

Early American Jewry

*THE JEWS OF PENNSYLVANIA
AND THE SOUTH*

1655-1790

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Chapter I

Pennsylvania — 1734

DURING the Revolution, Philadelphia was the second largest city in the English-speaking world. It sheltered the most important Jewish community in the United States, though by no means the oldest. New York, Newport, and probably even Savannah had synagogue organizations that antedated the one in the City of Brotherly Love.

Most of the Jews in this Pennsylvania capital—where they were first reported as being numerous enough to note by a traveler in 1734—were of Central European origin. Probably some of them were attracted to the city because of the large number of German Christians who had settled in eastern Pennsylvania. Individual Israelites had traveled to Pennsylvania much earlier, coming down from New Amsterdam no later than 1655 to trade with Indians on the Delaware. William Penn had theorized that the Indians were descendants of the Ten [Lost] Tribes—they looked just like the Jews in the London ghetto! We must look, however, for less aboriginal specimens, if we wish a persuasive authenticity for the first Jew who settled perma-

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nently in Pennsylvania. He may have been a certain Jonas Aaron, who was already settled in the colony in 1703. But his Jewishness is indicated only by his biblical name, at best an uncertain identification.

It is more likely that the first Pennsylvania Jew, of whom we can be sure and whom we know by name, was Isaac Miranda. He was probably a Tuscanian; at least this is known, that his brother Joseph was steward to the Duke of Tuscany.

Though we have identified Isaac as a Jew, he may already have been a convert to Christianity when he appeared on the Pennsylvania frontier.

On occasion the pioneer Jew in a new area becomes a convert. Alone, cut off from any close Jewish community, eager to establish himself, he marries out of the faith and ultimately leaves it. The change of faith makes him somehow a little more acceptable to his neighbors; nevertheless, they continue to think, and frequently speak, of him as "the Jew." Their criteria of Jewishness are "racial" and ethnic. After the first Jew, the convert, has settled in a village or hamlet, succeeding Jews, unconverted, who wander in are more readily accepted. The ice has been broken, and the community has been prepared to receive these others.

Miranda had settled on Conoy Creek, in what was later Lancaster County, by about the year 1715. Although he was primarily an Indian trader, he also dabbled in politics. Sometime in 1727 he was appointed a deputy vice-admiralty judge, and later the same year he was dismissed when he refused to do the bidding of his superior, the vice-admiralty judge Joseph Browne, in a case smelling of corruption.

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This "apostate Jew or fashionable Christian proselyte," as he was called by an unsympathetic Christian contemporary, died in 1732. Apparently a man of some wealth, he left his heirs two houses in Philadelphia, silver plate, furniture, books, a farm in Lancaster County, and several thousand acres of land. One of his two sons, George, carried on the family business of trading with the Indians, and in the 1730's was well-known in the Allegheny area as a trader among the Shawnees.

The elder Miranda was very eager for his daughter Mary to wed the aristocratic James Hamilton, the son of Andrew Hamilton, the famous lawyer who had defended John Peter Zenger in the well-known suit involving freedom of the press. In order to stimulate his interest, Miranda made liberal provision in his will for the young scion if he espoused the daughter, but the future lieutenant-governor of the colony did not marry Miss Miranda. Fate, however, had evidently ordained that there should be a "Jewess" in the Hamilton family. In the next generation, Andrew Hamilton III did marry Abigail Franks.

Jews, that is, unconverted Jews, did immigrate in increasing numbers to Pennsylvania in the first half of the eighteenth century. By 1730 the London De Pazes were building boats in Philadelphia shipyards, and by the 1750's there were isolated families, or groups, or even communities in Philadelphia, Easton, Reading, Heidelberg, and in other villages and townships as far west as the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Lancaster, in the middle of the eighteenth century, had a little community and a cemetery. It was the most important

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frontier post for the western fur trade. There were ten families or male adults there in the 1740's, and the leading Jew, Lancaster's most prominent merchant, was Joseph Simon.

As for Philadelphia, there was a modest little congregation of Jews worshipping in a rented room on Sterling Alley as early as the 1750's. They had been holding services at least since 1747. Their first cemetery—originally the private burial plot of Nathan Levy—had been purchased in 1738; Levy sought a second plot from the Penns several years later.

This Levy, the founding father of the Jewish community, was a son of the well-known New York merchant-shipper, Moses Levy. Through the marriage of his sister Abigail, Nathan became a brother-in-law of Jacob Franks, the enterprising New York businessman. By 1731 young Nathan, then twenty-seven years of age, was an officer of the New York congregation, and by 1747 he was the third largest taxpayer in the synagogue, ranking just below Mordecai Gomez and Jacob Franks. The records of the 1740's and of the year 1750 disclose the fact that he continued to pay liberally for the upkeep of the New York congregation in spite of the fact that he had been living and doing business in Philadelphia since the late 1730's. No doubt it was filial loyalty and piety that prompted him to remain a member of Shearith Israel while doing what he could to establish a new Jewish community in Philadelphia.

Being a cemetery owner was not without its problems, and a Jewish cemetery was nearly always subject to desecration. In 1751 Levy was forced to insert the following

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advertisement in a September issue of Franklin's *Pennsylvania Gazette*:

Whereas many unthinking people have set up marks, and fir'd several shots against the fence of the Jewish burying-ground, which not only destroyed the said fence, but also a tomb-stone inclosed in it; there being a brick-wall now erected, I must desire those sportsmen to forbear (for the future) firing against the said wall. If they do, whoever will inform, so that the offender be convicted thereof before a magistrate, shall have twenty shillings reward, paid by Nathan Levy.

For at least nine years before his death Levy was a partner of David Franks in the firm of Levy and Franks, merchant-shippers who owned a number of good-sized schooners, sloops, and ships registered in Philadelphia. The firm had a store on Second Street and dealt in all sorts of merchandise, and from a letter which Nathan wrote in 1742 to James Dinnen (Dunning), the Indian trader and guide, we see that he also handled furs, bartering bundles of skins for goods and cash:

Mr. James Dinnen,
S'r:

I received your favour with six bundles summer skins for which have credited your account, and have according to your desire sent you all the goods you wrote for, excepting 1 p's match coating [coarse woolen cloth] and brass kettles, being I had them not.

The rum I bought for cash and so I did the vermillion, and therefore could not send you so much cash as I would. I alsoe paid John Smith, the waggoner, £4.17 for bringing the skins and carrying the goods out. I hope they may please you, and

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wish you good success in trade is the needfull at p[re]sent
from, s'r,

Your most humble servant,
Nathan Levy.

Philad'a, Octo'r 15, 1742.

I have sent you £6.10 cash by Walker.¹

The Levys of Philadelphia were very definitely "society." When Dr. Alexander Hamilton, a Maryland physician, made his "Gentleman's Progress" through the colonies in the summer of 1744, he went to a session of the Music Club in Philadelphia, where he "heard a tollerable concerto performed by a harpsicord and three violins." The leader of this club was the Attorney General Tench Francis, who "play'd a very indifferent finger upon an excellent violin that once belonged to the late Ch. Calvert, Govr. of Maryland." Apparently the only good fiddler of the three was "One Levy there [who] played a very good violine."

This violinist was almost certainly our Nathan Levy. Music was cultivated in his family, as we know from a letter written by his sister, Abigail Levy Franks, to her son Naphtali Franks in London in 1735. She recounted how her youngest son, Moses, was attracted to the instrument played by a daughter: "Richa does pretty well with her musick, Moses would fain learn if he could, he has stole some parts of tunes by seeing her taught." David Franks, still another son, then in Boston, continued Abigail, had studied the "fidle." From the mention of the "fidle" Abigail automatically went on in the very next sentence to say a word about her brother, Nathan Levy. The inference

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seems unmistakable that her train of thought led from the fiddler son to another probable fiddler, her brother.

The Levys, people of culture and wealth, were city-folk, as were most Jews in the colonies, but many individuals seeking a larger opportunity—with little capital and less competition—moved out into the wilderness. By 1744 some Jews, probably Alsatians, were settled in the little village of Conestoga at the edge of Lancaster County. Our source for this information is the same *Itinerarium, Gentleman's Progress*, of Hamilton, which tells us that he met a French Jew, Abraham Dubois, who had just returned from a visit to his relatives in this little Pennsylvania town on the frontier. Although Dubois spoke an execrable English, he was evidently something of a student of the Hebrew Bible, for he carried on a religious discussion with a skeptical Scotsman on the subjects of creation and the authority of the Old Testament writings.

Dubois had no hesitancy in engaging in a religious dispute in public in an American colony. In spite of the laws against blasphemy found in most colonies—and in Pennsylvania, too—there was freedom of expression here. Back home in France, he might have been sent to the galleys for an inadvertent remark. Almost up to the French Revolution a generation later, Jews (and Christians, too) were being sentenced to death for religious "violations" which were not even misdemeanors after the fall of the Bastille in 1789.

As in many other English colonies, Jews had been able to secure naturalization in Pennsylvania after 1740, and a few did take advantage of this opportunity. Judging, however, from the small number that had themselves natural-

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ized formally under the Act—about twenty men between 1740 and 1770—we may assume that most immigrants found it unnecessary to become citizens. Even as aliens few civil and economic rights were denied them.

Jews were still circumscribed in their political rights; Penn's Frame of Government of 1682 denied them the privilege of holding office or of voting for officers by virtue of the fact that they did not "possess faith in Jesus Christ." But, on the other hand, this same constitution afforded them, as it did to many others, freedom of conscience and the open exercise of their religion—though not the right to labor on the Lord's Day. There is no indication, however, during the pre-Revolutionary period, that they were disturbed by the authorities if they kept their businesses open on Sunday.

The fiddler David Franks became a member of a 1748 Assembly—raising for some historians the problem of what he did about the requisite Christian oath. But it is really not a problem, for Franks was not, as is often stated, a member of the General Assembly. The 1748 Assembly was simply the high-flown name of a social group which held a great ball that year.

Franks was no man to seek the chief seat in the synagogue; his Judaism meant little to him. Unlike his brothers Naphtali and Moses, he was an "assimilationist." The brothers, though native Americans, had gone "home" to England—not only for commercial reasons, but also to live in a large Jewish community where there were a number of other coreligionists who enjoyed an enviable economic and social status. Several of the wealthy Ashkenazim

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["Germanic Jews"] there—to say nothing of the Sephardim ["Spanish-Portuguese Jews"]—had estates and manors in the English countryside. Anglo-Jewish magnates could satisfy a perfectly natural and justified yearning for status and recognition, without having to leave their own group, for they had a circle of their own. Thus it was that both Naphthali and Moses Franks were content to remain within the circle of their own faith and even to become leaders of Ashkenazic Jewry in London.

David had no such "Jewish" worlds to conquer; he was determined to become a British gentleman in the fullest sense of the term. That he remained a steady contributor to Shearith Israel in New York is not to be regarded as a refutation. Rest assured, it was his father, Jacob Franks, a loyal and practicing Jew who had just finished a term as president of Shearith Israel in New York, who saw to it that his son David remained nonetheless a steady contributor to the New York synagogue.

Certainly, as long as the father lived, the son retained his membership in his father's congregation. When the old gentleman finally passed away David promised the then president, Hayman Levy, that he would contribute £5 annually to the synagogal treasury, exclusive of other religious offerings he might make. After the funeral of his father he observed the "thirty days" of mourning in the Jewish fashion, allowing his beard to grow for a whole month. Franks may have been a member of the Philadelphia congregation in the early days; the absence of his name among the contributors to the synagogue building fund in 1782 is easily explained; he was then in England. In spite

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of the fact that he was an assimilationist, he was not, as others became, a Jew-hater. He always maintained close contact with his Jewish friends, particularly with the Simon and Gratz families of Lancaster and Philadelphia, and in his own letters to them occasionally added a Hebrew word or two. On October 12, 1765, on one of his numerous visits back home, to New York, he did attend services at the synagogue. It was the Saturday when the cycle of Pentateuchal readings started all over again, and to commemorate this happy event the congregational trustees all got gloriously "high." David gleefully reported all this—with a Hebrew word thrown in—to his good friend Barnard Gratz.

Who was this good friend Gratz? In the 1750's David Franks took into his employ this young emigrant from the German-Polish border, from Langendorf in Upper Silesia. There was no reason for Gratz to remain in his native province. It had fallen to Frederick II of Prussia. In 1750 that monarch had issued his *Reglement*, a charter detailing the rights and disabilities of Prussian Jews. A generation later this charter of the enlightened (!) king was termed by Mirabeau "a law worthy of a cannibal."

As for Silesian Jewry, Frederick made an effort to limit the number of Jews who were to be allowed to remain, even if born in the land. It was difficult, even for a successful businessman, to secure residential rights for more than one son. "Surplus" sons were often compelled to leave the parental home and to wander off. Indeed, Jews were ruthlessly driven out of the countryside where they had leased and worked the distilleries, bakeries, mills, and dairies of the feudal gentry. Though individual entrepreneurs were

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successful in some of the towns, the cities, in general, were not discouraged from exercising their medieval prerogative of excluding Jews as residents. Accordingly, German Jewish boys of spirit refused to remain in eighteenth-century Silesia and Germany.

Barnard Gratz was born about 1738. He had clerked for a while in London for his cousin, Solomon Henry; then, in January, 1754, he had come to Pennsylvania to work for Franks. Barnard could not have been more than in his early teens when he left Silesia. It was such resolute and courageous youngsters who did so much to build this country.

Working for David Franks did not mean that young Barnard could not engage in business "adventures" for himself. Undoubtedly his employer encouraged him to do it, and was his partner in shipments. They often bought and sold on "joint account." People were glad to help a young beginner.

One of the "concerns" of Gratz was a partnership with Benjamin Moses Clava, which began in 1755 and lasted until 1769. Clava had married out of the faith—a Christian minister officiated—but did not withdraw from the Jewish community. The business which the two men carried on was an exceedingly modest one. They had very little capital. One of their customers was Mrs. Hannah Moses, obviously one of those traditional mothers in Israel, a type common among the Jews of Europe, where the wife girded up her loins and supported the family. Evidently she took seriously the dictum of the Jewish sage who had said: "In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man." Hannah sold

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cheap jewelry, knives, snuff-boxes, brass and enamel fountain pens, children's rings, and the like.

Barnard lived at Hannah's house for a while and credited his board bill against what she owed the firm of Clava and Gratz. A scrutiny of the firm's accounts shows that the members found some time to relax—or were the following entries in the line of business: "Rum, sug'rs, and limes"—and, immediately following, "ditto" and "entertainm't given gentlemen from N. Y."

In 1758, after Barnard had been in the country for almost five years, he heard that his younger brother Michael had left the East Indies and was in London. (The source of his information was his cousin Jacob Henry, now Franks's agent in Lancaster. Jacob was a younger brother of Cousin Solomon Henry, the London merchant.)

Barnard was upset at the news. Michael was something of a problem; he was always getting into trouble and failing to make good. He had done poorly in Berlin and Amsterdam. Obviously he was now coming from the fabulous Indies without the expected sackful of diamonds or rupees.

Barnard, on the other hand, was a sober person; he was working laboriously to get ahead. His account books disclosed his studious practice in the English script. Not that Barnard was without sentiment. On the last page of one of his account books he wrote:

Now by love [Jove?] the gratees oath that is,
None loves you half so well as I.
I due not ask your love for dis,
For Heavens sake belive me or I die.

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Underneath is sprawled his signature: Barnad Grates. Off to a corner he wrote, "Mary Samuel . . . in London." But it was not Mary Samuel whom he ultimately married.

As an older brother seriously beginning to find his stride, Barnard had little patience with a rolling stone. On November 20, 1758, Barnard wrote to Solomon Henry, for whom Michael also had worked before going to the Indies:

Philadelphia, November 20, 1758.

Dear Cousin Solomon:

I have not had the pleasure of a line from you this great while. Only had the satisfaction to hear from your brother, Jacob Henry, of y'r being in good health, which I wish may continue.

I likewise heard my brother Michael is coming back from the East Indies, which am very sorry for, and I should be glad to know his reason for returning. I don't know what advice to give him that would be for the best of his interest, as I do not know his disposition. If he could content himself with living in the [American back] country, or else with living here [in Philadelphia] at Mr. David Franks's in my place, [he might do well,] as I intend to leave him next spring, as I've wrote for a cargo to Mr. Moses Franks by direction of Mr. D. Franks. With their assistance, I believe I could soon get him my place, where he could learn the business of this country by staying with him two or three years, and might do a little business for himself as he has some money of his own.

This place requires honesty, industry, and good nature, and no pride, for he must do every thing pertaining to the business. So if you and he think he is capable of the last—I have no doubt of his honesty—and he has a *mind* not to be stubborn but to take advice after his arrival, I would advise him to come by the first vessel in the spring. I would assist him as far as in my power as a brother. That is not a great deal, as I am poor

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my self. But if he thinks himself wise enough and refuses to take advice of Cousin Jacob [Henry] and myself, then let him do what he pleases; I would not advise him to come here, as it would give me much pain and uneasiness.

I regret I cannot remit you y'r money before next spring.

Your kindness shall always be acknowledged by, dear sir,

Your aff'te cousin and most humble servant,

Barnard Gratz.

Respects to Miss Hart. Will remit her money p'r next vessel.²

It is evident what brother Barnard was after. Let Michael—his synagogue name was Yehiel—come to America, take Barnard's place with David Franks, live at Franks's house, work for him, and put his money into "ventures" now and then. But no "monkey business"!

That same day, in the same mail, he sent a Judaeo-German letter to Michael himself. Though the florid salutation in Hebrew need not be taken literally, for it was an old epistolary formula, Barnard did love Michael—there is no record that they ever quarreled:

Greetings to my dearly beloved brother who is as dear to me as my own life, the young man, Yehiel—long may he live—that princely, scholarly, and incomparable person:

I report that I am in good health, and I hope you are too.

I learn, dear brother, from the letter of our relative Solomon [Henry] to our relative Koppel [Jacob Henry] that you have returned from India. I am very much surprised, but I cannot say much because I do not know the reason [for your return].

Only if you are satisfied to live in the country and keep a shop—if you are at all able to do that—or to live with my employer, Mr. David Franks, would I advise you to come here in the spring by the first boat. But you must agree to follow our advice while you are here. In that case I hope everything

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will turn out satisfactorily to you. My plan would be that you come here and stay with my employer two or three years until you learn the business. Meanwhile you will get the same wages that I got.

[In that case] You might turn your money over to Mr. Moses Franks and take an order on Mr. David Franks, to be paid here when you arrive. I think this would be better than keeping a shop in the country. Mr. David Franks is a very good man, and you will be able to make some money with your capital here. Otherwise, "do as is good in thine own eyes," do what you want, but do let me know through someone what you have in mind. And don't be too proud. From me,

Your brother,

Issachar Ber[Barnard].

Remember me to everybody in our family.

P.S. Dear brother, if you intend to come here and live with Mr. Franks, you should not bring with you any merchandise whatsoever. You will be able to earn more with your money here. Will you please, therefore, do me the favor of paying our relative Solomon [Henry] nineteen pounds, i.e., £19 ster. on my account. When you arrive, I shall return the sum at once. The rest you ought to give to Moses Franks, and have him issue an order on Mr. David Franks here. Come over by the first boat, as I have already spoken to my employer about you, and he will wait for you until the month of Nisan or Iyyar [April-May]. However, you may do as you please.

I have just reconsidered the matter with our relative Jacob. If you have some money, you might bring with you about eighteen or twenty silver watches, worth from forty-five to fifty-five dinars [shillings?] a piece, some new-fashioned watchchains, about twenty dozen of women's shoes made of calamanco and worsted damask of all colors, a few dozen of women's mittens of black worsted, and a few other articles. In this case you can invest your money [in these articles] and not turn it over to Moses Franks. You might ask him what he

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thinks you ought to bring here, if you have more money than you need for the articles mentioned above. Let them be insured.³

Michael left England in April, 1759, and about twelve weeks later, by the second week of July, he was already in this country at work selling his "cargo" of goods.

Back in London Cousin Solomon learned that the new immigrant had purchased a pair of expensive buckles—knee buckles?—not for resale but for his own use. "Time enough for you to wear such things when you are worth a hundred thousand," admonished Cousin Solomon. Michael was apparently getting off to his usual bad start! How he must have chuckled in later years at Cousin Solomon's strictures, as he sat for his portrait to Thomas Sully!

Chapter 2

Pennsylvania — 1771

LESS than ten years after Michael Gratz landed in the colonies he was well on the road to a successful business career. In fact, within three years of his arrival he was already sending money out of his profits to his sisters in Silesia. He adjusted himself with natural facility to the needs of this pioneer land. The spirit of initiative that had prompted him as a young man to make the long trip to India stood him in good stead when he crossed the Alleghenies, relying more on his common sense and nerve than on his pistols to get along with the Indians.

Both brothers, Barnard and Michael, were engaged in foreign commerce, initially in "concerns," but ultimately on their own. Commerce was the royal road to wealth. The merchants of Philadelphia sent furs, grain, lumber, and cattle abroad in exchange for hard cash and consumers' goods. Barnard engaged in the coasting trade from New Orleans to Quebec; Michael, the more enterprising, sent cargoes to Canada, Georgia, and to the Dutch and British West Indies. Theirs was the typical career of colonial merchants, as exemplified in the activities of an Aaron Lopez.

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But they were more malleable, more open to change and to new opportunities than the dignified Newport shipper.

Sometime after the French and Indian War (1763) the Gratzes realized that the turn in political and economic conditions would profoundly affect their mode of doing business. Following the defeat of the French, the English, it will be recalled, had acquired Canada and practically all of North America east of the Mississippi. To help finance the cost of the long war with the French and to raise money for administration and future defense, the colonists were called upon to pay additional taxes and duties. The old colonial system of winking at smuggling and at illicit trade and of conniving at disregard for the Navigation Acts was scrapped. The attempt was now made really to enforce the laws. Paper currency was prohibited. A Stamp Act was imposed, and new duties were levied in spite of the outcries of the colonists, who took refuge in the slogan: "No taxation without representation." England was now definitely embarked on a mercantilistic policy which the colonists felt was unjust and which they believed was intended primarily to further the interests of the English at home.

The American merchants determined to bring the home government to terms by a boycott expressed in nonimportation agreements and resolutions. Along with many others Barnard and Michael Gratz signed the nonimportation resolutions in Philadelphia in 1765.

One of the obvious effects of this more rigid control of colonial commerce and the resultant American boycott was the decline of foreign commerce, or at least of its profits. Many merchants were bankrupted; others realized that

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they would have to find additional sources of trade and income or go under. The Gratzes, to survive, began to put more time and effort into the fur and Indian trade.

The English policy toward the Indians supported this economic shift of the Gratzes. The authorities in London proposed to set aside the huge trans-Allegheny area as a vast reservation for the Indians, who would be encouraged to supply furs for the English market. The colonists were forbidden to establish settlements on the other side of the mountains—that would carry them farther and farther away from English traditions and from control by English cannon. As long as they lived along the tidal rivers they would be oriented toward Europe and would remain English in their loyalties.

But all such commercially slanted legislation was more easily planned than carried out. Colonists were beginning to cross the mountain barriers. Land companies in the Ohio basin had been in the making now for almost a generation. By punitive exactions and by purchase the Indians were brought to cede large areas to the white man. Thereupon the government reluctantly changed its mind with regard to the colonization in the Indian country.

Enterprising merchants were intent upon exploiting the wilderness country, and that meant, first of all, bringing out the furs; they established depots at important river junctions and at portage points. There the fur traders and hunters were “staked” to an outfit, stocked up with “Indian goods,” and were paid for the furs in food, drink, ammunition, and other necessities.

It was but a short step from supplying trappers and buy-

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ing their peltries to the much bigger game of securing huge land grants, getting colonial and royal confirmation, and then throwing the vast areas open to land-hungry colonists.

One of the leading figures in this phase of American transmontane expansion was David Franks. Like most successful merchants of his day, Franks ran a general store, operated a commission business, owned and freighted his own ships, underwrote maritime insurance, and bought and sold commercial paper. His specialty was army supply, especially of the interior posts; this heightened his interest in the fur trade and led him ultimately into land speculation. His mercantile and shipping pursuits served as underpinning for these activities, which he furthered through his influence in high places both here and in London. Though he was not in politics himself, his "connections" were of the best. His father-in-law, Peter Evans, was in politics; and his daughter, Abigail, had married Andrew Hamilton III. The Hamiltons were a powerful clan, related to the Penns, the Allens, and the like.

For decades prior to the Revolution, Franks was an active, perhaps the dominating figure among a group of businessmen who sought to control the western fur trade all the way to the Mississippi River. They were particularly eager to pre-empt the Ohio River and the Illinois River traffic. (The assumption that Frankstown, a portage point on the Kittanning Path, was named after him or his family is wrong. This village, and another Frankstown below Wheeling, owe their name to Frank Stevens, an Indian trader of the 1730's.)

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Throughout the 1760's Franks appears as a partner in a variety of enterprises, all of which were directed toward the West. In the 1760's and 1770's, David Franks operated under the firm name of (Isaac) Levy and Franks. This concern is not to be confused with the older firm of (Nathan) Levy and Franks, which was dissolved about 1754, although the Levys were all related through David Franks's mother. The frequent change in name is to be accounted for by the fact that any time an important "venture" was made a loose, temporary, and new partnership might be formed, and when the transaction was finished the partners frequently entered into other ventures separately. A man might be "concerned" in two or three firms at the same time. In 1760 Franks was in a firm which included William Trent, Joseph Simon, and Levy Andrew Levy. A few years later he was concerned with almost the same partners in a new company. For a number of years he was closely associated with George Croghan, deputy superintendent for Indian affairs under Sir William Johnson.

Croghan and his partner, William Trent, had been pushing into the Upper Ohio River Valley, trading with the Indians, as far back as the 1740's. They were in the van of that westward movement which was just beginning to reach out across the mountains as far as the Ohio. In the year 1754 the struggle between the English and the French for control of the Ohio Valley broke out. The English, pushing up from Virginia, and the French, coming down from Canada, met head-on in the Ohio valley; this was the "wilderness beginning" of the French and Indian War, a

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war in which the English traders, in the first years, were beaten back and suffered severe losses.

After the conflict was over, in 1763, the Indians (Pontiac!) again attacked the traders who had pushed in with large supplies of goods. Throughout the whole western country, as far north as Detroit and Mackinac, merchants were robbed and harassed and killed. Croghan and Trent again suffered losses at the hands of the Indian marauders, as did Simon and Levy of Lancaster, their associate Franks, and the rival Baynton-Wharton group of Philadelphia, all of whom lost valuable stocks. Preliminary to a demand for satisfaction from the Indians, the traders and merchants submitted their bill to Sir William Johnson, the superintendent for Indian affairs. The total loss, so the claimants said, was about £81,000, sterling. Almost a third of the amount represented losses by Franks, Trent, Simon, & Co.

As compensation for their losses in 1763, the traders, and the merchants who had financed them, sought a grant of land from the Six Nations (the Iroquois), whom they held responsible for the attacks of their tributaries, the Shawnees, the Delawares, and the Hurons. Influenced more through the presents offered them by Sir William Johnson than through any consciousness of their moral or legal responsibility, the Six Nations finally signed a treaty at Fort Stanwix in New York in November, 1768. Under the terms of this instrument, the Iroquois made large cessions of land east and south of the Ohio River, which included a large tract in what is today West Virginia, as compensation for the "suff'ring traders." In the expectation of receiving this land and exploiting it for purposes of colonization and

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speculation, the Indiana Company had been created in 1763-65 by these traders and their supporters.

It was but a step to the next move: compensation also for the losses suffered in 1754. The sufferers of 1754—in some instances identical with the traders who were despoiled in 1763—had been clamoring for relief for almost a decade. Later they combined their claims with those who had been despoiled in 1763; they turned to the British government for special financial reimbursement for their group alone, but they accomplished nothing. They were very dissatisfied. Finally, a representative group of six, which included David Franks and Benjamin Levy, sought relief from the Anglophile Iroquois for the damage done by the French and their Indians. When this farfetched claim was rejected by Sir William Johnson, the six conceived the idea of asking the king for a special compensatory grant in the new lands ceded by the Indians in 1768 at Fort Stanwix.

Again, in anticipation, a company was organized, with its shares divided into two equal parts. Out of one half, the traders, under William Trent, agreed to pay their creditors, the merchants; the merchants got the other half as compensation for the efforts and the money they were supposed to expend in securing the expected grant for the 1754 traders. But the merchants, apparently, were not willing to put out any cash if they could help it; instead, they offered David Franks's brother, Moses, one-ninth of their half of their stock if he would further their claim at the English court.

We have spoken above of David's brothers Moses and Naphtali. It was Moses, in all probability, who represented

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the family interests in London. His type of representation was most desirable. The colonies were on the frontier; the manufactories, the money markets, and the sources of political influence (contracts!) were in England. It was important, therefore, that every large firm have a London agent. This was one of Moses' jobs, and his career had equipped him for it. He had moved to England in the 1740's, before he was thirty. Thereafter he had become a prominent businessman, moving in high financial and political circles in spite of the fact that his own political rights as a Jew were limited. He had kept in constant touch with his family and his old synagogue, and was the agent of Shearith Israel in 1757-58 in its search for a new minister. Conscious of Moses Franks's success, the president and governors of the College of the Province of New York—later Columbia—appealed to him in 1762 to help raise funds in England for the school, which had been so hard hit by the "ravages of a destructive war."

Moses had already been appointed the London representative for the merchants and sufferers of 1763. Now he was offered the job of squeezing a grant out of the king for those traders and their backers who had experienced losses in the *opening* days of the French and Indian War. Here is the letter which David Franks, his cousin, Benjamin Levy, and their four associates sent to Moses:

Philad'a, 4th Jan'ry, 1769.

Sir:

We embrace the opportunity of this packet to acquaint you that we have associated together in order, if possible, to obtain a compensation for the losses of the Indian traders whose

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properties were violently and unjustly taken from them by the French on the River Ohio, on or about the year 1754.

At a late congress [1768] with the Six Nations Indians at Fort Stanwix, a large tract of country was ceded to his Majesty, and a boundary settled between the English colonies and the Indians. At the same time a tract of land lying on the Ohio, within the bounds of the ceded country ["Indiana," now largely part of northern West Virginia], was granted by the Six Nations to the Indian traders and others who suffer'd by the depredations committed by their dependant tribes in the year 1763. During the course of this treaty an application was made to Sir William Johnson by several merchants of this city, who had been sufferers in the year 1754, to request of the Indians a compensation for their losses likewise. This Sir Will'm refus'd to comply with, under a perswasion that it was extremely improper to demand a satisfaction from the Six Nations for hostilities committed by the *French* and their *Indians only*, in which neither they, the Six Nations, nor their tributaries had born any part.

These merchants have since thought proper to prefer a petition to his Majesty to be included in the *grant* made by the Indians to the sufferers of 1763. Some of us were subscribers to that petition, but having since had an oppertunity of inspecting several letters, petitions, and other papers relating to that subject, which we were before unacquainted with, are satisfiyed there has been no unfairness in the proceedings of the sufferers of 1763, and that therefore it would be more proper and just to make an application to the Crown for a tract of land distinct from *theirs*, than to attempt to interfere with their grant.

We, the signers of this letter, are the legal representatives of the Indian traders who were the real sufferers in the year 1754, having a deed executed by Capt. William Trent who has been empowered for that purpose by regular letters of attorney under the hands and seals of those traders, vesting in us one

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moiety [half] of all such lands as shall be granted by the Crown as a compensation for their losses (we being at the expence and trouble soliciting such compensation), the other moiety to be divided among the traders themselves, out of which moiety all the merchants to whom any of them owe money may receive a payment of their several demands.

We, therefore, do request of you to make an application to the Crown in behalf of the sufferers of 1754 for a grant of land distinct from that granted by the Indians to the sufferers of 1763, as there is now an immense quantity of excellent unappropriated land within the boundary, exclusive of that. And we confide in the justice of his Majesty and his ministers that they will in this way reimburse those sufferers on account of whose losses reprisals were made on the French merchants' effects before the declaration of war, those reprisals not having been applied to the indemnification of the sufferers.

Capt. Trent and Mr. Sam Wharton will shortly embark for England. To these gentlemen we refer you for particulars. They will on their arrival wait on you and show you all the traders' powers [of attorney] and other papers, and inform you fully of every thing relating to this subject. And they will be able to point out to you a valuable tract of land, within the late cession [by the Indians] to the Crown, which it may be proper to apply for, and will in all respects afford you their best assistance.

As there will be no method of requiting you for your trouble in negotiating our application (which you are to be the *sole agent* for), except out of a part of the grant, care has been taken to make over to your brother, Mr. David Franks, two-ninths of the whole moiety conveyed by Mr. Trent, in order that you may have one-ninth for your services.

We are, with great respect, sir,

Your most obed't hum. servants,
Edw'd Shippen, Jun'r, Jos. Morris, Benjamin Levy,
David Franks, Thos. Laurence, Sam'l Wharton.⁴

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• Moses accepted the offer of this consortium to act as their lobbyist at the Court and soon presented a memorial on behalf of his clients setting forth their claim to compensation. We shall see the outcome of this and similar claims.

• Reverting to the Gratzes, it was, very probably, David Franks and Joseph Simon who interested them in the peltry trade and in the prospect of land speculation. Simon and Barnard Gratz had married girls who were first cousins; Michael had cemented the relation by marrying Miriam, Simon's daughter.

• Simon's headquarters were in Lancaster, a fast-growing village on the Pennsylvania frontier, destined within a few years to become the largest inland city in British North America. Simon's fur trading outpost was at Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh), where his associate Milligan looked after his interests. The Lancaster merchant had been a member of the old firm of Levy and Franks, probably since the late 1740's. Numerous partnerships were characteristic of this enterprising Lancastrian; we know of at least eleven different supply and mercantile companies in which he was active during the course of a generation. Practically all of them had been established by him.

• Most of these partnerships were very informal. We have a contemporary description of how Simon and Lowrey dissolved their forty-year-old firm. Some time after the Revolutionary War, Colonel Alexander Lowrey and Simon, now elderly men, called in arbitrators and proceeded to wind up the business. No books, papers, or contracts were

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offered—and none were needed. Simon reminded Lowrey of a certain sum paid him at a certain spring while out West; Lowrey asked Simon to recall what he had paid him while sitting on a log out in the Indian country, and thus the discussion continued until a final settlement was reached, peacefully and amicably.

One of Simon's partners was William Henry, the inventor. The young mechanic had joined forces with Joseph Simon as far back as 1750, after he had finished his apprenticeship as a gunmaker. The business was known as Simon and Henry. Henry was famed as a master craftsman, and the Henry rifle was a prized possession in colonial days. The company manufactured and sold arms, ran a hardware store in Lancaster, and exported bar iron. Henry had built the first stern-wheel steamboat in America (1763), but this experimental boat sank in Conestoga Creek. Sometime about the beginning of the Revolution the partnership of Simon and Henry was dissolved, because the latter went to work for the new American government as a commissary officer and as an arms manufacturer.

In addition to his other ventures Simon had been interested in the development of the Illinois country since the middle '60's. Together with a number of other entrepreneurs, he formed what might be called the "Lancaster syndicate" (although some of those concerned, like the Gratzes, lived in Philadelphia). A rival firm—much larger, and known for its sharp practices—had settled on the Scioto among the Shawnees, attempting by this maneuver to throttle the Fort Pitt fur trade. This was the "Philadelphia syndicate" of Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan.

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By 1768 Barnard and Michael Gratz were actively engaged in an Illinois venture, employing one William Murray as their agent in the Mississippi River country. Murray also served as an agent for David Franks and for the London army supply syndicate in which the Frankses were very active. The records show that the Gratz brothers sent Murray gloves, shoes, caps, handkerchiefs, cloth, knives and buckles, coffee, tea and sugar, mustard and pepper, gin, wine, spirits, and rum.

Not infrequently men like Colonel Croghan worked with both the Philadelphia and the Lancaster group; indeed, the rivals found it advisable, on occasion, to join forces in the attempt to secure confirmation of their far-reaching plans from the reluctant, slow-moving British ministry in London.

In the late summer of 1769 Barnard Gratz had made the long and arduous trip to England. No doubt he wanted to see his cousin Solomon Henry. More important was the need to renew old business connections and to establish new ones. In addition, he was certainly eager to note what progress was being made in securing the approval by the English government of the land companies in which he was interested, for these syndicates were now in the process of merger and reorganization. We may be sure that in London he kept a watchful eye on the new Grand Ohio Company which proposed to create the large colony of Vandalia in what is today the state of West Virginia. (The proposed charter of this settlement disenfranchised Jews—in spite of the fact that a number of the proprietors were Jewish. But

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no American colony at that time envisaged such political equality.)

During Barnard's absence Miriam Simon Gratz, who had married brother Michael about two months previously, sent him the following note:

Philadelphia, August 26, 1769.

My dear Brother:

As I have just now heard of this opportunity, I do myself the pleasure of dedicating a few lines to you, and I hope to be excused for not doing my duty before, but I can assure you that it was not neglected for want of regard for my dear brother. Therefore, as I know your goodness, I need not make any further apologies.

I have the happiness of acquainting you that our family enjoys perfect health. Dear little Rachel [your daughter] has escaped the small pox and is hearty. She often talks of her "dear little Daddy" and wishes to see him, as, indeed, we all do. But how could it be otherwise when a person whom we all love and esteem is at so great a distance from us.

Would it was spring. Then should we be in expectation of a new happiness [Miriam gave birth to a son in April, 1770]. But, alas, a long winter is before us, though I can assure you there is nothing wanting but your presence to make us completely happy. I have a dear, good, and kind husband and a dear little prattling niece, which is a great comfort. I pray that the Almighty may prosper you in all your undertakings and conduct you safe over the wide ocean to your dear friends here.

I hope you'll make yourself entirely easy about Rachel and be assured she'll be as well taken care of by us as she possibly can be. Becky is the same kind body she always was. She desired me to remember her kindly to you and to let you know that she is much pleased in living as she does. I can assure you

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that I do everything in my power to render everything agreeable to her.

Rachel gives her love to you and hopes *that* you won't forget her London doll. I hope after the receipt of this I shall be favored with a few lines from you. I could not expect it before as it was my place to write first. My dear Michael joins me in love for you. I must conclude, wishing you every felicity this world can afford. From

Your ever loving and affectionate sister,
Miriam Gratz.

P.S. I should be much obliged to you if you would make my kind love acceptable to my Aunt and to my new cousin, Mr. Solomon Henry.

“You must make haste home.” Rachel Gratz. (This is Rachel writing. As she begged me to let her write, I was obliged to guide her hand to please her.)⁵

A week later Michael wrote Barnard a more important letter. He reported—and this was good news—that the first cargo of goods sent out West to William Murray had been profitably disposed of; but—and this was not so good—he also reported that one of their customers, Mr. Robert Callender, had lost a considerable sum of money through the “Black Boys.”

The Black Boys were a sort of vigilante group of Pennsylvania frontiersmen who had united under Captain James Smith to protect the frontier against marauding Indians. In order the more effectively to accomplish their purpose, they were accustomed to stop the pack horse trains coming across the mountains and to search them for guns, munitions, and liquor going to the Indians. They frequently disguised themselves as redskins, hence “Black Boys.” Sometimes they did not burn the “contraband” which they

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seized but appropriated it for themselves. In 1765 they had destroyed a valuable pack horse train consigned to George Croghan, who was awaiting its arrival at Fort Pitt. This occurred at Sideling Hill, west of Fort Loudon, on what is today the Lincoln Highway, U. S. Route 30. Here is part of Michael's letter:

Philad'a, 31 August, 1769.

Dear Brother:

. . . . A few days ago receiv'd a letter from Mr. Wm. Murray of the Illinois who refers us to letters by . . . Mr. Morgan [of Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan], but none of them arrived as yet here. He [Murray] relates in regard of the goods he had with him turning out to great advantage, and hopes we have sent the like goods by first battows on our joint acco't with him, as else we will be only the poorer for it.

However, as there is a little [some] fear of an Indian war by what letters I saw from Mr. Milligan [Joseph Simon's partner at Fort Pitt], [inasmuch as] the Senecas Indians [are] much discontented on acco't of the purchase money that was given at the last treaty to the nether Indians, and their share not received of them, which makes them very insolent and daring, tho' is thought they want nothing but presents, and robb, if they can, mean time. So am no ways sorry that we did not send any more [goods], as [I am] much afraid of what we have there already if an Indian war should happen, though nothing [is] thought of [one] at present by the generality of people.

Mr. Callender has sustained a loss of about £300 by the Black Boys (as they call them) stopping twenty-four horse loads of Indian goods on the road to Fort Pitt, a little this side Bradford [Bedford], where they pretended to burn the goods, but the chief [the major part was] carried off by them, for which he will receive but little satisfaction tho' [he] is after them.

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Mr. Croghan has wrote a letter to you wherin he promises to be here in September or October when perhaps he will want some goods. However, shall be glad to see him here whether he does or not. . . .

However, hope you will be able to settle [on] a good correspondent for a small cargo [of] Indian goods and the other articles of E[as]t India goods, which am in hopes we will be able to make quick and good returns of, with the assistance of the great run [smuggling] and our friends. Especially when the goods are laid in on good terms, [I] think [we] cannot fail. And no doubt the difficult [Townshend] Acts [imposing duties on lead, paper, tea, etc.,] will be on the repeal before or upon your leaving England; so that [I] would not omitt bringing some goods if they even was to be stored here for a little time, till we have acco't of the repealing of those Acts.

. . . However, [I] would do nothing if in case there is no prospect of the Acts being repeal'd, which you are to judge, as [you are] on the spot.

Should be glad [if] you could get in with the Levy's family and try if they would ship those East India nankeens, etc., as there we might do something profitable for them and ourselves too.

Find there is a lottery this year; so must desire you to concern me in a ticket: one-half, or a quarter in two tickets. . . .

[Michael Gratz.]

[To Barnard Gratz, London.]⁶

In the welter of a succession of proposed colonization schemes, with their interlocking directors, with their confluent and opposing interests, the names of Joseph Simon, the Gratzes, Levy Andrew Levy, and the Frankses frequently recur. The land settlement schemes of Franks and his associates were part of a persistent westward movement marked, however, by a sharp ebb and flow.

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Many famous names are associated with these western settlements. Back in 1763 George Washington was among the almost forty enterprisers who had formed the Mississippi Company to establish a colony at the mouth of the Ohio. At this strategic point they would have been able to control much of the Mississippi and Ohio River fur trade with the Indians. Three years later, in 1766, Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan, working with Croghan, actively undertook the economic exploitation of the Illinois country. Just about the same time the Lancaster firm of Simon, Trent, Levy, and Company, which we have already mentioned, began to penetrate the same Lower Ohio and Mississippi area.

By 1768 Joseph Simon, the Frankses, the Gratzes, and their friends had begun to merge their interests in the Indiana-Grand Ohio-Walpole-Vandalia colony on the Upper Ohio. This latter company, encouraged and represented at London by Benjamin Franklin who wanted to unite the conflicting interests in the western lands, blithely talked of a colony of 30,000,000 acres. By 1773, the David Franks Company had supplanted Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan on the Mississippi as traders, and was ready to start colonizing in that area.

Thus we see that from Pittsburgh to the Mississippi large sections of the Ohio River Valley were ripe for mass settlement. The Pennsylvanians were making plans for their new Vandalia colony. Adjoining them, west of the Scioto River, there was to be a little colony which George Washington proposed to establish. Farther down at the Falls of the Ohio (Louisville), Simon and Campbell, with offices at Lancaster

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and Pittsburgh, proposed to lay out a city and, incidentally, to dominate the Ohio River fur trade.

Still farther down the stream, in present-day Illinois, David Franks and Company was determined to establish large-scale settlements in conjunction with its trade with the natives. (This "Illinois Land Company" had twenty-two shareholders; eight were Jews; two, the Hamiltons, were Franks's "in-laws.") To carry out this purpose the company's western agent and chief negotiator, William Murray, assembled a huge load of supplies and Indian small goods at Pittsburgh in May, 1773. It was anything but an easy task. Ten boatmen had been hired at Philadelphia, but only three showed up. The butchers, a sailor, and a tailor for the new colony had deserted, taking their guns with them.

But discouraged as Murray was and disgusted as he was with the town—"this wretched place"—he still took time out to tease his correspondent, Michael Gratz. Murray had delivered some horses, ordered from Michael, to a Mr. Mahon, a Scotch-Irishman. Mahon sold them within a few minutes at a profit of £11. "You see, Michael," Murray wrote, "that a Scotch-Irish man can get the better in a bargain of a Jew. I cannot have it in my power to transgress the Mosaic law by eating swine's flesh," he continued facetiously, "not an ounce of it can be had in this beggarly place, nor indeed of anything else."

By July 5th, Murray had reached the Mississippi with his goods and had already negotiated the purchase of two huge tracts of land from the Indians.

This enterprise was big business. In later years the com-

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pany claimed that the grant alone had cost them over \$37,000. All of this was in barter goods, of course: cloth, blankets, shirts, stockings, gunpowder, lead, guns, brass kettles, tobacco, looking glasses, grain, horses, and cattle. And it was no mean achievement to send these "sundries" and Indian goods over the Alleghenies on pack horses to Fort Pitt, through Indian country and hostile "Black Boys," and then down the Ohio River on flatboats to Kaskaskia and Fort de Chartres on the Mississippi.

What the company received in exchange for the goods was even more imposing: the lower triangle of land between the Mississippi and the mouth of the Ohio—approximately the same area in which Washington and his friends had been interested in 1763—and a huge wedge of land between the Mississippi and the Illinois Rivers extending to the Checagou (Chicago) or Garlick Creek. This latter area provided one of the most important river highways between the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes and Canada; the former area dominated traffic on the Lower Ohio and Mississippi Valley—and the Ohio, it must not be forgotten, was the chief highway running east and west. It was a brilliant undertaking.

But it was one thing to buy an empire from the Indians; it was something else to have the title confirmed and to secure permanent settlers. Franks and his associates were conscious of the importance of securing proper sponsorship for the new colony. They turned to Virginia, which had always claimed that territory. From their offices in Philadelphia they petitioned Governor John Dunmore of Vir-

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ginia in April, 1774, to take the Illinois company under his protection:

To His Excellency, the Right Honorable John, Earl of Dunmore, governor and commander in chief, in and over the colony and dominion of Virginia and Vice Admiral of the same:
The petition of the several grantees named in the deed (herein after mentioned), as well on behalf of themselves as in the names and on behalf of all the several persons settled upon the lands granted by the said deed to the petitioners, humbly sheweth:

That your petitioners having seen the opinions of Lords Chancellors Camden and York relative to titles derived by his Majesty's subjects from the Indians or natives (an exact copy whereof is hereunto annexed), and being farther induced by motives of extending the British trade into the Indian country, and by equitable, fair, and open dealing to bring over the natives to a due sense of a peaceable and well regulated commerce, as well as to avert the evil consequences that might ensue to his Majesty's good subjects from the great numbers of irregular and lawless emigrants that are about seating themselves upon the lands of the natives, without having obtained the consent of those native and natural proprietors to the making of such settlements, which irregular and unlicensed incroachments might very probably be productive of Indian insurrections and depredations, the fatal consequences of which have been experienced by many thousands of his Majesty's subjects;

Your petitioners have therefore at an expence of many thousand pounds, as well as with very great fatigue to some of your petitioners, in the most fair, open, and public manner, purchased in fee simple from the native proprietors two several tracts or parcels of lands as by the Indian deed of conveyance (duely executed in full and public council held with all the chiefs or sachems of the different tribes of the Illinois nations

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of Indians, and recorded in the Secretary's Office at Williamsburgh in the colony and dominion of Virginia) may more fully appear. That no part of the lands in your petitioners' purchase were heretofore ceded to, or purchas'd by, or for either their Christian [French] or Britannic Majesty's or either of their subjects;

That the purchase was fair, open, public, and satisfactory to the Indians, appears from the affidavits of Richard Winston, French interpreter, Michael Danné, and Piero Bloit, Indian interpreters (the latter of whom being Indian interpreter for the Crown in that country), taken by the officer commanding his Majesty's troops in the Illinois country, which may be farther proven, if necessary, by the testimony of many other credible witnesses who were present at the several conferences publicly held with the Indian chiefs, &cta., relative to the petitioners' purchase, as well as subscribing witnesses to the executing the deed of conveyance, and present at the delivery of the considerations expressed in the deed;

That your petitioners are at a very considerable expence making settlements upon their purchase: as well by themselves as by many orderly, industrious, and usefull British subjects whom your petitioners are transporting to that country, which 'tis hoped and expected may soon become usefull and beneficial to their parent country, as well as to his Majesty's colonies in America. And also tend greatly to faciliate and expedite the civilization of those Indians who have heretofore been troublesom to the frontier inhabitants of the several colonies. The settlers, upon your petitioners' purchase, becoming also a good barrier to cover the frontiers of the several contiguous colonies, and particularly the present frontier inhabitants of Virginia;

That your petitioners shall be always willing to comply with such rules and regulations with respect to quit rents as the inhabitants of his Majesty's colony and dominion of Virginia are subject to, as well as ardently wishing to enjoy the

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benefit of the laws, and as they apprehend their purchase to be within the limits of the colony of Virginia, tho' its jurisdiction has not hitherto been so far extended;

Your petitioners theirfor pray that your Lordship be pleased to take the petitioners and their settlements into the protection of your Lordship's government of Virginia and extend to them the laws and jurisdiction of your colony accordingly.

And your petitioners shall ever pray.

By order of the committee duely authorised by all the grantees.

David Franks,
J. Murray,
John Campbell.

Philadelphia, 19th April, 1774.⁷

It all sounded very promising. Yet less than a month after this, while in the Mohawk Valley conferring with Sir William Johnson, Barnard Gratz received an ominous letter from William Murray. The Illinois agent was impatiently waiting in Philadelphia for Michael Gratz to finish celebrating the Jewish festival of Pentecost—"as the Devil will have it . . . Moses was upon the top of a mountain in the month of May." Reports had just come in, Murray continued, that the Indians were being killed by the whites on the Ohio. "If this intelligence be true, it would be much against us and greatly endanger my scalp."

The intelligence was, unfortunately, true; the family of the Indian chief Logan had been murdered. Cresap's and Lord Dunmore's War was on, the frontier was ablaze, the settlers fled to the forts, and all hopes for a peaceful penetration of the West had to be given up for the time being. And in the following year, 1775, the outbreak of the Rev-

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olution was a further blow; extensive colonization was out of the question, certainly for the duration of the war.

The Illinois Land Company enterprisers were never able to salvage their investments. None of the proposed pre-Revolutionary colonies in the West were able to come into existence after the states ceded their western lands to the federal government. The dreams of landed empire faded away.

Chapter 3

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IN the early 1770's, Michael Gratz was beginning to count his profits from his traffic in the Illinois country and to justify the wearing of that expensive pair of buckles to which his cousin Solomon Henry had voiced such pointed objection. Although concentrating on the western trade, Michael did not fail to keep in touch with various businessmen in other parts of the country. There were no adequate newspaper services, and no efficient credit bureaus to inform, to advise, or to warn. Throughout the American colonies, in the West Indies and on the mainland, merchants helped their friends with advice, price quotations, and other important bits of news.

In July, 1771, Michael received a short note from Manuel Josephson, a respected New York merchant whose harrowing experiences as a sutler during the French and Indian War were slowly receding into the mist of the past. In 1762 he had been elected president of the congregation; strangely enough, he had trouble with the synagogal leaders a number of years later. He was accused, in 1769, of oppos-

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ing the "good rules and orders instituted by our community" and was threatened with expulsion.

But this letter which Manuel Josephson now sent to Michael had nothing to do with congregational discipline. It concerned itself with an entirely different problem:

New York, 17th July, 1771.

Mr. Mich'l Gratz,
D'r Sir:

On Friday last I wrote you, but the mail being closed I followed the post boy to the ferry and deliv'd him the letter, and as I have not heard from you p[er]. this day's post, fear it did not come to hand.

I therefore shall repeat the subject w'ch is: that a young rogue named Levy Marks, who came to your place [Philadelphia] with the Widow Jacobs from St. Eustatia [in the West Indies], this day a week, took from me severall goods to the amo't of £40 to sell on commission, or rather to take all the proffite to himself, as I charged him only prime cost in order to encourage him, and [he] went away w'th them.

Having from that day to this not had any intelligence from him, and as it is probable he may have gone to your place, if so shall take it as a particular fav'r if you could secure me, if not in the whole at least some part, and otherwise act with him as such a villain deserves.

This being what at pres't offers, remain w'th salutations to Mrs. Gratz, d'r sir,

Your most humb'e serv't,
Manuel Josephson.⁸

As early as 1760 we find a Levy Marks, a tailor, in business in Lancaster and Philadelphia, living intermittenly in these two towns. When, in 1765, Michael Gratz set out for St. Eustatia and Curaçao, he made out his will, in which he

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provided a legacy for a cousin, Levy Marks of Philadelphia. In the spring of 1776 a Levy Marks, presumably the cousin, advertised in *The Pennsylvania Packet* that he had an inn, some houses, and some land for rent. He informed his debtors and creditors that he was leaving town and asked them to come in and settle their accounts. But while still in Philadelphia, in 1777, he sent a petition to the Continental Congress asking for the job of superintending the manufacture of army uniforms. And that same year, back again in Lancaster, he subscribed a sum of money to hire one or more persons to keep a steady courier service between Lancaster and General Washington's army. Two years later he was among those who took the oath of allegiance to the free, sovereign, and independent state of Pennsylvania.

Obviously the "young rogue" Levy Marks is not to be identified with that solid citizen, Levy Marks, the erstwhile tailor. Indeed, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that during this period there was even a third man by the name of Levy Marks. As far back as 1750, Levy Marks, a member of Shearith Israel in New York, was assessed the minimum amount for a seat; and in 1770, he was still in New York, although now dependent on congregational charity. This is definitely not our *young* rogue of 1771.

There were thus three men of this name: one, an old New Yorker; another, Michael's cousin; and the third, our genial young scoundrel who made off with Josephson's goods, and, probably, with the widow from St. Eustatia.

Exactly four months later, Joseph Simon of Lancaster sent his "in-laws" Michael and Barnard Gratz a letter in

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Yiddish, to which an English postscript was added, complaining of another rogue:

Here, Lancaster, Sunday, 10th of the month of Kislew, 532, according to the shorter reckoning [November 17, 1771]. Peace to my beloved son [in-law] and his brother, the distinguished princes and the honorable congregational leaders, the respected and scholarly Yehiel [Michael] and Barnard Gratz—May their Rock and Redeemer guard these distinguished and God-fearing gentlemen and may they and theirs enjoy the blessings of peace:

I cannot refrain from giving you an account of what happened here last Thursday.

At about six o'clock in the evening a man came here with the enclosed letter [of recommendation from a Philadelphia engraver] and described himself as a cousin of Levy's [my son-in-law, Levy Andrew Levy]. He was dressed like a gentleman, with boots and spurs, and he was mounted on a horse. He was accompanied by another man, very neatly dressed, whom he referred to as Master Bailey—he said that he was a lawyer—so Levy told him to put up his horse at Slough's [the innkeeper].

When he returned to Levy's, we examined him closely in the light and found that he had been here two weeks ago. At that time he was dressed in a Ferginny [Virginia] shirt with leggings and moccasins, and Lyon and Master Myers had given him something. We were therefore surprised to see him in such fine array. He then gave Levy the enclosed letter. We thereupon questioned him as to how he had come by the fine clothes and the horse. He told us that Master Abrams [Alexander Abrahams, a clerk of the Gratzes] in Philadelphia had given him the coat and the camisole, and that Master Abraham Franks [a Philadelphia Mason] had lent him the cape, coat, boots, and spurs, and that a certain man in Philadelphia called Lazah (the butcher's son) had given him his hat, wig, shirt,

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and stockings. The last time he was here he wore his own hair. He said he was a barber by trade.

I have forgotten [to say that] Abraham Franks is surety for the horse he was riding. He had hired it for two shillings a day. A certain man in Philadelphia, the son of Wolf the beadle, had given him money for his expenses. He [the rogue] told us that he had been brought up with Levy in the same street in Oxford [England], that his uncle was married to Levy's mother, that he was the son of Hayyim Gast, and that he had a wife and two children in England. When we found out that he had been a convict, I told him to clear out the same evening, and I had nothing more to say to him. Then I went home.

Meanwhile, after I had left, he began to weep before Levy and Lyon, and so they gave him something. (But I did not give him a penny, and I was very glad that I had not given him anything.) Afterwards I let Slough know what birds these two were, and I advised him to beware of them and not keep them over night. But Slough did not take my advice; he let them stay over. Whereupon they certainly did repay him for his kindness; they paid him with counterfeit coin, of the same kind as you will find enclosed in this letter. Therefore, you people ought to be on your guard and treat such birds as they deserve when they turn up in Philadelphia. I believe that the other fellow who was with him, whom he addressed as Master Bailey, is also a Jew.

I am very angry at that old fool of an engraver for giving such birds a letter. He [the crook] had friends enough in Philadelphia who helped him with clothes, money, and a horse. Why did they not keep him with them? Why? Because like begets like! Therefore, if they ever get such guests again, let them keep them there. Let them enjoy themselves with such birds. He told us that they would go to Philadelphia by way of Reading.

With which we close and wish you both health. From me,
your friend, Joseph ben Simeon.

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Please try to get Slough's money for him from these birds. If you can get it, I shall be happy. Slough took the counterfeit money in exchange for a quarter of a moidore [gold coin]. They left Friday morning at five o'clock.

[The following postscript in English was addressed by Levy Andrew Levy to his "in-laws," the Gratzes.]

I am very angry with the engraver for recommending a transport [a convict] to me, and a good for nothing rascal. I never shall countenance such sort, was it even a brother, tho' I believe it all false his being a cousin. I knew him not; very few of those sort reforms, a proof, the behaveour to Slough. He had neither bread nor watter from me, yet his deceetfull lammentations flung me of 10/6. I have taken a resolution that I will hereafter take no more notice of straglers, unless they can perduce a letter of recommendation.

I am gentlem'n,
Y'r h[umble]. s[ervant].
L. And'ew Levy.⁹

When the rogues, who had cozened Colonel Matthias Slough, owner of the tavern the "Swan," out of a gold coin, examined it at their leisure, they may not have been very gleeful, for if Lancaster gossip was well-founded, the worthy Boniface was not unaccustomed to clip the gold coins that came into his possession—close! But then even a clipped coin is better than a counterfeit coin.

Defaulters and crooks were resented bitterly; they were cheats depriving honest men of hard-earned savings which they had scraped together only through toil and drudgery—and they gave the Jew a bad name.

Jews even in a secure position are nearly always fearful. They have their reasons. They are afraid that their own hard-won status will be threatened by the actions of co-

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religionists of lesser culture and of seemingly baser character. Jews are under the impression that the world holds the Jews, as a group, responsible for the derelictions of the individual.

In that same year (1771) the former American merchant Naphtali Hart Myers, as head of The Great Synagogue in London, took the lead in driving Jewish criminals out of England. He successfully urged the Postmaster General to stop providing free transportation for emigrants from the Continent; he and his cohorts induced the Lord Mayor to offer the poor Jews already in England a passport to return whence they had come.

This action of Myers in policing his own people was patterned after the action taken by him and his coworker Naphtali Franks, five years before, in 1766. At that time the two men had offered their assistance to the magistrate, Sir John Fielding of Bow Street, in dealing with Jewish criminal elements. The aroused Jewish leaders excommunicated the evil-doers, expelled some of them from the synagogue, and did everything they could as heads of Ashkenazic Jewry in England to rid the country of "wretches who are a pest to every community." (The Protestants did not, as far as we know, so denounce their own criminal elements. They sat back and let the state ship them to the colonies.)

Scamps and rascals were regarded as real threats by men like Levy, Simon, and Josephson. Less troublesome, although still a sizeable expense, were the impoverished and broken men who were dumped into their midst. These they just as promptly forwarded to the next community. There

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was no attempt, as far as we can see, at social rehabilitation. A case in point was Jacob Musqueto.

He arrived in New York from the Island of St. Eustatia, a distance of about 2,000 miles, and, after throwing himself upon the mercy of the local Jewish community, asked to be sent to the Island of Barbados, only about 200 miles from the spot whence he had just come. With resignation—one might almost say with Christian resignation—and without any reproach as far as the records indicate, the Shearith Israel leaders provided for him for a while. Then they sent this “object of charity” on to Philadelphia, requesting Michael Gratz to collect sufficient funds to dispatch him back to the West Indies.

Whether the unfortunate Mr. Musqueto was a voluntary migrant, it is difficult to say. Jewry in the West Indies may have shipped him to New York just to get rid of him—the Americans no less expeditiously rose to the emergency by giving him a long and peaceful free ride back. (Maybe that was what he really sought!)

But let us not be unjust. It is by no means improbable that the quickest way that our impoverished itinerant could go from St. Eustatia to Barbados—both in the West Indies—was via the long trip to New York. Such was not an unusual route for a merchant going from Jamaica to Surinam, Dutch Guiana. The longest way round was the quickest—though not the shortest—way home!

But there was another type of itinerant who was treated with more consideration than the ubiquitous “objects of charity”: the collector for Palestine. Emerging from the very ends of the earth, as rabbi, scholar, and pious man,

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such a person had to be shown every courtesy and all generosity before he, too, was respectfully but cheerfully forwarded by the relieved community to a sister congregation.

Both paupers and Palestinian emissaries were part of the tradition of Jewish communal life and were accepted with equanimity. But businessmen who defrauded their creditors were beyond the fraternal pale. When, in 1760, red-faced, black-bearded Myers Levy of Spotswood in East Jersey departed with his wife and five children—and £2,300 worth of unpaid supplies—the Gratzes and the Frankses and their Gentile fellow-victims offered \$800 for his return with the goods, but only \$50 if he were brought back sans property.

There was no question of what they thought of this Levy; it is difficult to know what they thought of another Levy who, in the same decade, gathered to his bosom the absconding wife of an irate citizen from the same colony of New Jersey. *The Pennsylvania Journal* of November 5, 1769, carried the dour announcement that John Farnsworth was no longer responsible for the debts of Deborah his wife: "She likes the said Levy better than me . . . intends to live with him as he will maintain her as a gentlewoman. I have waited on Mr. Levy respecting the affair from whom I have received no other satisfaction than insolent language. . . ."

The Mr. Levy who received Mr. Farnsworth's wife was no "criminal" measured by the standards of his day; he may have been in love, and love, we are told, covers a multitude of sins. But the sputtering letter of Joseph Simon, which we have just read, clearly indicates that the Jewry of his day

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was not devoid of unvarnished criminals. Among the thousands of redemptioners and indentured servants who were shipped to this country, among the military and political criminals transported here, were many scoundrels and petty villains condemned to slave in the colonies as bonded servants until their terms were up. Evidently Levy Andrew Levy's "cousin" and Mr. Bailey, "the lawyer," were two transported convicts who had either served their terms here as indentured workers or had escaped from their lawful masters and were on a tour of petty thievery. (The name "Bailey" may well have been an unwitting reminiscence of Old Bailey, the Central Criminal Court, in London!) There may have been little excuse for past criminality by bondsmen of this type; but there was justification, only too frequently, for flight from their present servitude.

It has been estimated that at least one-half of the immigrants who came to these shores in colonial days, Irish, Scotch, Germans, and others, came as indentured servants. Some of them found good homes, others were subject to brutal mistreatment. Two days after the battle of Lexington, on April 21, 1775, while the country was ringing with the cry of "Liberty or Death," Mr. Purdie's *Virginia Gazette* announced a substantial reward for the capture and return of seven English servants who had escaped from their masters in Harford County, Maryland. Among these fugitives was the Jew, Abraham Peters, about twenty-eight years of age, about five feet nine inches high, black hair and beard, of a swarthy complexion, lame, his left hand somewhat perished—and talks very good Dutch.

Peters and his friends and dozens of others who were hid-

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ing in the fields and skulking in the forests in April, 1775, may well have been no criminals, but poverty-stricken men who had sold themselves to gain passage to a land where they hoped to achieve the liberty and the opportunity that were denied them at home.

Certainly, one of the reasons why Joseph Simon was so irritated by the impostor Levy Marks was the fact that Matthias Slough was the victim. Simon and Slough knew each other very well; they did business together during the French and Indian War.

Simon was the outstanding Jew in Lancaster, proud—we may be sure—of the fact that his Christian acquaintances referred to him as a “principal merchant,” an “eminent trader,” “a man fair in his dealings and honest from principle.” He was one of the two men who laid out the Jewish cemetery, and he it was who established the synagogue—no doubt only a modest room in his own home, graced by a portable ark standing against the east wall.

Occasional services were held in Lancaster. On a holy-day, when the heads of the different families were in town, when Simon and his Jewish sons-in-law foregathered with their Jewish clerks, and an extra Jew or two had come in from Conestoga, Reading, or York, they must have had a good-sized congregation—but those occasions cannot have been too frequent.

It is doubtful if they held services every Sabbath. This is not to imply that some of these Lancastrians were not Sabbath observers. Simon, for instance, kept kosher and would do no business on his day of rest, as the Rev. David Mc-

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Clure discovered when he passed through town on his way to the Muskingum Valley to bring the gospel to the benighted Indians. When Mr. McClure presented an order for money on the Sabbath to Simon, the latter said to the clergyman and his companion: "Gentlemen, to-day is my Sabbath, and I do not do business in it; if you will please to call tomorrow, I will wait on you." To this McClure responded that he as a Christian could not do any business on his Sabbath, on Sunday. Simon realized the difficulty and, in spite of the fact that in so doing he violated the Jewish law, called in his neighbor Dr. Boyd and asked him to handle the financial transaction for him. McClure's "gratitude" for this kindness is recorded in his diary: "The Jews in general are said to be very strict and punctual in the observance of some of the traditionary ceremonies of their law, but hesitate not to defraud, when opportunity presents. Like their predecessors, the Pharisees, they tythe the mint, annis, and cummin, and neglect the weightier matters of the law, as judgement, mercy, and faith. They strain at a gnat and swallow a camel."

Whenever Simon chanced to be in Philadelphia of a Saturday, he could always join the local congregants at their devotions. Although tradition has it that prayers were heard in a Philadelphia synagogue in the 1740's, one may well doubt that regular services were held during that decade. There is a Philadelphia tradition—for what it is worth—that no permanent congregation could be established because the original settlers, followers of the German or Polish rite, could not agree on a common liturgy.

Pastor Henry Melchior Mühlberg, father of the Lu-

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theran Church in America, tells us that there were only a handful of Jews in town, and they were "practicing atheists." As a true Pietist in the Francke tradition, Mühlenberg was also an evangelist. He was interested in converting the children of Israel, and his colleague Callenberg, back at the University of Halle, kept him supplied with Yiddish missionary tracts. (As a student of the Bible in the original tongue, he was quite familiar with the Hebrew script.) Something had to be done about the Jews. It is true, so he preached to one of his religious classes, they are the cousins of our Lord, but only after the flesh, not in the spirit. Unless these Jews believed in Jesus, there was no salvation for them; they were eternally damned. No man to delay when precious souls were at stake, Mühlenberg asked a friend of his, a good Christian, to approach the outstanding Jew in town and to offer him some tracts on the true Messiah. The Jew who was solicited—either Nathan Levy or David Franks—sent the pastor the following message: "The most representative men in the city, with whom I associate, admit that their Messiah . . . was an impostor. Give your writings to these gentlemen. I have no intention or time to read them."

It was not until the late winter of 1760 that the Philadelphia congregation bestirred itself and took on a new lease of life, probably under the prodding of the Gratz clan. In January of the following year Jacob Henry wrote from New York to Barnard Gratz that he had heard that a synagogue was to be built. Henry was frankly incredulous and was convinced that "Eternity is nigh at hand." Ironically he speculated whether the ritual would follow the London

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Ashkenazic, Prague, or Polish pattern; he implied, indeed, that the Philadelphia ritual would be a Quaker one—that is, none at all. There would be no organized synagogal community. Desiring, however, to end his letter on a serious note, he expressed the hope that they would really accomplish something: “I wish you may go through your good works; and *I wish* myself the pleasure to see it built.”

Jacob Henry's skepticism was justified only in part. While no building was erected at that time, the congregation did perk up. A messenger was sent to New York that fall (1761) to bring back a Scroll of the Law as a permanent loan. Ten years later, then at least a dozen families strong, the congregation determined to open a synagogue. Through the agency of a Mr. Myers, it secured another Scroll from Jonas Phillips, a New York merchant.

A silver pointer—the *yad*—was needed for the Reader, and also, of course, prayer books, *tefillot*. All these were secured that same year, as we discover in letters which Barnard Gratz sent to two of his London agents, Jacob Barnett and Michael Samson. Barnett, an unsuccessful printer, supplied the prayer books, in response to a letter dated October 15, 1771. In the same letter, Gratz complained that the dark purple and deep red ribbons which he had ordered had arrived, but were light blue and half pink. Barnett, it would seem, had failed to check the color of the goods before they were packed for shipment. Gratz went on to warn Barnett that he did not think that there was a market in the colonies for such items as rose water and “hungry” [Hungary] water, but that ready-made shoes might possibly sell in small lots. Let us hope that the

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juniper berries [for gin?] which Barnett sent Gratz were of good quality. (One gathers the impression—it may be an unjustified one—that Barnett was just a little bit of a *shlemiel*—a “nebb.” Michael Samson, however, was certainly no *shlemiel*; he was one of the leaders of Ashkenazic London Jewry and was soon to become a warden of The Great Synagogue).

On the same day that Gratz wrote to Barnett he sent a letter also to Samson, his banking correspondent for the nonce, asking him to settle for purchases made for the Philadelphia synagogue. Gratz's note is interesting because it is his own entry into his letter book, and had not been whipped into shape by a clerk. It reveals his knowledge of the vernacular. Evidently, in spite of his having lived for two decades under the British flag, his English still left something to be desired.

Philad'a, Oct. 15th, 1771.

Mr. Michael Samson,

D'r Sir:

Your fav'r of the 6th June I duly rece'd and was glad to hear of your and y'r family's good health, which gave me a great deal satisfaction and pleasur.

In regard the *sefer torah* [“Scroll of the Law”] have only to say and to lett you know that we have the one you man-tioned to me, that did belong to Mr. Jonas Philips from New York, from Mr. Myers, as Mr. Philips order'd, for which you will be kind enough to pay Mr. Philips for it. I suppose he will not charge too much for it, as he asked me but seven guenes, I think, for it. But shuld he ask somthing more now, you must pay him. Mr. Myers of New York, I heard, told som-body he thinks it will be nine guenes, but hope Mr. Philips will

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lett it goe for the price he asked me for it, as above. However, I live [leave] this to you to agree with him.

You need not to send the silver *yad* ["pointer"] I mentioned to you before, as we had one made a present for the *shool* from New York. And shuld be glad if you would be kind enough, after paying Mr. Philips for the *sefer torah*, and if mony enough in your hands, you would pay Mr. Jacob Barnett seventy-five shillings sterling for some *tefillot* he sent me hear. And pleas to lett me know neeta [the net balance] that I might know how our acc'ts stand, as should not like to trouble you without proffit and to advance money [for me].

I am very much obliged to you for the trouble you have taken in forwd'g the letters to Amsterdam, and wish sincerely it was in my power to serve you or any of yo'r family, which would give me great pleasure. And should you or any of y'r family incline to venture something this way in trade, shall allways be glad to serve them and advicing them what would best answer this way.

I have now only to wish you and Mrs. Samson a great deal of joy on y'r family increase with a son. Hope Mrs. Samson and y'r d'r children are well, which is the senceer wishes from, d'r sir,

Yo'r most hum'le servent,
B. G[ratz].¹⁰

Thus the congregation gradually acquired the inventory of cult utensils which it needed to carry on a proper and attractive service.

Among the Jewish settlers at this time in Philadelphia was a transplanted New Yorker, Jonas Phillips. Jonas was an American patriot, as we shall see; he had every reason to be one. He had emigrated from Germany when he was not yet twenty years of age, coming from one of the twin-

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villages Alten or Gross Buseck in Upper Hesse, not far from Giessen. With a chance to leave, it would have been foolish for him to remain in Hesse. In all the Hessian states of that time Jews paid exorbitant discriminatory taxes; in one of them they were excluded from most crafts and forms of commerce. Jonas went to London—where, no doubt, he Anglicized his name Feibush or Phoebus to Phillips—and then sailed, in 1756, for Charlestown, South Carolina, on the “Charming Nancy” with Moses Lindo, an expert in the indigo trade, who was taking him along as a clerk or as a servant.

He remained but a short time in Charlestown and then struck north. By 1759 we find him up the Hudson at Albany, a freeman of the city, bartering groceries, liquor, and drygoods for furs, and catering also to the military headed toward Canada; by 1761 he was back in New York, opposite the Fort, doing business with the soldiers again, we may be sure. The following year, 1762, in Philadelphia for the occasion, this twenty-six-year-old German immigrant married sixteen-year-old Rebecca Mendez Machado, a Sephardic Jewess, the daughter of a former *hazzan* of Shearith Israel.

The next fall, the first of their twenty-one children was born. The children came quite regularly, most of them survived, and they needed food. In 1765, after having become an insolvent debtor, Phillips accepted the position of *shohet* for Shearith Israel and kept the post till 1769. He was paid £35 a year, and although he complained that he received no perquisites, the *shohet* of that day usually did receive the tongues of the animals he killed. He almost lost this job

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in 1767 when he carelessly left his pinchers lying around. That instrument was used to stamp the lead kosher mark on the meat of the animals he had slaughtered. Anyone could have used it to put a kosher seal on an unfit piece of meat! He was given another chance, and the following year he even dared to ask for an increase in salary. He got it: the officers gave him a grant of £10 for firewood—and then they immediately revoked it.

Things seem to have picked up for him in 1769, for he was then given the freedom of the city of New York. He had business relations with Moses M. Hays in Newport, to whom he described himself as of a “poor but honest family.” In those years he probably still had more downs than ups. Now that he was a recognized denizen of the city, he felt that he could strike out completely for himself. He resigned his position as *shohet* in the winter of 1769-70.

But, in order to help keep the pot boiling, he took a sick man in as a paying guest at the request of the community, which boarded out its impoverished and sick who had no homes of their own. For this he received fourteen shillings a week. The deal was made with Isaac Moses, who was then an important officer of the congregation. Jonas was glad, no doubt, of the extra income now that he was about to surrender his job as *shohet*, and, perhaps due to the boarder, he managed that same year to save enough to send some money home to his mother. It was his wife, we may rest assured, who took care of the sick man. After all, a young healthy woman of twenty-four, who had only three or four children of her own, could easily assume the care of

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another person, even if he was sick. Hard work certainly did not hurt her; we know that she lived to be eighty-five years of age.

Three years later, in 1773, Phillips experienced some obscure misfortune which severely threatened his status and touched upon his integrity, for we find him soliciting, successfully, a certificate of good character from his former employer, Moses Lindo. By 1775 he was settled in Philadelphia, doing business as a retailer and auctioneer, moving around from location to location, and striving to attract custom by extensive advertising. He sold everything from broadcloth to bacon. He dealt in pork—but one may rest assured that he never ate it himself, for he was an observant Jew and had a good knowledge of rabbinic law.

In July, 1776, he sent a letter to his relative and business correspondent in Holland, Gumpel Samson. Along with the letter went a copy of the Declaration of Independence. Because of the British blockade, Phillips sent his letter by way of the Dutch island of St. Eustatia. In it he enclosed a draft for his mother and hinted, rather broadly, as one might to a relative, that money was to be made by running the blockade. He thought he could fool the British by writing in Yiddish. He fooled only himself: they intercepted the mail, and it lies today in the British Public Record Office with the sage notation of an archivist that it was written in some shorthand! Jonas had been away from home for many years and flattered himself that he wrote a better English than Yiddish. Maybe he did—but there is nothing wrong with the original Yiddish of his letter:

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Philadelphia, Sunday, 12 Menahem Ab, 536, according to the shorter reckoning [July 28, 1776].

Peace to my beloved master, my kinsman, the eminent and wealthy, wise and discerning God-fearing man, whose honored, glorious name is Mr. Gumpel—May his Rock and Redeemer protect him and all his family! Peace!

As it is not always possible to send a letter to England on account of the war in America, I must therefore write by way of St. Eustatia.

I have not yet had any answer to a letter of May, 1775, when I sent my master a bill of exchange for ten pounds sterling for my mother. Should that letter not have arrived, then the enclosed third bill of exchange will obtain the money, and please send it to my mother, long life to her. Should it, however, have already been obtained, you need not return the bill of exchange again, and a hint to the wise will suffice [Use it to buy goods for me to run the blockade!].

As no English goods can come over at all, and much money can be earned with Holland goods if one is willing to take a chance, should you have a friend who will this winter acquaint himself with the goods mentioned below, I can assure you that four hundred per cent is to be earned thereby. I could write my meaning better in English than Yiddish.

The war will make all England bankrupt. The Americans have an army of 100,000 soldiers [literally: "tough guys"], and the English only 25,000 and some ships. The Americans have already made themselves [free] like the States of Holland. The enclosed is a declaration [of independence] of the whole country. How it will end, the blessed God knows. The war does me no damage, thank God!

I would like to send you a bill of exchange, but it is not possible for me to get it. If my master, long life to him, will disburse for me 100 gulden to my mother, I can assure you that just as soon as a bill of exchange on St. Eustatia can be had, I will, with thanks, honestly pay you. I have it, thank

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God, in my power, and I know that my mother, long life to her, needs it very much; and I beg of my master, long life to him, to write me at once an answer, addressed as herein written.

There is no further news. My wife and children, long life to her and them, together send you many greetings and wish you good health up to one hundred years.

Your friend, to serve. From me, Jonah, son of Mr. Feibush [Phoebus]—the memory of the righteous is a blessing—of Buseck,

Jonas Phillips.

[Address all goods sent:]

To

Mr. Jonas Phillips in Philadelphia to the care of Mr. Samuel Curson, merchant in St. Eustatia.

Goods that will sell to advantage in this place. All sorts of coarce and fine white linen, Russia sheetings, coarce white thread, ravens duck, Russia sail duck, oznabrigs [coarse linen made of flax and tow], drillings, check linens, Harlem stripes, thomoise [shomoise? = chamois type cloth], ivory combs, needles, pinns, drugs and medicines, sewing silks, worsted stockings, large, striped woollen blankets, different sorts of woollen goods for the winter season.

To

Mr. Gumpel Samson, merchant in Amsterdam, by way of St. Eustatia.

St. Eustatia, 24 Sep'r, 1776, Rece'd and forwarded by

Your hum'e serv't,
Sam. Curson.¹¹

Less than two years later, Phillips and sundry other Philadelphia merchants did succeed in bringing a cargo of goods through the British blockade. It was an expensive load, for the insurance alone ran to fifty per cent of the

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cost, and they paid for everything in sterling. But, apparently, they were to derive no profit from this bold venture, for the goods were taken by the Clothier and Quartermaster Generals for the use of the army. In the meantime, the same goods had advanced forty per cent at the European source. Phillips and his friends now petitioned Congress to bear all these facts in mind when they set a price for these valuable wares. When and if they were paid, rest assured it was in Continental currency!

Chapter 4

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IN his July, 1776, letter to Amsterdam, Jonas Phillips had said of the war: "How it will end, the blessed God knows." He certainly could not have been very optimistic that winter as he received the news of the defeat at Long Island, the withdrawal of Washington's troops from the city of New York, the mishaps of Benedict Arnold at Lake Champlain, the surrender of Fort Washington and Fort Lee, and the steady retreat across New Jersey toward the Pennsylvania border. It looked as if Philadelphia itself was doomed, and no doubt Jonas wondered what he himself would do if the British entered the city.

At that time another Jew, a member of a prominent Philadelphia family, who had been living in Baltimore since the early '70's, sent a hasty note to his well-known friend Robert Morris offering him sanctuary in Maryland. This hospitable businessman was Benjamin Levy. (One of his sons was named Robert Morris Levy.)

The Pennsylvania Levys, whom we have already met through David Franks's partner, Nathan, included also

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Samson and Benjamin Levy. Benjamin married Nathan's daughter, Rachel.

Like Nathan Levy, Samson and Benjamin moved in the best social circles. Samson was one of the subscribers of the first Philadelphia dancing "Assembly" in 1748. Both Samson and Benjamin, together with eight other Jews, were among the approximately 400 merchants who signed the 1765 agreement not to import goods from England until the Stamp Act was repealed. Robert Morris, whose firm was Willing, Morris, & Co., was also among the signers.

Much more than today, social relationships in old Pennsylvania followed closely in the wake of business deals, certainly as far as Jews were concerned. The Frankses and the Levys traded with the Hamiltons, the Shippens, and the Plumsteds, took their men as partners, danced with their women-folk—and intermarried.

When Benjamin Levy lost his money in 1768, in part no doubt due to the looting by the Indians during the early days of the French and Indian War, he was compelled to make an assignment of his assets to a group of Philadelphia merchants, some of whom were his social intimates, fellow-members of the aristocratic "Assembly." Business was, even then, always business.

Shortly thereafter Benjamin moved to Baltimore, hoping, doubtlessly, to take advantage of the growing West India trade and to improve his financial condition in that thriving city of 5,000.

There had been a "Jewes store" in Maryland in the seventeenth century. Benjamin, however, was one of the first permanent Jewish settlers in Baltimore, although individuals

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of his persuasion had been naturalized in the colony as early as 1757. At the most, however, there could not have been more than a dozen Jewish families in Baltimore during the 1770's. True, a cemetery was purchased in 1786, but no real Jewish community came into being until the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

There was little to attract a Jew to Maryland beyond its commercial opportunities. Even the so-called Toleration Act of 1649 extended its benefits only to those who believed in Jesus Christ. In 1659 an early Jewish settler in Maryland, Jacob Lumbrozo, was arrested under this Act and charged with "blesphemy ag'st Our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ."

Lumbrozo, "the Jew doctor," did not start this trouble, or at least so he said. He became involved in a religious argument when questioned how he could deny that Jesus Christ was the savior in view of his resurrection from the dead and the miracles he had performed. Lumbrozo coolly answered that miracles had been performed by magic, as Moses and the Egyptians could well testify. As for the resurrection, well, the disciples had stolen and hidden his body. He told one disputant, who insisted that Jesus was the Messiah, that he was only a man, a human being, and when asked by another disputant if he thought that Christ was a necromancer, he said nothing but only laughed.

It was Lumbrozo's good fortune that he never had to stand trial, but was released under a general amnesty proclaimed a few days after he was arrested. Otherwise he might have lost both life and property, for blasphemy was no joking matter then, or even a half century later. In 1697,

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an eighteen-year-old student of the University of Edinburgh, Thomas Aikenhead, was executed on this charge in Scotland. A year later a law was almost passed in the English Parliament subjecting Jews to the older act "for the more effective suppressing of blasphemy and prophane-ness." Had this law been passed and implemented, Jews would have been compelled to leave England.

In Maryland the Church of England was "established" in 1692-1702, and Jews were effectively barred from political life. The disability was preserved in a series of laws, promulgated in the years 1715-16, which opened offices of trust only to those who could take the oath "upon the true faith of a Christian." The constitution of 1776 continued these disabilities, thus offering full civil and political equality to those only who declared their belief in the Christian religion and thereby denying Jews their complete religious liberty. Indeed, it was not until 1826 that Maryland was ready to enfranchise its Jews.

Benjamin Levy, in all likelihood, was little concerned, in the 1770's, about these civil and religious disabilities. He was not greatly interested in matters Jewish. He was certainly not so orthodox as some of his fellow Baltimoreans. In 1782, Ezekiel Levy of Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia came to Baltimore on a business trip. He was discovered in the act of shaving on the Sabbath by Isaac Abrahams, one of the Jews in town. Isaac relayed the news to Mordecai M. Mordecai, then in Baltimore. The latter—a distiller of Lithuanian birth who maintained membership in the Philadelphia congregation—reported this offense to the head of the synagogue, Jonas Phillips, and Jonas brought the matter be-

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fore his congregational board. But, after carefully considering the charges, the board finally dismissed them for lack of corroborating testimony.

Benjamin Levy would certainly not have been interested in informing on an errant Philadelphia Jew; there is no record that he was a contributor to any Jewish congregation, and it is to be doubted that he was. In fact, the members of the Levy family still left in Philadelphia were not active any longer in synagogal affairs; some, indeed, had accepted Christianity. When Rachel and Benjamin Levy died in Baltimore, they were both buried in an Episcopalian cemetery. But such burial is no final proof that they were no longer Jews; as late as 1786 Benjamin took oath on the Five Books of Moses.

It was no doubt in his Philadelphia days that Benjamin Levy had first become acquainted with Robert Morris, who was then already a successful businessman. Later, during the war, the Baltimore merchant stood ready to co-operate with Congressman Morris in raising funds which the Continental Congress so desperately needed. In December, 1776, Levy was authorized to sign bills of credit emitted by the Congress.

This is the note which Robert Morris received from Levy in the trying days when Washington was retreating into Pennsylvania, and it seemed that the fall of Philadelphia was imminent:

My dear Morris:

It is said that if the Congress are oblig'd to leave Philadelphia, they intend coming to this town. We have two very good rooms on our first floor upstairs, which we purpose for

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you and Mrs. Morris. We have one spare bed, our house is good and large, and think if you can be supply'd with bedding from Mr. Aquilla Hall, who is but about 25 miles from hence, we could accommodate all your children and three or four servants, having other apartments that will do exceeding well. But sincerely pray that you may not be under the necessity of leaving your home and that we shall soon hear of the enemy' retireing. As these are not times for compliments and ceremony, I need not give you assurances of making you welcome as I ever profess'd myself,

Your truly affectionate humb. serv[an]'t,
Benjamin Levy.

Rachel [my wife] joins me in compliments to Mrs. Morris.
Baltimore, Friday, 13 Decb'r, 1776.¹²

Another Philadelphia merchant who signed the 1765 nonimportation agreement, along with Benjamin Levy, was Mathias Bush. He was a brother-in-law of Barnard Gratz—he and Barnard had married two sisters named Myers. This marriage also brought Bush into the Joseph Simon family; Simon had married a cousin of the two sisters. It was not the Gratz-Simon connection that brought Bush into close touch with the wealthy and prominent Levy-Franks clan. The families had known each other back in London.

As early as 1748 Mathias Bush was a contributor to the New York synagogue, but by the next year he was in Philadelphia, engaged in trade and commerce, as a naturalized British subject. When the French and Indian War broke out, he was kept busy supplying the Pennsylvania military forces with firearms, munitions, and similar sundries. He was an observant Jew and participated in 1761 in the borrowing of the Pentateuchal scroll from Shearith

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Israel of New York. (At least two of those who signed for the *Torah* ["the Scroll of the Law"] were not actually living in Philadelphia. Therefore some historians have suggested that the *Torah* was for use either in Lancaster or in Reading. Reading is quite improbable, since it had only one or two Jewish families; Lancaster is less improbable. We are inclined to regard Philadelphia, the largest of these cities, as the place most likely to have housed the *Torah*, since we saw above that the congregation at this time was developing some vigor.)

Evidently the small Jewish group in Philadelphia was being augmented in the 1750's and 1760's by a steady flow of eager immigrants. By 1769—the year in which Bush became a partner of David Franks in the candle business—there were enough "new Jews" to create trouble.

With rare exception, Jews have always resented Jewish newcomers. The older element, even when it shared the same ritual, stemmed from the same ethnic stock, and hailed from the same distant province as the more recent immigrants, nearly always looked askance at them. The newcomers, for their part, were resentful of the snobbery and prosperity of the older group.

All the frustrations which Jews experienced in the world outside them they vented internally in bitter personal quarrels and mutual recriminations. Before the Dutch Jew, Leon Norden, died in Savannah in the 1790's, he specified that "None of the Sheftalls need be present" at the funeral.

Family and business jealousies and private feuds were behind much of the synagogal dissension. Religious "differences" played only a minor part in the clashes of colonial

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days. The Polish or Germanic rite differed somewhat from the Spanish rite, but such differences should not be over-emphasized. Moreover, wealth had a way of wiping out such religious disparities. Indeed, it is not unusual for the examination of a squabble in the "Spanish-Portuguese" synagogue to disclose that it was German Jews bickering with *Landsleute*. Wrangling, quarreling, petty sniping, were common in all Jewish pious associations in all lands, and certainly the Philadelphia Jewish congregation was no exception. (It was no different in the little Christian conventicles throughout the colonies!)

We do not know the substance of a struggle between two groups in Philadelphia at this time when their total number did not exceed twenty or thirty families. It is from Mathias Bush that we learn that there was trouble between the older and the new migration, and that one year the obstreperous newcomers even held separate services during the High Holydays. Mathias, of course, sided with the "old-timers"; he had been in this country now for a whole generation, at least since 1742, and he, too, looked down upon the more recent immigrants.

Curiously, the leader of the revolt of the "new Jews" chanced to be one of the older settlers, the Hebrew teacher. The newcomers documented their resentment against the older group in typically ghetto style by circulating a pasquil in which our old friend Joseph Simon was lampooned. When Barnard Gratz was in London, in 1769, he received some word of the affair in a letter from Bush. The "new Jews" were a "plague." "Pray prevent what is in your power to hinder any more of that sort to come!"

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Such intramural Jewish squabbles and jealousies were nothing new in Jewish life. Six years before immigrant Bush wrote to immigrant Gratz to keep the other immigrant Jews out of this country, the Portuguese Jews in Bordeaux succeeded in inducing the king of France to sign a measure expelling German and Avignonese Jews from Bordeaux. Though this decree was not implemented, it is a grim reminder of the type of brotherly love that only too often obtained in some Jewish communities.

Because Mathias had a son named Solomon, one might with confidence hazard the guess that the surname "Bush" (*B'SH, Ben Shelomoh*) derives from an ancestor named after the wise king of Jerusalem. The guess is wrong. Mathias' Hebrew cryptogram, signed to the 1765 Philadelphia nonimportation agreement, reads, "From B. City (*MB'SH, from B. Stadt*)," obviously some town or hamlet in Germany or Bohemia.

Solomon Bush, a son of Mathias, was appointed a Deputy Adjutant General of the Pennsylvania State Militia on July 5, 1777, by the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania. A few months later, in September, his thigh was shattered by a bullet in a skirmish—no doubt near the Brandywine—and he was carried, badly wounded, to Mathias' house in Chestnut Hill, near Philadelphia. In October, the month after General Sir William Howe took Philadelphia, Bush was discovered and made prisoner. The unfortunate officer described his plight in the following letter to his friend, Henry Lazarus, a merchant in Fredrick Towne (Winchester), Virginia:

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Chesnut Hill,
15th Nov'r, 1777.

D'r Sir:

As Mr. [Joseph] Simons tells me that he is going to your town, cannot omit leting my good freind know how we all are, being sensible it will give him satisfaction to hear from his freinds.

I suppose you heard of my being wounded the 18th of Sept'r [a week after the Battle of the Brandywine] when with difficulty was bro't home in a most deplorable condition with my thigh broke, and the surgeons pronounced my wound mortal. Seven days after, the enemy came, who treated our family with the utmost respect. They did not take the least trifle from us, though our neighbours, the poor Tories, lost every thing. Howe's march this way has made many Wigs.

I was conceal'd after the British Army came here twenty-two days and shou'd have got clear, but a vilain gave information of me, when [whereupon] I was waited on by an officer who took my parole. When [whereupon] I wrote a line to the [British] commanding officer leting him know of my being a prisoner and requesting a surgeon which he imedeately comply'd with, and was attended every day during their stay at this place.

I am, thank God, geting beter and have the satisfaction to have my limb perfectly strait. My wishes are to be able to get satisfaction and revenge the rongs of my injured country. I wish you joy of the success of our troops to the northward [Burgoyne surrendered to the colonials at Saratoga, on October 17th] and hope to tell you New York is ours before long. The [English] shiping is not got up to Philad'a though this is the 9th time of their attacking the Fort [the English took Fort Mifflin the next day]. There is a cannonade whilst I am writeing; shou'd they not be able to carry the Fort their stay in Philad'a will be but short.

As it grows late and am seting in bed writeing, remain, with

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my best wishes to Mr. and Mrs. Lazarus, Uncle Levy, and the
worthy Miss Brandla [your daughter],

Your most affection'e friend and hbl'e serv't,
Sol'n Bush.

My parents' best wishes to you all. Pray pres't my comp's to
Col. Johnson, Mrs. Charlton, and family.¹³

As an officer on parole it was necessary for Bush to re-
port to the British. On one such occasion—apparently while
receiving medical attention at enemy headquarters—he was
an unobserved witness to a civilian's bringing a letter to
General Howe. Learning that this civilian was an agent
carrying messages to the British from a spy at Washington's
headquarters, he forwarded that important bit of news
to General Washington through General John Armstrong.

Bush's wound in his thigh never healed thoroughly; he
was ill for years. In April, 1779, he appealed for financial
aid to the federal Board of War. When help was not forth-
coming from that source, he wrote in September to
Timothy Matlack, the fighting—and spending—Quaker,
who was secretary to the Supreme Executive Council of
Pennsylvania:

Chesnut Hill, 27 Septem'r, 1779.

Dear Sir:

Pardon the liberty I take in troubling you with these few
lines the purport of which as I well know you to be a friend
to the Sons of Freedom, especially those who have been un-
fortunate in the service of their country. I have, my d[ea]'r
sir, lain in a most deplorable condition ever since I had the
pleasure of seeing you in Lancaster, and still continue in a
helpless state. This, with the expensive times, compells me to
petition the Honb'le [Supreme Executive] Coun'ill to direct

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me where I shall apply to have my acco't [for m]y pay and rations settled, as I have through [my] great indisposition been unable to apply for [the] same since my appointment. As I am still a prisoner on parole and in the service of the State [of Pennsylvania], have petition'd the Council that I may draw my pay and rations (untill exchanged) monthly. I therefore beg your assistance in forwarding the same which will ever be gratefully acknowlidg'd by, d'r sir,

Y'r mo. obd. hbl. ser't,
Sol'n Bush.

The Hon'ble Timothy Matlack, Esqr.¹⁴

Finally, on October 20, 1779, the Supreme Executive Council of the state declared, after studying his case, that he had distinguished himself by his brilliant military career, especially in the winter of 1776 "when the service was critical and hazardous," and therefore recommended to the Board of War, in charge of army matters, that he obtain pay and rations equal to his rank. He was now a major; a week later he was made a lieutenant-colonel, thus becoming the highest ranking Jewish officer in a combat unit of the Continental army.

Although Bush was able to contribute a tidy little sum to the synagogue building fund in 1782, he may have been in need of assistance, for in 1785 the Pennsylvania Council, now under the presidency of Benjamin Franklin, awarded him a pension.

Like so many other veterans, Solomon Bush found it hard in postwar days to adjust himself to the humdrum routine of the prosaic world of peace. He was eager for a government appointment. And he was convinced that the sacrifices he had made and the sufferings he had undergone

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entitled him to consideration at the hands of his old comrades in Pennsylvania and of his old commanding officer, President Washington.

Modesty ill becomes a man conscious of his own worth. Solomon made several efforts to obtain an appointment to public office. In 1780 he appealed in vain to Congress for the post of secretary to the Board of Treasury; in 1784 he turned to the Supreme Executive Council of his state, applying for the position of health officer of the Port of Philadelphia, and in 1793 to George Washington for the post of naval officer for the same port. Letters of recommendation for this latter post stressed his acquaintance with the merchants of Philadelphia; his appointment, they said, would give general satisfaction. Shortly before his death—which was the result of his wound, as it was commonly believed—Bush had no hesitation in writing to the President (1795), petitioning him for the position of postmaster general to succeed Colonel Timothy Pickering, who had entered upon his new post as secretary of war.

When Colonel Bush was asking his friends to support his candidacy for the federal berth of naval officer for the port of Philadelphia, he had just returned to his home town after an intermittent stay of several years in London, from the late 1780's to 1793. He had been summoned to straighten out the affairs of his father, who had died a few years earlier. It was his duty, as the oldest son, to look after the family.

In Philadelphia, conditions were bad, both generally and for Solomon in particular. The yellow fever was taking its toll. Mathias Bush had left three orphan daughters, all

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young, whose support devolved upon Solomon. In addition, he had to support a brother who had been imprisoned by the British, had fought in the campaign under General Nathanael Greene in the South, and had finally lost his reason. Added to all this he had a wife and family of his own. The task of earning a livelihood, the new responsibilities, and the distress occasioned by the reopening of his old wound made it necessary for him to secure some sort of suitable, pleasant, but light work—a government position. Hence his several efforts.

Still another effort, an earlier one, is worth pausing over. While in London, Colonel Bush had been Dr. Bush, a practitioner of medicine. Just when he acquired his training is not known, but if we may accept his word, he had built up a good clientele in the English capital. But his heart was not in medicine; he was always the Revolutionary soldier and staunch American, proud of the fact that he was one who had "fought and bled in the service of his country."

Bush was one of the leaders of the "patriots" in London, a group of Americans and Englishmen who were devoted republicans and watched with fascinated anticipation and sympathy the unfolding drama of the French Revolution. When Bush heard, in July, 1789, that Captain Watson, commander of a New York ship, had been seized together with part of his crew, on the charge that the men were natives of Great Britain, he at once stepped into the breach. On behalf of the American government, which then, seemingly, had no diplomatic or consular representative in the country, he approached the English authorities and made a vigorous protest. (This case of Captain Watson was one of

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the early instances of visit and search of American boats in port and of the impressment of their sailors. By the spring of the following year this abuse had become so patent that Washington sent Gouverneur Morris from France to ask the English, among other things, to stop boarding American vessels. Morris warned them that the consequences in the United States might be serious. The War of 1812 is eloquent testimony that he was not exaggerating.)

The Watson ship and crew were released, largely through the exertions of Bush. The Colonel was so elated that he sat down, in August, 1789, and reported the good news to the President. In the back of his mind was the conviction that he had demonstrated his capacity to serve as a representative of his country: "From my acquaintance and connection w'th personages of the first consequence in this country," he had written the President in an earlier letter, "I doubt not of rendering my country many services. Believe I have nothing in view but the prosperity of America." Here is the letter in which Bush suggests rather pointedly his availability for appointment:

London, 5th August, 1789.

I did myself the honour to address your Excellency a few days since, congratulating you on the happy event of your appointment to the Chief Magistracy of the United States, a country to establish whose liberties I have bled in her cause, and now feel happy in her prospects in having one to preside over her liberties for whose welfare and felicity I daily offer up my most fervent prayers.

I took the liberty to mention to your Excellency the seizure of the ship commanded by Capt. Watson belonging to New York, and am happy to say by a spirited exertion and due rep-

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resentation the ship is again liberated. From this event and a number of American seamen daily coming to this metropolis, it points out the necessity of a minister or consuls being appointed for the United States.

From my connection in this kingdom, I think it wou'd be in my power to serve my country shou'd they think proper to confer a deplomatic appointment on me. Believe I do not speak from interested or picuniary principles, as I will undertake to serve my country from the same principles I step'd forward to the field.

I am happy to find the warm affection between the people of this country and their former bretheren, the Americans, residing here, which is a pleasing presage of the happy union which every good man wishes to take place between the two countries.

With every mark of sincere respect and true affection, I beg leave to subscribe,

Your Excellency's most obd't faithfull hbl. ser't
S. Bush.

His Excellency
Gen'l Washington.¹⁵

It was November before Washington's secretary found time to answer the Colonel's two letters and to express the President's appreciation of his proper and spirited conduct. "As a citizen of the United States of America I offer you my thanks for the assistance which you afforded towards saving the property of our countrymen." Discreetly, the President said nothing about a diplomatic or consular appointment. In the postscript the President acknowledged the receipt of a book, *City Petitions* (London, 1778), which an English admirer had asked Bush to forward to the General. John Trumbull, the painter, had personally carried

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the book to the States. (This very volume of petitions, addresses, and remonstrances of Londoners on behalf of the colonists appeared in the book market in 1949 with Washington's autograph, bookplate, and a presentation inscription of the "left wing" English donor: *Manus haec inimica tyrannis* ["This hand is the enemy of tyrants"]). The price asked was \$2,000.)

Bush never became a distinguished diplomat; he was never offered a post in the cabinet of a Washington. Nevertheless, this fervent republican was crowned with titles far more resounding and exalted than any republic could vaunt—he became a Mason of high degree. The last years of his life were devoted to intense activity in the Sublime Lodge of Perfection. He had been made Deputy Inspector General of Masonry for Pennsylvania in 1781 by virtue of an appointment by Moses M. Hays, and was finally elected Grand Master of the lodge for the years 1787–88; he had gone to Britain on a mission to further relations with English Masonry.

One of the pleasant duties of his Masonic career was to indite a letter to Frederick the Great, head of the Grand Council at Berlin and Paris. In this letter, written in 1785, Bush described himself as follows: "I, Solomon Bush, Grand Elect, Perfect and Sublime Knight of the East and Prince of Jerusalem, Sovereign Knight of the Sun and of the Black and White Eagle, Prince of the Royal Secret, and Deputy Inspector General, and Grand Master over all Lodges, Chapters, and Grand Councils of the Superior Degrees of Masonry in North America within the State of Pennsyl-

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vania, etc." He signed this grandiloquent effusion: "Your very humble and most affectionate brother."

It is interesting to speculate what thoughts ran through the mind of the cynical Frederick as he read this letter—if he ever did—from the offspring of a Germanic Jewish immigrant to the Prussian autocrat who denied his German Jews the most elementary of civil, political, and social rights. Frederick probably laughed—out loud.

Chapter 5

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IF Frederick the Great had been in a laughing mood during the last few years of his life, he might have smiled very broadly also at a letter addressed to him and to one of his bureaus by a famous magician and fellow-townsmen of Solomon Bush. Or, perhaps, he might not have smiled.

Sometime in the first half of the eighteenth century there was a Jewish family in Pennsylvania that had a son named Jacob. The young man later called himself Jacob Philadelphia. Evidently he grew up in that city. Inasmuch as it is known that he traveled in Portugal years later, it has been surmised that his family was of Portuguese origin. But Jacob journeyed to many lands and he was, it would seem, a fine linguist. The last half of his life was spent largely in Germany.

One student of American Jewish life ventured the opinion that he was the son of Barnard Jacobs, a Lancaster County merchant. Jacobs was living in Heidelberg and in Lancaster in the early 1740's. For a while he and a partner, a man named Levi, ran a country store near Conrad

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Weiser's inn, bartering notions for furs, hides, grain, and fruits. In one of their advertisements in a German-language newspaper they warned their clientele: "They further announce that they do not trade on Saturday and Sunday because they are Jews." Jacobs' distinction lies in the fact that he was in all probability the first *shobet* ("slaughterer") and *mohel* ("circumciser") in the colony. Responding to the religious needs of his neighbors, he circumcised children in most of the towns of Eastern Pennsylvania. It seems hardly likely, however, that Jacob Philadelphia was a son of this Lancaster merchant, for the latter fathered a child as late as 1777.

Somehow or other, young Jacob managed to secure training in the natural sciences, possibly through an apprenticeship to the pietistic mystic, Dr. Christopher Witt, a member of the older queer communistic Society of the Woman of the Wilderness. Early in the 1750's Jacob went to England and worked in the experimental laboratories of the Duke of Cumberland. In the next few years, by dint of work and wit, he transformed himself into the prodigious combination of physicist, chemist, astrologer, expert mechanic, submarine pioneer, and prestidigitator. With this background he was soon hailed as one of the most famous magicians in Europe, traveling, lecturing, and experimenting in public before learned and unlearned audiences—for a good fee. Apparently he was part magician, part scientist, part charlatan—but certainly no one's fool, and the ultimate product of his varied genius was an attempt to promote a German-American trading company.

The European trading companies were organized to bar-

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for colonial raw materials for domestic finished wares. The pattern was old, and was followed by the medieval trading companies and by the later Dutch, English, and French corporations which penetrated the East and the West Indies. In December, 1745, during a period of imperialistic aspiration, Sweden licensed the Christian bankers, Abraham and Jacob Arfwedson, to establish an overseas trading company to exploit African and American lands, especially the isles of the West Indies. To secure the necessary capital the Swedes went out of their way to invite all groups, of all nationalities and religions, to send in their subscriptions, and despite the fact that Jews were not tolerated in Sweden at this time, the "Hebrews" were specifically encouraged to purchase shares. Evidently the Swedes believed that the merit of supporting their commercial enterprises had the sacramental power of transmuting Jews into Hebrews.

As early as 1747 Frederick the Great had thought of exchanging American tobacco for Prussian textiles. After the War of Independence had begun, American commissioners sent out by Congress tried persistently to negotiate with the Prussians a treaty of amity and commerce which would involve recognition of the new American state. This recognition Frederick refused to grant.

Yet, he was eager to trade with the colonies; he needed their products; he wanted them to buy his manufactured goods. But he had no navy and no desire to run afoul of the powerful English, whom he hated. They had left him in the lurch in 1761 during the French and Indian War, and he would gladly have turned against them now, but he dared not. Nonetheless, the Prussian king did not prevent

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his merchants from making formal arrangements with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to carry on trade and shipping. This was in 1781. However, it was not until June, 1783, that Frederick empowered Baron von Goltz to prepare the way for a commercial treaty. By then it was evident that the British themselves would recognize the independence of the United States.

In May, 1783, our Jacob Philadelphia wrote a letter designed for Frederick, outlining his scheme for a German-American trading company which would further economic relations between the two lands. This letter was transmitted through an intermediary, one Stilcke, to Frederick William von der Schulenburg, who was now in charge of the state's maritime affairs:

Most Humble Memorial to the Honorable Royal General Directorium in Berlin:

I was in America from my youth and was reared there. Consequently, I have traversed that part of the world by land and sea and am acquainted with all its commercial harbors and markets. I know, therefore, the trade which is carried on there and which can be carried on even more profitably in view of the present changes in North America. I know this better than anyone else, for I have carried on a legitimate and smuggling trade by land and by sea with the English, the inhabitants, and also the savages, and I have been as far as eighty German miles beyond Quebec. I have spent considerable time there, have associated with the savages, and I am so well-informed that I not only know the American language which is spoken with the savages, but also the English and the African-Guinea which are spoken with the Negroes. I speak all these languages better than I speak German, and certainly nobody in Germany can make a similar boast. Therefore, in view of the prevailing

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modes of free trade, any nation that would want to carry on commerce there would have to spend many years and expend much money to acquire the necessary experience before it would be able to gauge the true advantage of the American trade.

To be sure, there will be no lack of a market for the goods to be transported to America. There will also be plenty of goods that are to be transported to Europe. The question is whether there will be the same profit which one might derive therefrom if one has a proper experience with and understanding of the American trade. That is the principal thing. For just as one can sell his linen better by ten to twelve per cent in Cadiz and Lisbon than in Hamburg, Luebeck, or Bremen—all three places in Europe, too—similarly the same circumstances and conditions are true of America and its commerce. Here one can lose ten or more per cent on every account at the wrong places and markets, if one has no further knowledge of them, and if one unloads and sells his wares in the first available harbor.

Inasmuch as I possess a knowledge of all the advantages of American commerce and am in a position to prove this, I therefore take the liberty of presenting my most humble proposal, first and foremost of all, to the Royal Honorable General Directorium, and I offer my most submissive services to establish commercial relations with America. I am able to indicate those harbors, commercial emporia, and markets where all goods sent to America can be sold most advantageously, and where, on the other hand, one can buy most profitably the goods which can be transported to Europe. I have in mind particularly the prime staples, articles such as linen, ordinary cloths, woolen socks, caps, etc. Just as I can point out the best harbors and markets for selling, even so I can indicate the best places for buying tobacco, wild animal- and raw hides and furs, the very articles from which England has drawn such great advantage up to this time.

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There are still a number of various products and wares which are manufactured and can be obtained in your Royal Highness' Prussian states and which can also be sold to an advantage in America, as for example, porcelain, velvet, iron, blue dyes, gold and silver laces, hats, mirrors, glassware, etc., and other similar articles. I know one article in particular—concerning which I reserve making a statement at the present time—on which one can make a pure profit at any time of twenty per cent.

I offer not only to sail with the ships and goods three to four times, but personally to take charge of the buying and selling of the goods and to get the project started.

For this service, for initiating and regulating this American commerce, I most humbly ask for an annual pension for life. If this pension be granted me, together with my traveling expenses—first of all to Berlin—then I am prepared immediately to disclose and to explain the secrets and the details of this trade. I will indicate, in addition, the best seasons for ships to sail, and I will direct the ships at sea myself. For I am experienced at sea, and I have not only visited America but also Asia and Africa; I have full knowledge of navigation, can steer ships, and know how to sail to America. I am known by the people in America and England inasmuch as I have made sea trips with the greatest sea heroes of the present generation in England, with men such as the well-known and famous sea-captain, Locks. The latter and the unfortunate technician who locked themselves in their boat and let themselves down to the bottom of the ocean to rise to the surface again with their boat were my very intimate friends, and I worked on this last project with them for many years. If they had followed my plans they would not have met with an accident.

If such an American commercial trade were to be established on His Royal Highness' own personal account, a very handsome profit could be derived. The cost of outfitting the ships would be paid through one cargo of American tobacco

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alone. Or, if a joint-stock or a trading company should be organized, then the various subscribers would not only get their interest at six per cent, in the course of five to six years, but would also get back their capital and could carry on this business in the future out of their own profits. The responsible authorities will understand, even better than I could explain, what great profits and advantages would also accrue to the factories and to the royal states in general through the establishment of such a commercial company.

Your most humble servant,
Jacob Philadelphia.

Euthen, May 27, 1783.¹⁶

This letter is of value, not only because it reflects the cockiness, conceit, and confidence of Jacob, but because it offers an insight into the economic and commercial opportunities which intelligent observers glimpsed in the new American state.

Schulenburg decided not to forward the letter to the monarch, even though it was just the sort of proposal that should have appealed to the mercantilistic ruler. In a short note of reply to the intermediary Stilcke, he wrote, rather vaguely, that he had certain objections to the proposal and deemed it inexpedient. It would not be shooting too wide of the mark to assume that this Prussian bureaucrat had little respect for our magician, whom he looked upon as something of a faker; and he may have objected to the financial demands which the petitioner made for himself. The basic idea was certainly not farfetched, for the very next year the state of Saxony attempted to establish such a company, with an office in Philadelphia, and the year after

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that, in 1785, Prussia signed its first treaty of trade and amity with the young republic.

During the early years of the Revolution, Colonel Solomon Bush, as we saw, was cooling his heels as an officer on parole, but he was more fortunate than many others, for while on parole he lived with his father, Mathias Bush, and had a good many comforts. Other American prisoners in the hands of the British did not fare nearly so well, especially those who were not officers. Thus, hundreds who were unfortunate enough to be confined in the prison ships at Wallabout Bay, Brooklyn, died of brutal mistreatment.

On the other hand, there were many British captured by the Americans, and their lives were by no means lives of ease and luxury. As early as 1775 there was a pressing need to provide the minimum necessities of food and clothing for them in some systematic fashion, and the man eventually selected by Congress and the British to feed and outfit most of the Tories and English prisoners was our old acquaintance David Franks of Philadelphia.

There was no question but that David was ideally fitted for this particular job, as a brief glance at his career reveals. Through his brothers Naphtali and Moses in London he had good connections with the British government, which was expected to foot the bill for the men in the hands of the Americans. His father, Jacob, as the king's agent for the Northern Colonies, had been actively engaged in army victualling, and Jacob in New York, David in Philadelphia, and his two other brothers in London worked closely together, probably as partners, serving as purveyors to the

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British army and navy in the American colonies for almost two generations.

David had been very active as an army supplyman during the French and Indian War. After Braddock's defeat by the Indians, he was one of those who contributed to a defense fund, and in 1758, when Colonel George Washington led the Virginia expedition that participated in the reconquest of Fort Duquesne, it was in part equipped by Franks. He then acted as the agent for a powerful business group in England, James and George Colebrook, Arnold Nesbitt, and Moses Franks, which had the contract, beginning in the late 1750's, of feeding and equipping the British armies in the American colonies. (Some of these men were also his partners in later land and colonizing schemes.)

The English syndicate with which David Franks was associated was more than a supply agency. It was in itself a quartermaster corps, or even more. It made a courier service available, forwarded the latest news dispatches, carried government baggage, and acted in a general advisory capacity. Its prime job, on the western frontier, was to provide the troops with flour and cattle, bread and meat. These staples were assembled at the various depots along the main highway and the Forbes Road, at Lancaster, Carlyle, Fort Loudon, Bedford, Ligonier, and Fort Pitt. (George Croghan once suggested that David Franks might well lease grazing lands in the neighborhood of Fort Pitt and raise his own beef. It is probable that his good advice was acted upon; we know that Croghan did sell some of his improved lands to one of the Franks companies.)

The difficulties under which the purveyors labored were

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almost insurmountable. At times the colonies themselves refused to co-operate with the Crown and the contractors; the sub-contractors were often unreliable or dishonest; the roads, after November, were impassable. In the dead of winter supplies had to be carried in by pack train, and it was no light task to take a train of 100 horses, loaded down with flour, across the mountains.

In June, 1763, one of the supply companies, of which Franks was a partner, submitted the following grim account to the British. It is also eloquent evidence of the manner in which the government handled the Indian problem.

D[ebto]'r, The Crown to Levy, Trent & Comp'y, for sundries had by order of Capt. Simon Ecuyer, Command't.

. . . To sundries got to replace in kind those which were taken from people in the hospital to convey the smallpox to the Indians, viz.,

2 blankets at 20 shilling	£2.0. 0
1 silk handkerchief, 10 s.	.10
1 linnen do. 3 s.6	. 3.6
	<hr/>
	2.13.6

Fort Pitt, Aug't 15th, 1763.

I do hereby certify that the above articles . . . were had for the uses above mentioned.

S. Ecuyer, Capt. Command't.

Sir Jeffrey Amherst's troops finally drove the French out and won the trans-Allegheny region for England. It was the Franks family and their partners who had helped in the arduous job of feeding and supplying the victorious armies of conquest.

But opportunities continued to knock at David's door

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even after the French and Indian War. He and his partner for the time being, the politically well-connected William Plumsted, served as the American agents for the British. After 1765, Plumsted dropped out; the agency name changed four times in the years 1764 to 1768, but David remained. In England the names of the companies changed at least three times between 1761 and 1766, but David's brother, Moses, was always included. For at least twenty years, Moses Franks and his varying associates, Nesbitt, the Colebrooks, Drummond, and Fludger, carried out contracts amounting to over £764,000, extending their operations as far north as Canada, as far west as the Illinois country, and as far south as the West Indies.

The money that David Franks made came from merchandising and from army contracting. He made precious little, if anything, in the land colony business.

With this background we can see why, after the Revolution broke out and British prisoners began to be a governmental problem, David Franks was appointed to provide for them. It was a continuation of his work, army purveying. He undertook this special task at the request of Congress in the late winter of 1775. In the following February, General Washington suggested to the President of Congress that Franks expand his activity by appointing a deputy to help him take care of the men and the officers in the Massachusetts area: "It will save me much time and much trouble."

The General also asked Congress to appoint a supreme commissioner to be responsible for all the prisoners, both British and American. This appointment was finally made

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in June, 1777, when Elias Boudinot became commissary general of prisoners and succeeded the committee that had functioned up to this time. Boudinot, to whom Franks was then subordinate, accepted the job not only that he might "be of some service to the prisoners," but also in order "to watch the military and to preserve the civil rights of my fellow citizens."

Franks found himself in a very difficult position. He, an appointee of the United States, was presumably a patriot—or at least a neutral. But at the same time he was the agent whom the English contractors, Nesbitt, Drummond, and (Moses) Franks, had appointed to victual imprisoned British troops. Moreover, he was also a commissary officer appointed by General Sir William Howe to provide for any special needs of the captured English. Accordingly, he had to keep in constant touch with the British army in America and with his brother's firm in London. And, finally, a number of his business associates, relatives, and society friends were loyalists. (One may realize how thin was the line between patriot, neutral, and loyalist by remembering that Commissary Elias Boudinot, who was later to become president of the Continental Congress, refused, as late as April, 1776, to be stampeded into favoring a declaration of secession from the mother country, and that Robert Morris, in July, 1776, refused to vote for the Declaration of Independence.) Franks's connections could easily make his American loyalties suspect.

In 1776 Franks experienced difficulty in collecting from the British authorities the monies which he had expended on behalf of prisoners. In October he asked Congress for

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permission to go to New York with his clerk Patrick Rice to submit his claims to the British general for certification. He and Patrick were allowed to go on the conditions that they "give their parole not to give any intelligence to the enemy, and that they will return to this city." Patrick Rice, in spite of his Hibernian name, was a Jew—unless he was an Irishman who could write the Hebrew script. His original name, we may surmise, was probably Feibush (Phoebus) or Phinehas Reis.

On June 28, 1777, just a few weeks after Boudinot had taken up his new duties as commissary general of prisoners, he wrote from Washington's camp at Middlebrook, New Jersey, to Franks that he was sending some "necessaries" for British prisoners located in Lancaster, probably the largest such depot in the country. The letter mentioned a bag sealed with an impression of a cupid and two hearts, and a hogshhead of clothes. Boudinot also had in his possession, he wrote, thirty-one guineas for the prisoners but deferred sending the money until he could "get an opportunity I can trust." In a postscript he asked for a roster of all the prisoners. Within a week Franks answered him from Philadelphia:

Philadelphia, July 4th, 1777.

Sir:

Yesterday I had the pleasure to receive your favor of the 28th ultimo with a h[ogs]h[ea]'d and bag containing sundry necessaries for the British prisoners. The contents of the hogshhead I know not, as I shall send it up to Lancaster unopened, but the bag, tho' sealed up as you describe, does not contain what is specified in the letter wrote by Adjutant Ward of the 33d Regiment, as some articles are wanting. Whenever the

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guineas comes to hand they shall be properly paid, some [of the prisoners] being here, and some at Lancaster and Reading; for which reason it will be best to send whatever may come to your hands for them, here, to prevent your sending up and down.

There's about *sixteen hundred* prisoners who draw provisions in this State: men, women, and children, as p[er]. return herewith. I have sent to Virginia, Maryland, etc. for a return of the prisoners in those states, which when comes to hand shall transmit you. There are likewise many captains and mates of transports and merchant men to whom I also issue provisions, being prisoners here.

I am very respectfully, sir,

Your most humble serv't,
David Franks.¹⁷

Elias Boudinot, Esqr.

The suspicion that Franks was a Tory sympathizer and not to be trusted induced the Congress, in the winter of 1777-78, to keep a watchful eye on him and to circumscribe his privileges as a contractor.

His uncertain position was certainly not made easier for him by the fact that his daughter Rebecca was notoriously a partisan of the British.

When the British took Philadelphia the Franks home, like many of the best homes in the city, was open to the British officers. Rebecca was a charming, brilliant girl, one of the wits of her generation, and a great favorite of the English, who were very much drawn to the attractive young lady.

There is no record of her baptism, but it is safe to assume that she was reared by her mother as a Christian. Unlike her father, there is no evidence that she had any interest

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whatsoever in Jews and Judaism. Yet she was constantly referred to as the "Jewess"; in the mind of the average Gentile, a person is a "Jew"—until the fact of Jewish origin is no longer known.

One of Rebecca's good friends was Anne Harrison of Wye Island, Maryland, who had married the patriot William Paca, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Paca was considerably older than Anne, who was his second wife. Loyalist Rebecca kept up a correspondence with Nancy, as she called her, even though Nancy was the wife of a delegate to the Congress. Rebecca even asked General Sir William Howe, then in command at Philadelphia, for permission to send Nancy a little gift through the lines, and prepared to make arrangements to have her come to visit her. Evidently her political prejudices did not extend to her patriot friends—nor theirs to her. One of her letters to Nancy gives us an excellent picture of social life in the occupied city:

[Philadelphia.]

Dear Nancy:

. . . . You can have no idea of the life of continued amusement I live in. I can scarce have a moment to myself. I have stole this while everybody is retired to dress for dinner. I am but just come from under Mr. J. Black's hands, and most elegantly am I dressed for a ball this evening at Smith's where we have one every Thursday. You would not know the room 'tis so much improv'd.

I wish to Heaven you were going with us this evening to judge for yourself. I spent Tuesday evening at Sir Wm. Howes where we had a concert and dance. I asked his leave to send you a handkerchief to show the fashions. He very politely gave me permission to send anything you wanted, tho'

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I told him you were a delegate's lady. I want to get a pair of buckles for your brother, Joe. If I can't, tell him, to be in the fashion, he must get a pair of harness ones.

The dress [I am wearing] is more ridiculous and pretty than anything that ever I saw: great quantity of different coloured feathers on the head at a time, besides a thousand other things; the hair dress'd very high in the shape [the Wilmington beauty] Miss Vining's was the night we returned from Smiths. The hat we found in your mother's closet wou'd be of a proper size. I have an afternoon cap with one wing, tho' I assure you I go less in the fashion than most of the ladies, no[t] being dress'd without a hoop. B[ecky]. Bond makes her first appearance tonight at the rooms.

No loss for partners, even I am engaged to [dance with] seven different gentlemen, for you must know 'tis a fix'd rule never to dance but two dances at a time with the same person. Oh, how I wish Mr. P[aca]. wou'd let you come in for a week or two. Tell him I'll answer for your being let to return. I know you are as fond of a gay life as myself. You'd have an opportunity of rakeing [having a good time] as much as you choose, either at plays, balls, concerts, or assemblys. I've been but three evenings alone since we mov'd to town. I begin now to be almost tired.

Tell Mrs. Harrison [your mother] she has got a gentleman in her house who promises me not to let a single thing in it be hurt, and I'm sure he'll keep his word. The family she left in it still remain. I had a long conversation about you the other evening with John Saunders. He is just the same as when you knew him. Two or three more of your old acquaintances are in town such as Prideaux and Jock DeLancy [my cousin]. They often ask after you.

Is Mrs. White with you? I long to hear all that concerns you. Do pray try to get an opportunity [to send a letter]. The clock is now striking four, and Moses [my brother] is just going out to dinner, quite the Congress hours. Moses wrote to-

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your mother about her house six weeks ago. Did she get the letter? All your Philadelphia friends well, and desire their loves; mine to all in Maryland.

When you see the Miss Tilghmans, tell them I never hear a new song or piece of music that I don't wish them to have it. I must go finish dressing as I'm engaged out to tea.

God bless you,
B[ecky]. F[ranks].

Thursday,
Feb'y 26, '78.

I send some of the most fashionable ribbon and gauze; have tried to get Joe's buckles in all the best shops, but in vain. B[ecky]. Redman is here and sends her love.¹⁸

While Rebecca was living this "life of continued amusement," her father was having his headaches with his prisoners. They were scattered in various towns of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, and there they were provided for by sub-contractors who were often friends and old business associates.

David's agent in Easton was the pioneer Jewish settler Myer Hart, who was sometimes referred to as Myer Hart de Shira (Texeira), and was reputed to be of Spanish descent.

When Easton was established by the Penns in 1752, Hart was one of the founding fathers and soon its most substantial citizen. Though he was involved in many lawsuits, he was not ungenerous. He contributed twenty pounds of nails to the building of the local school, a worth-while gift in the days of hand-wrought nails.

Hart was landowner, innkeeper, and general merchant. He did business occasionally with the Gratz brothers and

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their associates, and it was probably to them that he consigned the wheat which he shipped down the Delaware on flat-bottomed barges.

When the Congress quartered some of the prisoners in Easton, it was logical that Franks should give Hart the job of feeding them. Since David's sub-contractors furnished their own capital, periodic settlement with him was both desirable and necessary. In December, 1777, Congress insisted that British payment for the prisoners had to be made in specie. Franks could secure no specie for this purpose. Hart, at this juncture, felt that it was opportune to balance his accounts with his employer. Also, we may be sure, he sensed that Franks was under suspicion for his Tory leanings. In January, 1778, Hart asked Boudinot to have him passed into Philadelphia, within the British lines, on a flag of truce, in order to see Franks and straighten out their finances. Evidently this was not feasible, for about four weeks later he again approached Boudinot. We do not know the outcome of Hart's efforts to settle the accounts; we only know that he wanted to. In March, in answer to rumors that the British prisoners in Easton were being mistreated, Hart submitted the following statement:

March 19, 1778.

I, the subscriber, do hereby declare, that I have had the care of the prisoners in the British service at Easton in Pennsylvania from last September, as agent to Mr. David Franks of the city of Philadelphia. That during the whole time I have seen nothing like cruelty exercised towards them nor heard of any insult offered to them. On the contrary, I have observed a care and attention have been paid to their wants, and that the

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commissary and goal keeper have behaved to them civilly and with humanity.

That the greatest part of them have had the liberty of several miles limits, and do know that they have faithfully rec[eiv]’d one pound of meat and one pound of bread p[er] man p[er] day till within about two months past, when they were restricted to twelve ounces of each. That they have frequently been allowed to work out for the inhabitants and rec[eiv]’d a dollar p[er] day wages. That surgeons are appointed to attend the sick who have necessaries provided for their comfort. That all the officers are and have been on their parole, and none have ever been confined to my knowledge. That such prisoners who have wanted necessaries, as shoes, shirts, etc., have had liberty to purchase them in the town when they had money.

Myer Hart.¹⁹

Myer Hart’s operations were probably petty compared with those of Joseph Simon. That same month of January, 1778, when it appeared that Franks was not going to be able to pay his agents in specie, Franks was already in debt to Simon for thousands of pounds. The latter was afraid he might never receive his money. Accordingly, he asked Elijah Etting of York to consult with Congress, then meeting there, and determine if it would permit him to pay for the upkeep of the prisoners in Continental paper currency. In the meantime he continued to pay in bundles of paper money, which he had received from Franks, in spite of the Congressional insistence on specie. Inevitably Simon was summoned to York by Boudinot and by General Horatio Gates, President of the Board of War, and was instructed to comply with the order of Congress.

Simon thereupon informed Franks—in April—that if the

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latter could not supply him with hard cash, "I shall be obliged to decline acting as commissary for the prisoners." Again the following month Simon wrote a letter, a "tough" letter, to his principal:

Lancaster, May 12, 1778.

Sir:

The 9th instant I received a letter from George Murdoch, Esq'r, [a well-known patriot leader of] Frederick Town, who supplies the prisoners of warr in the state of Maryland on my acco't. He received a letter from Colo[nel]. Daniel Hughes, a copy of which as follows:

"Hagers Town, April 16th, 1778.

Sir:—I am desired by the Board of Warr to inform you that you are to furnish provisions [in specie] for the prisoners of warr, agreeable to the late resolves of Congress. I purpose to collect all the prisoners in this state to Fort Frederick by the fifth of May. Till then, you are to furnish them as usual. I am, sir,

Your humb'e s[ervan]t,
Daniel Hughes.

George Murdoch, Esq'r."

In consequence of said letter, I waited on the Board of Warr and acquainted them [with] the inconveniencys I labour under. I have often troubled them and prolong'd time, still expecting to here from you, that you would have answer'd my letters before this time, respecting my department, how I shall act. I am blamed greatly [for] not adhering to the resolves of Congress, *which I sent you before*, and the Hh'ble Board of Warr have still indulg'd me till the first of June by their letter, a true copy of which I now inclose you for perusal, that I may have early instructions from you how I shall act.

I shall prepair my acco't of imbursements for the prisoners in this and the state of Maryland by the first of June for a settlement, as I must then positivly give up my departments

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respecting the victualling and furnishing the prisoners with necessaries, if not furnished with specia to pay for the same, agreeable to the late resolves of Congress. And I should be very sorry, as I fear the prisoners will be neglected and not supply'd with the usual necessaries they receiv'd from me. I do assure you, the gentlem'n of the Hh'ble The Board of Warr have not alone given me great indulgence, but have acted in regard of the prisoners with a tenderness and feeling greatly to their honour. They have also told me that if provisions should be sent out [by the British] for the prisoners, they will not make it inconveniant or expensive to transport the provisions to the different places, but will receive them at any of the ports of the Army of the United States and order their commissary to replace the same quantity at the places where the prisoners resides, so that [so long as] the provisions sent out be good. Should they be otherwise, they will not be rec'd.

I suppose about 1200 prisoners will be remoov'd to Fort Frederick in the state of Maryland. The prisoners are intirely distitute of cloathing, shirts and shoes in perticular. Colo. Boudinot order'd the commissary I imploy at Reading to rece've no other money from me then specia which I have not.

I intended this letter to the care of Colo. Boudinot, but as I am inform'd he is now at New York I have taken the liberty to trouble his Excellency, Gen'l Washington, to forward it to you, if his Excellency should thing proper. I am in advance upwards of £15,000 and been oblidge to borrow money. I have accepted to pay a draft from Mr. Philip Bush. The fourth past, I sent you to the care of Colo. Boudinot receipts to the amount of 44,926 rations. Please to advise me if you have receiv'd them. I dayly expect the receipts from Maryl'd and have a number by me to send but would not trouble his Excellency with them. I am, sir,

Your very humb'e s[ervan]t,
Joseph Simon.

David Franks, Esq'r.²⁰

Chapter 6

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IT is by no means improbable that David Franks received this last letter from Simon on the very day that he was out on the river witnessing the most brilliant social event in the history of Philadelphia, an event in which daughter Rebecca played a leading part. In order to honor the British general, Sir William Howe, who was returning home, his officers determined to hold a tournament-festival, somewhat on the order of the medieval fete at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Two of its "directors" were good friends of Rebecca: Major John André and Captain Oliver DeLancey, Jr. André, after being captured at Saint John's in 1775, had been paroled to Philadelphia, and spent many a pleasant hour in the Franks household painting a miniature of Miss Rebecca—she was then all of fifteen or seventeen years of age—and inditing poetry to her. Oliver DeLancey, Jr., was Rebecca's first cousin, for Oliver's mother was Phila Franks, David's sister. Rebecca's very prominent role in the festivities, however, rested not only on her social background, but also on her personal charm.

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The fete, called the *Meschianza*, began at 4 o'clock in the afternoon of the 18th of May and continued for twelve hours, until the dawn of the next day. There were a regatta on the river, processions under triumphal arches, and a climactic grand ball with fireworks and a royal repast.

In the tournament two parties were represented: the Knights of the Blended Rose and the Knights of the Burning Mountain. The former chose a Miss Auchmuty as their Queen of Beauty; the latter, Miss Rebecca. We have a description of her costume on that great occasion. She was dressed in a "white silk gown, trimmed with black and white sashes, edged with black. It was a polonaise dress which formed a flowing robe and was open in front to the waist. The sash, six inches wide, was filled with spangles, as was the veil, which was edged with silver lace. The head-dress was towering, in the fashion of the time, and was filled with a profusion of pearls and jewels."

This grand "medley" of extravagant entertainment, "the notorious *Meschianza*," took place at the Wharton estate, "Walnut Grove," not many miles from Valley Forge where the harried Continental troops, still encamped, had spent a bitter winter. Hundreds of invitations were issued, and it is reported that £12,000 worth of expensive silks and laces were sold by one London firm.

A month later the English left Philadelphia, to be repulsed at Monmouth as they marched across New Jersey.

Two months later the memory of the *Meschianza* still rankled in the heart of General Anthony Wayne as he caustically wrote: "Tell those Philadelphia ladies, who attended Howe's assemblies and *levees*, that the heavenly,

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sweet, pretty red-coats, the accomplished gentlemen of the guards and grenadiers have been humbled on the plains of Monmouth. The Knights of the *Blended Roses* and the *Burning Mount* have resigned their laurels to rebel officers, who will lay them at the feet of *those* virtuous daughters of America who cheerfully gave up ease and affluence in a city, for liberty and peace of mind in a cottage."

But the Revolutionary General Charles Lee, whose inglorious conduct at Monmouth led to his suspension for a period of twelve months, nursed no such grudge against the female Tories of Philadelphia. While in temporary retirement in the Pennsylvania capital during the winter of 1778, he carried on a spirited correspondence with Rebecca Franks, whom he greatly admired. In a mock-heroic letter, studded with *double-entendre*, he reproached her for attacking him. He could have borne the accusations of treasonable correspondence with the enemy (an unconscious slip?), of getting drunk, of theft, of never parting with his shirt until his shirt parted with him—all these calumnies he could endure, but she had diabolically slandered him by reporting that he wore green breeches *patched* with leather, rather than genuine riding breeches *reinforced* with leather!

"You have already injured me in the tenderest part," he cried out grandiloquently, "and I demand satisfaction. And as you cannot be ignorant of the laws of duelling . . . I insist on the privilege of the injured party, which is, to name his hour and weapons; and as I intend it to be a very serious affair, I will not admit of any seconds. And you may depend upon it, Miss Franks, that whatever may be your spirit

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on the occasion, the world shall never accuse General Lee with having turned his back upon you.”

2. This sort of thing was just a little too crude for Rebecca, and when the General later realized that his *jeu d'esprit* had deeply offended her, he apologized most abjectly and most charmingly.

3. But while she was skirmishing flirtatiously with British officers, while she was enjoying her day of triumph at the *Meschianza*, certainly she had no thought, even for a second, that she was doing her father a great disservice. The British had left Philadelphia. Public opinion associated Franks with his Tory daughter—and his other loyalist associates. In September, 1778, Franks was unable to supply the British prisoners for lack of specie, and hence he could be dispensed with. In October or early November he was thrown into jail by the federal authorities. Possibly some ambitious patriot had his eye on Franks's lands which might be confiscated and sold cheaply after his conviction for treason.

4. The actual charge against Franks was that he had written to his brother Moses in England and had expressed “intentions inimical to the safety and liberty of the United States.” This letter, which he had attempted to forward through his brother-in-law, the British general, the senior Oliver DeLancey, was intercepted and sent to the Congress. In November, Franks was formally deprived of his position as commissary to the British prisoners in the United States. But when he stood trial no convicting evidence could be produced, and he was soon released. The letter to his brother is no longer extant.

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In the meantime, a dispatch reached Moses Franks in England with the news that David had been arrested. The anxious brother, not knowing that David had long since been released, sent a hasty note to Sir Grey Cooper, one of the secretaries of the Treasury, asking him to arrange immediately with General Sir Henry Clinton for the exchange of his brother, "tho' God knows whether he will be alive when such an act of benevolence and mercy shall reach him." Moses Franks had gone to school with Henry Clinton in America and hoped that the General would be mindful of the common tie.

David Franks made further efforts to get in personal touch with the English army authorities, but the suspicious Congress refused him permission. There was, however, a plain and simple reason for these repeated requests: it was imperative that he be reimbursed for the large sums he and his agents had put out for the British prisoners. Franks kept appealing to his principals, Nesbitt, Drummond, and Franks, to pay his drafts; they in turn appealed to the Lords of the Treasury, and these august gentlemen referred them back to Sir Henry Clinton, maintaining that Clinton had repeatedly been instructed to pay for the victuals for the prisoners out of the army contingency fund.

Neither Congress nor the Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council would let Franks go to New York under a flag of truce to induce Clinton to pay the bills or to certify to the food delivered, but they did permit his clerk, Patrick Rice, to go in his stead. In December, 1778, Franks owed his creditors and agents for 500,000 rations supplied the British prisoners in American hands. In March, 1779, Nes-

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bitt, Drummond, and Franks not only refused to honor his drafts, but, washing their hands of the whole affair, left him "holding the bag." He needed money badly, and in December of that year he smuggled through the following letter to his friend Major John André, Adjutant General of the British Army:

Sir:

I had the pleasure of addressing you in the month of February last, by Mr. Rice, my clerk and agent, praying for your friendly advice and assistance in the settlement of some interesting accounts at Head Quarters. I call them interesting because they really are so, both to my constituents in England and to myself and friends in this country, owing to the very long delay of payment of the large sums advanced so cheerfully, not only for our attachment to Government, but from inclination on my part to render essential service to the Crown, and also to distressed suffering prisoners. And my being able to render those unfortunate prisoners such necessary comforts during my agency always gave me the greatest pleasure and satisfaction, and indeed I sincerely wish that those troops were since that period as well supply'd, but that is not the case.

As for my own late sufferings, on acco[un]t of my loyalty, I have cheerfully submitted to it, notwithstanding my imprisonment, trial for life, the unhappy situation my large family were necessarily thrown into, and the heavy expence to lawyers, etc., of *two hundred guineas*. Yet find myself involved in great difficulties by the contractors [in London] suffering my drafts on them to the amo[un]t of £4,370, st[erlin]g, to be return'd protested for want of proper certificates being sent them for the said provisions as usual, or on acco[un]t of the Lords of the Treasury directing the Commander in Chief [Sir Henry Clinton] to settle the price of said provisions with me here and pay the amo[un]t thereof

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as by the contractors' letter will fully appear. And the hardships that attend us, on acco[un]t of the delay is great, as some of the holders of said return'd bills [of exchange], on this side, threaten imprisonment and seizure of effects.

Upwards of three months have I been applying for liberty to pass into New York to endeavor to do something towards a final settlement, but cannot yet obtain it, and it is deemed a great indulgence my being permitted to come thus far [to Elizabeth Town, New Jersey].

I therefore beg of Major André to give Mr. Rice his assistance in this settlement, or even for the present to procure a partial payment, in order to take up those bills as that would be a temporary relief to the concern'd, which, depend, we shall always retain a gratefull sense of.

I am, sir,

Your most obedient h'ble servant,
David Franks.

Elizabeth Town, December 2d, 1779.

P.S. Mrs. Hamilton [Abigail Franks], Miss Franks, and all the ladies of your acquaintance in Philadelphia present their best compliments to Major André and all their military friends, at or in the vicinity of New York, and, indeed, to make use of Miss F[rank]'s own expression, they would be very happy in taking a view of the Mall, or having a ramble under the *holy old trees* in the Broad-way.²¹

Less than a year later, in October, 1780, Franks was again arrested, this time by the Pennsylvania state authorities, on the charge of corresponding with the enemy at New York. If they meant that he was writing letters to the British, they were quite right; how else was he to secure payment for the large sums he had expended on their behalf? A second time, apparently, no evidence was brought against him, although it was suggested that he had depreciated the cur-

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rency by buying specie. Continental paper was falling so rapidly that ultimately it was not even to be "worth a Continental." Quite properly, Franks indignantly denied any direct responsibility for this inflation. But what was true, as Washington intimated in an earlier letter, was that the very use of American paper money in large sums, by the British and by men like Franks, to feed prisoners in the hands of the Americans, coupled with the British refusal to accept this same currency to feed prisoners in their hands, tended to undermine the value of the Continental dollar.

There was a Pennsylvania statute (1779) which permitted the Supreme Executive Council to arrest, place under bond, or to imprison any suspected British sympathizer. This statute was invoked, and though there was no specific provision permitting expulsion into the enemy's lines, David and his daughter Rebecca were sent to New York before the year was out. (This Franks incident is somewhat reminiscent of the banishment by Lincoln of former Congressman Vallandigham into the Confederate lines in 1863.) Rebecca got her wish; she had her ramble under the holy old trees in the Broad-way.

She kept constantly in touch with both patriot and Tory friends back home through letters. Her father's tribulations did not lessen her frivolous chatter, and her letters retailed the choicest Gotham gossip.

During the hot summer days there were parties with the British officers. A captain's barge, she wrote, was ready down at the wharf to carry guests to General Robertson's summer home. They were always chaperoned, for in New York no unmarried girl went out without an older woman

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to accompany her. In Philadelphia, of course, all this was unnecessary: "We Philadelphians, knowing no harm, fear'd none." There was an ample supply of attractive officers eager to dance attendance, the handsome Captain Montague, for instance—"Such eyes!" In her more quiet moments Rebecca went to church or yearned for her sister and the familiar scenes at home, or at "Woodlands," the Hamilton estate. But she could never quite keep the men out of her thoughts, and the choicest blessing she could conjure up for sister Abigail's girls back home was their choice of the wealthy titled suitors who were floating about: three Honorables, one with £26,000 a year!

Her father, David, was not lonely, either, in New York; he had many friends there. His sister Phila, Oliver DeLancey's wife, was in town. She could match his "escape" with a story of her own, for she was almost burnt alive in a kennel when the Whigs destroyed her home at Bloomingdale. Franks also wrote home frequently, but there is little, very little, in his letters to betray the fact that he had just gone through a harrowing experience which might have cost him his life. He showed no rancor, no resentment; he maintained an almost studied calm, preferring understatement to exaggeration. He kept busy, for there were prisoners' commissary accounts to be straightened out at British headquarters, deeds and bills of exchange and loose ends to be taken care of. He wrote to his daughter Abigail Hamilton in Philadelphia, asking her to attend to matters at home that required attention. Apparently financial jargon made sense to her; one gets the impression that she was her father's daughter—solid, sensible.

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But business details by no means monopolized the pages of his correspondence. He was interested in the family and said "how doo & loves de" to his son-in-law and children. Tell the young ones to take care of their teeth—I just sent Peg a toothbrush. When "By"—short for Becky?—went out to the General's on a hot summer day, David went swimming in the river. He felt lazy after his plunge—boasted that he could still swim like a boy: Wish I had your children with me "to dipp and learn." And after he had sent them all his prayers and good wishes and love he added: Tell Bernard Jacobs, the Lancaster merchant, that there's a Nathan Levy in a British prison ship and he wants Jacobs to send him some money.

One of Rebecca's long chatty letters was sent to Abigail from the Flatbush country estate of the Van Horn's. It gives us an excellent opportunity to study social life in aristocratic, Tory New York during the Revolution:

Flat Bush, Saturday, 10 o'clock, August 10th, [17]'81.

My dear Abby:

The night before last I receiv'd y'r letter by *Comfort* [the messenger]. I wish I had been in town to have answer'd it and sent the things out, but I fancy eer [ere] I cou'd have receiv'd y'rs, he must have left E[lizabeth]. Town. And a few days ago I got y'rs and the chicks [my nieces], all of which I thank you and them for. If I have time this morning I'll answer them and the girls' letters.

You will think I have taken up my abode for the summer at Mrs. V[an]. Horn's, but this day I return to the disagreeable hot town much against my will and the inclination's of this family, but I cannot bear papa's being so much alone; nor will he be persuaded to quit it, tho' I am sure he can have no busi-

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ness to keep him. Two nights he staid with us, which is all I've seen of him since I left home. I am quite angry with him.

I have wrote you several times with in these two weeks; you can have no cause to complain, with out it is of being too often troubled with my nonsense. Those [letters] you mention'd sending by P[olly]. R[edman]. have not yet come to hand. The ham is safe; the cracker's haven't as yet made their appearance. I fear they never will tho' I heard they were safe on S[taten]. Island. I fancy the person to whose care they were sent thought them too good to part with. The *person* who sent them and the ham, I beg you'll *give* my sincere thanks to.

You ask a description of the Miss V[an].Horn that was with me, Cornelia. She is in disposition as fine a girl as ever you saw, a great deal of good humour and good sense. Her person is too large for a beauty, in my opinion (and yet I am not partial to a *little* woman). Her complection, eyes, and teeth are very good, and a great quantity of light brown hair (*Entre nous*, the girls of New York excell us Phil[adelphi]'ans in that particular and in their form), a sweet countenance and agreeable smile. Her feet, as you desire, I'll say nothing about; they are V[an]. Horn's and what you'd call Willings. [The Willings, who evidently had big feet, were partners of Robert Morris.] But her sister Kitty is the belle of the family, I think, tho' some give the preference to Betsy. You'll ask how many thousand there are, only *five*. Kitty's form is much in the stile of our admir'd Mrs. Gallwey [Galloway], but rather taller and larger, her complection very fine, and the finest hair I ever saw. Her teeth are begining to decay, which is the case of most N[ew].Y[ork]. girls after eighteen—and a great deal of elegance of manners.

By the by, few N.York ladies know how to entertain company in their own houses unless they introduce the card tables, except this family (who are remarkable for their good sense and ease). I don't know a woman or girl that can chat above

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half an hour, and that's on the form of a cap, the colour of a ribbon, or the set of a hoop stay or *jupon* [petticoat]. I will do our ladies, that is Phila'ans, the justice to say they have more cleverness in the turn of an eye than the N.Y. girls have in their whole composition. With what ease, have I seen a Chew, a Penn, Oswald, Allen, and a thousand others entertain a large circle of both sexes, and the conversation without the aid of cards not flag or seem the least strain'd of [or] stupid.

Here, or more properly speaking in N.Y., you enter the room with a formal set curtesy and after the how do's, 'tis a fine or a bad day, and those trifling nothings are finish'd, [then] all's a dead calm 'till the cards are introduc'd when you see pleasure dancing in the eyes of all the matrons, and they seem to gain new life. The misses, if they have a fav'rite swain, frequently decline playing for the pleasure of making love, for to all appearances 'tis the ladies and not the gentlemen that shew a preference now adays. 'Tis here, I fancy, allways leap year. For my part that am us'd to quite an other mode of behaviour, cannot help shewing my surprize, perhaps they call it ignorance, when I see a lady single out her *pet to* lean all most in his arms at an assembly or play house (which I give my honor I have too often seen both in married and single), and to hear a lady confess a partiality for a man who perhaps she has not seen three times. [These women say] "Well, I declare, such a gentleman is a delightfull creature, and I could love him for my husband," or "I could marry such or such a person." And scandle sais [with respect to] most who have been married, the advances have first come from the ladies side. Or she has got a male friend to introduce him and puff her off. 'Tis really the case, and with me they loose half their charms; and I fancy there wou'd be more marriage was an other mode adopted. But they've made the men so saucy that I sincerely believe the lowest ensign thinks 'tis but ask and have; a red coat and smart epaulet is sufficient to secure a female heart. . . .

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And now, my d'r Abby, I am going to tell you a piece of news that you'll dislike as much as I do. What do you think of Moses [our brother in London] coming out with a cockade [an officer's insignia]! He writes to papa and me 'tis his serious resolve, and we must not be surpriz'd if we see him this summer. The idea of ent'ring an ensign at his time of life [he was probably close to thirty] distresses [me] more than any thing I've met with since I left you. All the comfort I have is that his Uncle M[oses]. will not allow him. I have not had an oppor[tuni]ty of asking papa's opinion of it, as I receiv'd the letter's since I've been here, but I am certain he must disapprove of it as much as I do. Was he ten or twelve years younger, I should not have the smallest objection, but 'tis too late for him to enter into such a life, and after the indulgence he's ever been us'd to he'll never brook being commanded from post to pillow by ev'ry brat of [or] boy who may chance to be longer in the service. Tomorrow I shall write to him and make use of ev'ry argument I am mistress of to dissuade him from so mad a project, which I hope will arrive in time to prevent it, for if he once enter's I wou'd be the first to oppose his quitting it, as I ever lov'd a steady character. The danger of the war I have in a measure reconcil'd myself to. 'Tis only his age I object to and the disagreeable idea of his being sent the L[or]'d knows where. If he does enter (which I hope to God he may not), I wish he may join the 17th, or els get into the dragoons; the latter I think he'll prefer on account of his lameness. He has not, I believe, wrote to you by this oppor[tuni]ty; Aunt [Moses?] Franks and Aunt Richa [father's sister], I believe, have. . . .

Nanny VaHorn and self employ'd yesterday morn'g in trying to dress a rag baby [doll] in the fashion, but cou'd not succeed. It shall however go, as 'twill in some degree give you an idea of the fashion as to the jacket and pinning on of the handkerchief. . . .

Yesterday the granadiers had a race at the Flatlands [Long

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Island], and in the afternoon this house swarm'd with beaux
and some very smart ones. How the girls wou'd have envy'd
me cou'd they have peep'd and seen how I was surrounded,
and yet I shou'd have [felt] as happy if not much more to
have spent the afternoon with the Thursday Party at the
W[oo]'dlands. I am happy to hear you'r out there as the
town must be dreadfull this hot summer. N.Y. is bad enough
tho' I do not think 'tis as warm as Phil'a. . . .

Well, this is sufficiently long; love to everybody. . . .

Y[ou]'rs,

[R. F.] 22

The "17th" which Rebecca mentions as her choice for
brother Moses was no doubt the 17th Foot Regiment,
whose lieutenant-colonel, Henry Johnson, was a beau of
hers. Six months later, in January, 1782, she married Henry
at her father's house on Broad-way. After the war the
Johnsons went to England, and there it was, about the year
1816, that Winfield Scott saw Rebecca, a prematurely aged
but still charming woman. In the course of the conversation
with the young hero of the War of 1812—he was a general
at twenty-eight—she said emphatically: "I have gloried in
my rebel countrymen! . . . Would to God I, too, had been
a patriot!"

David went to England after Rebecca's marriage, re-
mained there with his son Jacob for a while, and then re-
turned to the States. In 1786, a David Franks issued the
first New York city directory, and some historians have
credited this to Rebecca's father, but in error, for the David
Franks of the directory was a Gentile, the son of a Dublin
attorney.

It is difficult to determine whether our David Franks

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upon his return was in reduced circumstances, or not. In England, about 1782, he had told the Commission for the Relief of American Loyalists that he once possessed personal property worth £20,000 sterling, all this exclusive of his extensive land holdings, and that he had had to sell some of his furniture to pay his debts—yet he asked for only £1,125 as compensation. The Commission awarded him £125 and recommended an annual pension of £100 in view of his “loyalty and zeal.” In 1791, in Philadelphia, he was in the habit of borrowing small sums from Michael Gratz, now a well-to-do and respected merchant. When Franks died of yellow fever two years later his administrators supplied a bond of only £500, a relatively small sum. His estates apparently were never confiscated by the American authorities, although there is no question that his loyalty lay with the mother country. He was a Tory.

Chapter 7

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WHEN Congress removed David Franks as British commissary of prisoners in the winter of 1778, his chief associate in this work, Joseph Simon, asked the Board of War for authority to continue supplying "necessaries" to the captured. But, as we know, purveying was by no means the only economic outlet of Joseph Simon; we recall his interest in land-settlements and his participation in the Lancaster consortium with the Frankses and the Gratzes.

During the summer and fall of 1779, the Lancaster group lobbied diligently to get the Virginia legislature to acknowledge their claims to the "Indiana (West Virginia)" lands across the mountains. Barnard Gratz went to Williamsburg, the Virginia capital, in October for that purpose. He traveled about a great deal during the difficult war days, working hard to make a living, but he kept his family in Lancaster, where food was plentiful and where there was no danger of the enemy. There his "in-law," Joseph Simon, could be depended upon to look after the welfare of the womenfolk and children.

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Barnard Gratz's only surviving child was his young daughter Rachel. (She grew up to marry the widower Solomon Etting of Baltimore, whose first wife had been a daughter of Joseph Simon. The Ettings of Baltimore were a very important family in the history of early nineteenth-century American Jewry.) When she was seven or eight years of age, "her honored farther" showed her how much he loved her. He and Uncle Michael wrote William Murray telling him that an agent was bringing out a shipment of goods to the Illinois country. And among the supplies was a small package of jewelry which Murray was to sell, the profits to go to Rachel and two other Gratz youngsters. This was Rachel's first "adventure" in business, and Murray was asked to watch the account and remit the profits separately.

As she grew up her father lavished all his love on her. She, too, was very fond of her "dear little daddy," and she missed him very much when he left on a long trip to England or crossed the mountains into the dark forests.

Although Rachel was in her teens in 1779, she was apparently getting her first formal instruction in arithmetic—rather late, to be sure—but then all sorts of things happen in wartime. But she had already learned to write, as the following letter testifies. Barnard received it from her while he was away from Lancaster. He was probably at his business, in Philadelphia, at the time.

Lancaster, August 3, 1779.

Hon[ore]'d Farther:

I cannot let slip this favorable opportunity after my long silence to let you know that I am in good health, thank God,

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as I hope this may find you in the same. You mention in your letter about my minding my schooling, which shall do my endeavors to learn as I know it is my dear daddy's desire. I have just begun to cipher and I am very much delighted at it. I am in averdepois weight and now can cast up anything. I should be very much obliged to my good daddy if you see a pretty fan to get it for me, as they are very dear in this place. Today I was at a French colonel's funeral who was buried with all the honors of war. The day before that he was buried but it was not regular; so they took him up again. Today was the finishing.

I must conclude, hon'd father, with wishing you every earthly felicity this world can afford.

Your ever-loving and obedient daughter,
Rachel Gratz.

Aunt [Miriam Gratz?] and all the children desire their love to you. Aunt Bush desires to be remembered to you: Becky's [Richea Bush's?] compliments to you. Please remember me to Moses.

My d[ea]r daddy, I have one favor to beg of you, not to forget to get me a lining for my cloak and some lace. Becky begs of you the favor to get her three yards of linsey, please.²³

We do not have the slightest idea where Barnard got the three yards of linsey-woolsey for Becky. If it could not be gotten in Lancaster, which was something of a textile center in those days, it must indeed have been a scarce item. Perhaps Barnard had some of it in stock in Philadelphia. If not, then he probably made the rounds of his fellow-merchants, and among his associates in the synagogue who might have been able to help was Hayman Levy.

Hayman's daughter Zipporah ("Birdie" in English) had married Benjamin Mendes Seixas, of the New York and

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Newport family, in January, 1779, in Philadelphia. Levy had then taken his very capable son-in-law under his wing in matters economic, and they began to work together also in local congregational affairs. Seixas was already an up-and-coming Philadelphian; that very year, 1779, he protested with other solid citizens against the endless issue of worthless bills of credit by Congress.

Because of the Newport connections he was in frequent touch with Aaron Lopez, to whom he usually wrote through his brother Moses Seixas in Newport, or through Josiah Hewes, the Philadelphia agent of Lopez. Occasionally, as in the following letter, Ben wrote directly to Lopez:

Philad'a, Jan'y 16th, 1781.

Dear Sir:

We were yesterday week fav[ore]'d with yours of 22d Dec'r and note the contents. Mr. Hewes called on us and we have since rec'd £106.15. Cont[inenta]'l currency, and £37.10s. in specie, which closes our acct's for the present.

Accept of our thanks for your kind wishes of success in our business. We have for this some time past done but very little which made it necessary for each [Hayman Levy and myself] to seek singly, the profits being by no means sufficient to maintain two families.

Prices are very fluctuating with us, rise and fall 20 p'r cent in two or three days. Annexed you have the prices current, which will be some compensation for the postage. Nominal exch[an]'ge [of paper for specie] here is at seventy five for one, though in reality nothing less than one hundred [for one]. People governing themselves and asking in proportion to the latter.

Our city has been in a little confusion within these few days past owing to the Pennsylvania Line having mutinied

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[at] Morristown, January 1st], and on their march for this place. We dreaded the consequences of such a procedure. Happily for us, our governor [Joseph Reed, President of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania], with a committee of Congress, had influence enough to stop them at Trenton where matters were accomodated. They are most all discharged.

Gen[era]l Clinton [the British general], watching every opportunity, sent two men with great offers to them. They [the rebellious troops] had virtue sufficient to refuse him and delivered his emissaries to our Light Horse, who [the two emissaries] were last week executed as spies. Arnold [Benedict, the traitor,] has landed at Richmond in Virginia where he has done a great deal of mischief.

Our families join in best wishes for your and Mrs. Lopez's with all the worthy families prosperity. Believe me to be with respect in behalf of Mr. Levy and self,

Your assured friend, etc., etc.,
B[enjamin]. S[eixas].

West India rum, 90 to 100 doll'rs
Muscovado sugar 1100 to 1200 [dollars a loaf?]
Havannah brown [sugar], 10 doll. p. lb. } falling
D[itt]o. white, 12 do. }
Bohea tea, 90 [\$] p'r. lb.
Choco[la]te 18 [\$ per] lb. by the box
Coffee 16 & 17 [\$] per lb.
Allum salt 240 doll. per bussel
Fine imported [salt] 240 [doll. per bushel]
D[itt]o. country [salt] 160 [doll. per bushel]
Port wine has been sold as low as £9 to £12 per gall., there being a great quantity brought in [by] the several prizes lately arrived here.²⁴

The list of prices current which Seixas annexed to this letter gives a graphic picture of what deep inroads inflation

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had already made by the beginning of 1781. Pepper sold for \$98 a pound in February, so Josiah Hewes wrote in a letter to Lopez; in April it rose to \$130 a pound, and when Seixas left on a business trip that spring for Boston and Newport, he carried with him \$32,000 in Continental currency in payment for two barrels of pepper!

The following year, in 1782, the Jews of Philadelphia wanted to improve their synagogue quarters. For a generation prior to the war, the Jewish families in Philadelphia had held services in rented rooms. Now the *émigrés* who had streamed into town wanted something better. Most of them were voluntary exiles who had fled from the British-occupied cities of Newport, New York, Charlestown, and Savannah. But Philadelphia was more to them than a city of refuge. It offered them opportunities. It was the country's most important financial center, and, as the capital city, it afforded them a chance to secure their share of government contracts.

Nearly all these *émigrés* were sincere Whigs. Early in the war, Dr. Benjamin Rush had remarked that "the Jews in all the States" were Whigs. The good doctor erred; all were not on the Continental side, although the majority were. The large influx to Philadelphia, however, illustrated the basic correctness of Rush's observation.

The newcomers soon assumed control of the local Jewish congregation which at the time was already called Mikveh Israel, "The Hope of Israel." This was not the first American Mikveh Israel; the name had been adopted about 125

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years before this by the congregation in Curaçao, one of the oldest in the Western Hemisphere.

When the Philadelphia synagogue was reorganized in 1782, only one Pennsylvanian, Barnard Gratz, who had been its *parnas* or president, was put on the board of six; the rest were from out-of-town. Isaac Moses, a man of large affairs, was the new president; the others were Hayman Lévy, Simon Nathan, Benjamin Seixas, and Jonas Phillips.

The new leaders moved with dispatch. A vigorous campaign to raise money was promptly started, and soon an old house and a lot were purchased on Sterling Alley. They thought that the house could be remodeled, but when they discovered that it was almost as cheap to build afresh, the house and lot were sold and a new location chosen. Such, at any rate, is the story as Hyman Pollock Rosenbach gave it in *The Jews in Philadelphia*. But this was only half the story.

The facts are that the congregation liked the location and had decided to build its synagogue there. The contract had already been signed with the builders. Why, then, did it go somewhere else? Here is what really happened.

The lot on Sterling Alley, purchased from Robert Wall, was "contiguous" to the "lott" of the Reformed German Congregation, a local Protestant group. As soon as the church found out that the Jews were going to build next door, its members objected, and vigorously.

As Germans, or children of Germans, they reflected faithfully traditions that had characterized their ancestral land for hundreds of years. Indeed, as far back as the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great had declared that no

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synagogue should be so close to a church that the sound of the singers, the *hazzan* and the congregation would disturb the devotions of the Christian worshipers. Gregory's declaration prevailed throughout Christendom, and thereby set the pattern for Germany. The German Protestants of Philadelphia had probably never heard of Pope Gregory, and would have indignantly repudiated him as a Catholic had they known of him, but they had more recent and more acceptable authority. *Der alte Fritz* himself, Frederick the Great of Prussia—still living, too!—had been very specific on this matter in the charter which he granted his Jewish subjects in the 1750's. Prescribing for Jewish conventicles, he had ordered that: "The assembly is to be held at all times in a house back from the street, or in such a place where the neighbors and the public in general will not be inconvenienced by too much clamor."

But Philadelphia, in spite of its numerous Germans, was not Berlin; Pennsylvania was not Prussia. This was a free country, bringing to a successful conclusion a great war that was supposed to guarantee to every citizen certain unalienable rights, included among which was certainly the concept of freedom of conscience. As a matter of fact, the pastor of the German Reformed Church in Philadelphia was a patriot. And like his fellow-Philadelphian Haym Salomon, whom we shall soon encounter, he had urged the Hessian mercenaries to desert the British, and he had been imprisoned for his known Continental sympathies. Many of his flock were Whigs—but, apparently, they could see no connection between American patriotism and religious tolerance. They knew what tolerance was, for when they built

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their beautiful church many of the Christian denominations showered them with good wishes and, what was more important, with money. It was, therefore, with a glow of exaltation that they had reported to their spiritual leaders back in Europe: "The assistance rendered . . . by other denominations convinces us that that is done in America which has long and vainly been sighed for in Germany." Nonetheless, they objected to having a synagogue next door, but out of deference to this new American sentiment, the new spirit of the times which scorned bigotry, they resorted to vague generalities.

The officers of the synagogue believed that inasmuch as the church did not want them as neighbors, the least it could do was to take the lot off their hands at the price they had paid for it; that was only fair. Such a proposal was made to the German Reformed Church:

[Philadelphia, May 1, 1782.]

Gentlemen:

We find a misunderstanding has operated respecting the lot of ground and building thereon, lately purchas'd from Mr. Rob't Wall. In order therefore that we may understand each other, and to prevent any future disputes, we now again offer you the same.

Our intention was to build a synagogue and school house thereon for the use of our congregation, not conceiving that we should in the least disturb you. To our great surprize we are told it will.

We can now supply ourselves with another lot, not so convenient for our purpose, nor on such good terms, though it will cost more. But as we would wish to live in friendship with our neighbours, and to convince you it is our mean[in]'g, we are willing to take the same price we gave for the place, with

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the charges, which is £540, specie, to be paid in the following manner, viz't, £350 immediately, and £190 in one year with interest. These are the conditions we must bind ourselves to if we purchase another, and these are the only terms we have in our power to offer.

The season of the year advances, the tradesmen [mechanics] are wait'g to begin their work agreable to contract, and we are in want of our synagouge. We therefore request you answer by Monday or Tuesday next.

Annexed is a copy of the conditions agreed to with Mr. Wall, for your better information.

We are, gentlemen,

In behalf of the Hebrew Congre'n,
Your very h'bl serv'ts,
Isaac Moses, Pres't;

Barnard Gratz, Jonas Phillips, Benj'n Seixas, Simon Nathan,
Assistants.

To the President and Vestry of the Reform'd German Congregation.

Fifty-eight and a half feet in front on Sterl'g Alley, and in depth forty-seven feet, together with the privilege of a cellar under, and building over a four and half foot alley, subject to a ground rent of nine Spanish milled dollars per annum.²⁵

The church did not accept the proposal. Thereupon the leaders of Mikveh Israel called a meeting of the entire congregation and secured authority to buy another lot. Before the month of May had passed they had purchased one on Cherry Alley. Ben Seixas was appointed chairman of the building committee, or, as they expressed it: he was to give directions to the carpenter and to the mason. In June the Jews finally decided to advertise the lot for sale and, if no buyer could be found within a month, to dispose of it at public auction.

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One wonders what motivated the leadership of Mikveh Israel to urge the congregation to move elsewhere. Did they not have the courage, in a free country, to build a house of worship on a lawfully acquired piece of ground? Were their leaders afraid to insist on their rights?

Hayman Levy and Simon Nathan were skilled and aggressive merchants, men highly respected and admired by their associates. Levy had left a successful business behind him in New York to throw in his lot with the Whigs in Philadelphia. His certainly was not the action of a fear-ridden man.

Together with Barnard Gratz and others, Simon Nathan was to sign a strong appeal to the Council of Censors of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, asking them so to modify the constitution that Jews might take the oath with good conscience if elected to the Pennsylvania state legislature. These two men were ready to fight vigorously for the rights that were theirs.

Barnard Gratz was no coward. It took courage to engage in commercial ventures that carried him into almost every colony of North America, to ride the solitary trails over the mountains into Indian country, and to fight, as he did, even in old age, for equality before the law for the Jewish citizens of Maryland.

Benjamin Seixas, Simon Nathan, Isaac Moses, and Jonas Phillips had served in the militia during the Revolution.

Isaac Moses, the richest man of the lot, had excellent relations with powerful people. A patriot, who had pledged his credit for a substantial sum on behalf of the American government in one of its dark hours when supplies were

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sorely needed, who sent his privateers to scour the seas for British prizes, had no fear of those little men who called themselves Christians but were alien to the spirit that distinguished the founder of their own faith.

The belligerent Jonas Phillips was indubitably a man of moral courage. In later years he was to stand out for his insistence on his rights as an American citizen; he petitioned the Continental Congress in the mistaken notion that it had the authority to revoke the Christian test oath of the Pennsylvania Frame of Government. When summoned to court on a Sabbath, he refused to be sworn because of his religious convictions even though he was fined £ 10.

The president and *junta* ["board"] of this congregation were anything but servile men. What motivated them to move was simply their self-respect, their inner dignity. They refused to live with people who did not desire to live with them.

The dedication of the synagogue on Cherry Alley took place on September 13th, and the following invitation was sent to the President (the Governor) and the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania:

Memorial of the Jewish Congregation of Philadelphia, 1782:

We, the president and representatives of the Jewish congregation in this city, humbly beg leave to approach his Excellency, the President, his Honour, the Vice President, and the Honourable, the Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The Congregation of Mikve Israel (Israelites) in this city, having erected a place of publick worship which they intend to consecrate to the service of Almighty God, tomorrow,

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afternoon, and as they have ever profess'd themselves liege subjects to the sovereignty of the United States of America, and have always acted agreeable thereto, they humbly crave the protection and countenance of the chief magistrates in this state to give sanction to their design, and will deem themselves highly honoured by their presence in the synagogue, whenever they judge proper to favour them.

The doors will be open'd at 3 o'clock and the service will continue 'till seven.

The uncertainty of the day of consecration was the sole cause of having delayed this matter 'till now, but earnestly hope it will not be thought too late.

With prayers to the God of Israel for the safety of the United States in general and this commonwealth in particular, we are, gentlemen, most respectfully and most devotedly, in behalf of the congregation,

Jonas Phillips, President,

Michael Gratz, Sol. Marache, etc., etc.
Philadelphia, 12th September, 1782.²⁶

Chapter 8

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AMONG those who were certainly present at the dedication of the synagogue was Haym Salomon. At this time Salomon, a prosperous Philadelphia merchant and broker, was in one respect the congregation's most important member. He was its most liberal contributor.

This man is one of the most fascinating figures in American Jewish history—and one of the most debated. The controversy about Salomon became quite acute in the early 1920's, when the Federation of Polish Jews in America formed a Monument Committee to erect a memorial to him as one of the great financiers of the American Revolution. Thereupon a number of publicists and scholars, believing that there was no justification for a monument to his memory, set out to prick the Haym Salomon "bubble."

The root of the controversy extends back as far as 1827. At that time Haym M. Salomon, a son, wrote to James Madison about his father's affairs, thereby taking the first steps to recover large sums which the son claimed the

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father had advanced to the government during the period of the Revolution.

Haym Salomon, as this legend has it, was a Polish Jewish immigrant who had fled his native land after the partition of 1772. A friend of Pulaski and Kosciusko, he turned, like them, to these hospitable shores. He landed in New York, became a patriot forthwith, and along with others was commissioned by Washington to destroy the warehouses and the ships of the city after its occupation by the British in 1776. In this underground activity he worked closely with General Alexander McDougall, the New York political radical. He was finally caught, thrown into prison, sentenced to death by General Clinton, but managed to free himself by a bribe of a large sum of gold, and fled on August 11, 1778, to Philadelphia.

By this time France had recognized the United States; the Dutch were moving or were being driven by circumstances into the American orbit, and ultimately both began to lend the American government money. It was Haym Salomon—so this story goes—"who was charged with the negotiation of the entire amount of those munificent grants of pecuniary supplies from the governments of France and Holland."

As the French troops began to pour in, he handled all the funds for the support and maintenance of their sea and land forces, 150,000,000 livres, on which he received the regular mercantile commission. All the money he made through these transactions he invested in the Revolutionary cause.

But these large financial dealings—so the tale continues—

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by no means exhausted his contribution to the struggle for American liberty and independence. Frequently he supplied funds to members of Congress, who without his aid could not have remained in office, for they were reduced to their last dollar. Among those whom he so helped were James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, Edmund Randolph, Joseph Reed, Arthur St. Clair, James Wilson, and a number of others.

He was reputed to be close to the French minister, Chevalier de la Luzerne, and to his subordinates, Marbois and La Forest. Even Don Francisco Rendon, the Spanish agent, was dependent on Salomon, for in a letter to Don Diego José de Navarre, Governor-General of Cuba, he is reported to have written: "I am entirely indebted to the practical kindness of Mr. Salomon to support my credit with any degree of reputation, and without it I certainly could not have been able to render that protection and assistance to the subjects of His Most Catholic Majesty which is enforced on me by his royal commands."

Haym Salomon, continues the legend, was the real financial hero of the Revolution: "the man that stood behind Morris and actually produced the actual sums with which the Revolution moved on." He advanced to the government—in one form or another—about \$800,000 of his own money, but when he died, leaving a young widow and helpless children, nothing was left for them. Thus far the story is a curious hodgepodge of fact and fiction.

In spite of the claims made by his family a century ago, and despite the fact that at various times committees of Congress recognized a validity in their demands, members

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of the family have never received one cent. In 1893 the Salomons were willing to waive all rights to financial reimbursement, if only a medal were struck recognizing the services of their distinguished ancestor. Still nothing was done, even though a Congressional committee viewed the suggestion favorably.

When the Federation of Polish Jews of America sought, on the basis of the family tradition, to erect a monument to his memory in New York, it met with strenuous opposition and a denial of the truth of the Salomon story. Indignantly the proponents countered: "America failed to repay the money he advanced, and now men seek to rob him of his posthumous fame."

Max J. Kohler, of German Jewish descent and an able student of American history, was among those who opposed the monument. The project to honor Salomon, he maintained, was motivated not so much by the wish to enshrine the memory of the man, as by the desire of the Polish Jewish federation to emphasize the fact that Polish Jews had come to these shores long before the Russian pogroms of 1881. The sharp differences between Kohler and his cohorts on one side, and the "Polish" Salomonians on the other side, were to some degree a reflection of the rivalry between the old-line German Jewish settlers and the newer, aspiring East European element in American Jewish life. Haym Salomon was accordingly caught in between the disputants; it is our hope to rescue him—if we can—from this awkward position.

It is only fair to Kohler's memory to insist that he was certainly not consciously whipping Polish American Jewry

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with the Salomonic cudgel; he strove to be a conscientious, cautious, and accurate historian, and he nearly always succeeded.

Was the monument justified, or was Professor Worthington C. Ford, the eminent American historian, right when he said that the "story itself is incredible. . . . only as an estimable merchant has he claims to any recognition"? Let us look at the facts.

That Haym Salomon had met his compatriots Pulaski and Kosciusko is possible, yet is nowhere documented. Salomon was undoubtedly a Polish Jew, born in Lissa about the year 1740. At an early age, like all poor Jews of his day, he set out to make his fortune; he could not have been out of his teens. It is very doubtful if he was given even the most elementary and usual Hebrew training; he was certainly never a *yeshibah babur*, a student of a rabbinical academy. It is true that he knew the Hebrew alphabet, but he wrote the most common Hebrew words phonetically, and the few Yiddish words he used are evidence of an incomplete knowledge of his own mother tongue. We know that he usually pressed his friends into service when he found it necessary to write a letter to his family back in Poland.

In his wanderings he acquired a working knowledge of German, French, Italian, Russian, Polish, English, and perhaps some other tongues. Far more to the point, he did acquire an unusual knowledge of finance and made friends among the bankers of the most important European commercial centers.

Haym Salomon was not a member of Shearith Israel in New York. He probably came to America about 1775 or

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even early in 1776, just about the time the patriotic members of the congregation were getting ready to flee before the British invaders. Salomon thus did not have time to affiliate himself with the Jewish Whig group. The new loyalist congregation which soon assembled in the old synagogue has left us no records.

In the summer of 1776, while suttling at Lake George for the American troops, he became known for his warm attachment to their cause, and it was not long, therefore, after the British took New York that Salomon incurred their suspicion. There is every reason to believe that he was an ardent patriot working zealously to undermine them. The facts are that he was arrested by General Robertson and thrown into the military prison, but soon released. There were large numbers of Hessians with the English, and a skilled businessman and interpreter like Salomon would have been invaluable to them. It is by no means improbable that his release was arranged without bribery, through the intervention of some of the Jewish commissary officers who came over from Germany with the Hessians. (There were a number of them, and some of them remained in this country after the war.)

For the next year or two Salomon enjoyed a considerable measure of prosperity in New York. He married, probably for the first time, on July 6, 1777, on a Sunday. We specify "for the first time," because he was already thirty-seven years of age. The bride was fifteen.

Haym's wife, Rachel, was the daughter of Moses B. Franks, a member of the widely-known Anglo-American family. Franks is usually referred to as a wealthy New York

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merchant, probably on the strength of his kinship with Jacob Franks. Actually, as late as 1774, the rolls of the congregation show that he received a load of wood. This may have been charity, or Franks could have received it as the perquisite due him as a synagogal employee, and, if he was working for the congregation, then he was indeed a poor man! On the other hand, Rachel Franks brought Salomon a dowry of 200 pounds New York currency; if this is to be accepted at its face value, it means that Moses B. Franks was no longer impoverished in 1777. It is by no means improbable, however, that the stipulated sum brought by the bride existed only in the contract, and nowhere else, and was inserted as a face-saving device. Such things were done.

The man who engrossed the marriage contract and also served as one of the witnesses was Abraham I. Abrahams. (We now know that the unexplained "I" stands for Isaac, and that he was by origin, though not by birth, a Lithuanian Jew, a "Litvak," one of the first of his tribe in the colonies!) No doubt Abrahams, who was not only scribe but *mohel* as well, also looked forward piously to the merit of another circumcision, and he was not disappointed, for on Tuesday, July 28th, the following year, he officiated for Haym's first-born son, Ezekiel. (The lad grew up to become cashier of the New Orleans branch of the United States Bank.)

While working for the Hessians in New York, Salomon used the opportunity to help his adopted country by propagandizing the mercenaries, but he was finally betrayed, and on August 11, 1778, fled for his life. He barely managed to reach Philadelphia, and there, two weeks later, he penned the following appeal to the Continental Congress:

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To the Honorable, the Continental Congress:

The memorial of Hyam Solomon, late of the city of New York, merchant, humbly sheweth:

That your memorialist was some time before the entry of the British troops at the said city of New York, and soon after taken up as a spy and by General Robertson committed to the Provost; that by the interposition of Lieut. General Heister—who wanted him on account of his knowledge in the French, Polish, Russian, Italian, etc., languages—he was given over to the Hessian commander who appointed him in the commissary way as purveyor chiefly for the officers; that being at New York he has been of great service to the French and American prisoners, and has assisted them with money and helped them off to make their escape; that this and his close connexions with such of the Hessian officers as were inclined to resign, and with Monsieur Samuel Demezes, has rend'ed him at last so obnoxious to the British head quarters that he was already pursued by the guards, and on Tuesday, the 11th inst., he made his happy escape from thence.

This Monsieur Demezes is now most barbarously treated at the Provost's and is seemingly in danger of his life. And the memorialist begs leave to cause him to be rememb'ed to Congress for an exchange.

Your memorialist has upon this event most irrecoverably lost all his effects and credits to the amount of five or six thousand pounds sterling, and left his distressed wife and a child of a month old at New York waiting that they may soon have an opportunity to come out from thence with empty hands.

In these circumstances he most humbly prayeth to grant him any employ in the way of his business whereby he may be enabled to support himself and family. And your memorialist as in duty bound, etc., etc.,

Haym Salomon.

Philad'a Aug't 25th, 1778.²⁷

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Salomon's petition was referred to the Board of War and was probably buried there under hundreds of similar requests.

At thirty-eight, with a wife and an infant child, he began life anew in Philadelphia. He had just lost a fortune, at his own appraisal; five or six thousand pounds sterling was a great deal of money in those days. He settled down to start all over again, as a commission merchant and bill broker, and for three years we hear nothing of him: it is obvious that he was struggling to get a toe hold.

By 1781 it seems that he was on the way up. Following the methods he had used in New York, he began to advertise extensively in the local newspapers, emphasizing his financial connections with France, Holland, and St. Eustatia. (Until its seizure that same year by the English this neutral Dutch island had been the most important depot for commerce between the blockaded United States and Europe.)

The French armed forces in America now employed the multilingual and skilled Salomon to sell their bills of exchange, and we may assume that this one client alone was sufficient to put Salomon back on easy street.

Commissions were liberal, and huge amounts, millions of livres, were involved. Salomon took his orders, probably, from John Holker, the French consul, and Holker, we know, worked hand in glove with Robert Morris.

The latter had, in May, 1781, just accepted the post of superintendent of finance, with the top salary of \$6,000 a year. His was the almost impossible task of whipping the chaotic finances of the struggling country into some sort of

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shape. To accomplish this, he needed an able, honest broker to help sell the bills which were coming in from France, Holland, Spain, and other sources. Salomon was just the man for him and—at Holker's suggestion?—Morris chose him as his chief agent. This was in June, 1781.

Two months later the campaign to corner Cornwallis in Virginia was set under way; Robert Morris was called in and promised to raise the money to make it possible. Judging from the fact that Mr. Salomon the broker is mentioned more than one hundred times in the diary of the superintendent of finance, we may rest assured that Haym pitched in vigorously to help Morris.

Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown in October. The end of the war was in sight, but the peace was not yet at hand. Salomon continued to serve Robert Morris as one of his chief aides, selling bills of exchange, negotiating drafts, and floating securities. He undoubtedly did a very satisfactory job, for the following summer, in July, 1782, Morris permitted Salomon to advertise himself as "Broker to the Office of Finance." "This broker has been usefull to the public interest," Morris wrote in his diary, "and requests leave to publish himself as broker to the office to which I have consented, as I do not see that any disadvantage can possibly arise to the public service but the reverse, and he expects individual benefits therefrom." (It has been suggested that one of the reasons which prompted Salomon to publicize himself in the newspapers as the Broker to the Office of Finance was the need to meet the growing competition of brokers like Isaac Franks, and, later, of Benjamin Nones, Lion Moses, and others.)

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In an advertisement in *The Pennsylvania Packet* of Philadelphia, for July 20, 1782, Salomon informed the public that he was Broker not only to the Office of Finance but also to the consul general of France and to the treasurer of the French army. He stressed that he bought and sold on commission all kinds of commercial paper and bonds for all parts of Europe, the West Indies, and the United States. Bills of exchange excepted, he charged one-half of one per cent commission on all transactions. (Robert Morris, as per contract, paid him only one-half of one per cent on the bills as well.) He lent money, he discounted notes, and he stored and sold on commission tobacco, sugar, and tea. "He flatters himself," continued the advertisement, that "his assiduity, punctuality, and extensive connections in his business, as a broker, is well established in various parts of Europe, and in the United States in particular."

Banking did not exhaust his interests. In the summer of 1782 he engaged actively in the mercantile and import fields. That his entry into commerce was a relatively new venture for him is evidenced by the fact that his name does not occur in the Lopez or Gratz correspondence. With the war approaching its end, the long-blockaded United States was hungering for consumers' goods. In May, he tells a merchant in Virginia, he is ready to ship such goods.

Philadelphia, May 7th, 1782.

Mr. John Brownlow,
Frederickbourg.
Sir:

I have yours of 30th ulto. and am now preparing what you wrote for to be ready againts the waggons come. The hats

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are so much higher than what you judged that I shall defer sending them till I hear further from you. They cannot be got less than 10½ dollars. Silk stockings are also high and scarce, and am afraid shall not be able to send the quantity you want. Goods are grown scarce, and from the number of vessels we have lost, and our capes being now swarming with enemy cruizers, we expect they [the goods will] rise considerably. Inclosed is Major [Robert] Forsyth's draft which I have thought best to send back as they will not accept it till they have all the acc'ts from that department [of the Virginia militia].

I am, sir,

Your hum[bl]'e ser[van]'t,

Haym Salomon.

The forty dollars in fav'r of Rob't B. Chew I have paid.²⁸

Four months later Haym Salomon was in communication with the firm of Watson and Cossoul of France. Elkanah Watson, apparently the senior member, was a remarkable person. Then only twenty-four years of age, he was the head of a large mercantile and banking house. When only seventeen this Massachusetts boy had been sent by the Providence merchant, John Brown—an old business associate of Aaron Lopez—to General Washington at Cambridge, with the welcome load of a ton and a half of gunpowder. In 1779 Watson carried dispatches to Franklin at Paris. After that Watson settled down in partnership with Cossoul in Nantes. It was during that period in his career that the famous writer, agriculturist, and far-visioned transportation economist corresponded with Salomon.

As early as January, 1782, Salomon had sufficiently recovered from his losses in New York to be able to think

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again of helping his family back in Poland. He sent them money through Gumpel Samson in Amsterdam. But when he heard nothing from Samson, he wrote to Nantes, to Watson and Cossoul, asking them to investigate. (Also he wished to remind this French firm of his letter of July, 1782, asking them to report on a Mr. John Cuming of L'Orient, France; Salomon had sent Cuming £1,000 for goods over a year earlier, but had gotten nothing in return.)

Philadelphia, 4th Sept., 1782.

Mess'rs Watson and Cossoul,
Gent'n:

Some few months ago I remitted a bill [of exchange] to Amsterdam to one Mr. Gumpel Samson for the purpose of his forwarding the same to some particular persons as directed. I have certain acc'ts that the bill remitted was paid, and Mr. Samson rec'd the money, but have not been favou'd with a line from said Mr. Samson. I have no manner of doubt but said Mr. Samson has done the needfull as I directed, and attribute his not writing to neglect and the little intercourse this country has as yet with Holland. As the intercourse with your place is more frequent, this is to request that any lettre to my address, directed to you, that you forward the same to me, for which purpose have by this conveyance requested Mr. Samson to forward my lettres to you. Any charges thereon will be thankfully reimbursed by me.

Hope you have rec'd the papers sent you for the recovery of my money in the hands of Mr. Cumings. As by appearance peace [between England and the United States] is near at hand when bussiness can be transacted on some solidity, hope our connections will be established for our mutual interest and proffit. I am with great regard, gent'n,

Your very obe't and very h'e serv't,
H[aym]. S[alomon].²⁹

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The £1,000 which was astray with Cuming could be put to much better use. Salomon was in the habit of lending money to some of the delegates of the Continental Congress who were in desperate need, among them, James Madison. In August of 1782 the future president had written to Edmund Randolph: "I cannot in any way make you more sensible of the importance of your kind attention to pecuniary remittances for me than by informing you that I have for some time past been a pensioner on the favor of Haym Salomon, a Jew broker." The next month Madison was still in as bad shape as ever and reported that other members of the Congress were also in sore need of ready cash. He then borrowed some more money from Jacob I. Cohen, a Richmond merchant.

But evidently even that was not sufficient, and so he directed his steps again to the office of Salomon. It is to be noted that this time Madison does not refer to him as a "Jew." "I am almost ashamed to reiterate my wants so incessantly to you," he wrote to Randolph again, "but they begin to be so urgent that it is impossible to suppress them. The kindness of our little friend in Front Street, near the coffee-house, is a fund which will preserve me from extremities, but I never resort to it without great mortification, as he obstinately rejects all recompense. The price of money is so usurious that he thinks it ought to be extorted from none but those who aim at profitable speculations. To a necessitous delegate he gratuitously spares a supply out of his private stock."

The month of September was a busy one for Salomon. It is true that he was worried because he had no news of

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the remittance which he had sent his family, but he had his satisfactions too. For a generous man the pride and pleasure of helping a man like Madison to remain in Congress must have been great. And Salomon had the additional pleasure the same month of attending the dedication of the first real synagogue building in Pennsylvania, a building which he more than any other man had made possible through his financial contribution.

He was not an official of the congregation at this particular time; he was undoubtedly too busy to accept office. Certainly the choice of honors would have been offered any honorable man who had contributed so large a percentage of the total cost of the new structure erected on Cherry Hill. The building cost £1,815; something less than £1,000 was actually collected by Jonas Phillips. Salomon's contribution was £304, a large sum for a man who had arrived in Philadelphia more dead than alive just four years before. Later he added to his benefactions and gave the synagogue a very fine Scroll of the Law which he had imported from Europe.

Among those who were present at the dedication of the synagogue with Haym Salomon was his good friend, Eleazar Levy, a former Canadian trader. Levy was one of the New York *émigrés* to Philadelphia, "from principles repugnant to British hostilities," as he phrased it.

He was a man with a grievance. Late in May, 1772, he had lent £1,000 on a large plot of ground on the Hudson River known as West Point. The army had moved in, taken over, used up much of the timber for fuel and fortifications, and had thus reduced the value of the land. The

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borrower had finally agreed to pay the mortgage in paper money at forty to one, but Levy had indignantly refused to accept this offer which practically wiped out his equity. In 1779 he petitioned John Jay, President of the Continental Congress, and in 1783 the honorable delegates of the United States and their president, Elias Boudinot, asking for relief. He received but cold comfort from them. In 1779 they told him his petition would be acted upon at the conclusion of the war; in May, 1783, they informed him "that in their opinion it is not expedient for Congress to take any order therein." That ended the matter.

It was to this man that Salomon turned in January, 1783, in the matter of the money sent to his family in Poland. Aware of Levy's many connections, he asked him to write to his friend "Samy" in Amsterdam. "Samy," Samuel Myers, was a member of the firm of Isaac Moses and Company and of the interlocking firm of Samuel and Moses Myers with offices at Amsterdam, Philadelphia, and New York.

Philadelphia, 9 Jan'y, 1783.

Dear Samy:

At the request of my friend, Mr. Haym Salomon, [I] inclose you two lettres for Mr. Gumble Samson, a Jew merch't or trader, at Amsterdam, which request you will deliver into his own hands. The intent is to be asured that he has received the lettre, and you will be pleased to advise of the delivery.

Some considerable time since, Mr. Salomon, reflecting on the circumstances of his family in Poland, which, when he left many years ago, consisted of a father, a mother, brothers, and sisters, from whom he has not heard, thinking it his duty, now it is in his power to afford them assistance, he upwards of a

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year ago remitted a bill on Amsterdam for five hundred guilders to Mr. Gumpel Samson with directions where his relations lived, and how Mr. Samson was to dispose of the money among them. Tho' many oppurtunities have offered and vessels arrived from Amsterdam, Mr. Samson has not answered Mr. Salomon's lettre or in any manner acknowledged his receipt of the money remitted, tho' the house on which the bill was drawn advise the bill was presented and the money paid by them to Mr. Samson.

Mr. Samson was further requested to forward his lettres to Nantz to Mess'rs Watson and Cossul who had Mr. Salomon's directions thereon. In this Mr. Samson has also been remiss.

Thus having related the circumstances, you will judge of Mr. Salomon's anxiety to hear of his parents and his ardent wish to relieve them, for could he once know Mr. Samson was not inclined to trouble himself with this charitable, tho' unprofitable commission, Mr. Salomon would immediately use his utmost endeavour with some other people and remit another bill.

I need not enlarge further on this matter. Your own feelings will direct you what's necessary in order to [bring] the accomplished relief to these poor relations of Mr. Salomon, whose blessing must follow every individual that in any shape is instrumental therein, I am,

With true regard,
Your affect. friend,
Eleazer Levy.³⁰

A few months later, in April, Salomon finally heard from his folks back home. The money which he sent them had finally come. All told, he received four Yiddish letters from them. These Salomon forwarded to New York, through the courtesy of Eleazar Levy, to Israel Myers, with the

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request that he answer them. Myers no doubt was proficient in Hebrew and Yiddish. Here is Salomon's note to him:

Philadelphia, 29 April, 1783.

Mr. Israel Myers,
New York.

Sir:

I take the liberty in sending you, by Mr. Eleazer Levy, sundry letters rec'd from my parents, which I have to beg of you to answer in the best manner you can and according to the directions that Mr. Levy will give you. I dare say you will partake with me of the joy that I feel on receiving those letters so long wished for, and in relieving them in their necessity. Beg you will answer the four letters, and also please to write duplicates of each which in so doing you will confer an obligation on

Your very obe't serv't,
H[aym]. S[alomon].

N. B. Please to mention to my father the difficulty that I have laboured under in not having any learning, and that I should not have known what to have done had it not been for the languages that I learned in my travels, such as French, English, etc. Therefore would advise him and all my relations to have their children well-educated, particularly in the Christian language[s], and should any of my brothers' children have a good head to learn Hebrew, would contribute towards his being instructed.³¹

Our Eleazar Levy—who was one day to be an administrator of the estate of his deceased friend Haym Salomon—is not to be confused with an Ezekiel Levy to whom Salomon wrote a sharp note the next month through one of his clerks, Samuel Hays. Indeed, there were apparently several Ezekiel Levys at this time: one in Pennsylvania, one in Charlestown, and another in Virginia.

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The Pennsylvania Ezekiel Levy worked in Northumberland in 1777-78 for Aaron Levy, the land agent and founder of Aaronsburg. For part of this time Ezekiel was a soldier—probably a militiaman—and fought at the battle of Germantown. The Charlestown Ezekiel Levy served in Captain Lushington's "Jew Company," and fought at the battle of Beaufort in February, 1779. The Pennsylvania Levy reappeared in September, 1782, as the member of Mikveh Israel who, we recall, was haled before Jonas Phillips and the board and was charged with having shaved on the Sabbath. The third Ezekiel Levy, presumably a converted Jew, was a Virginian who, late in the 1780's, was a vestryman in the Protestant Episcopal church at Williamsburg. The latter was in all probability identical with the Richmond Levy to whom Salomon and Hays wrote in 1783.

It is also possible that the three were one and the same person.

The Pennsylvanian, leaving Northumberland after his enlistment had expired, may well have gone down to Charlestown where, perhaps, he was conscripted to serve with Lushington. After the British occupation of the South Carolina capital, he may have gone north to Philadelphia with the hundreds of other Charlestonians who fled the city. The Northumberland-Charlestown-Philadelphia wanderer could then have migrated to Virginia after the war was over, and there have become a convert. The acerbity of the note to Levy may have been due not only to Salomon's concern for his "hankerchiefs" but also to his distaste for a Jew whose religious fidelity was suspect.

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Philadelphia, 29th May, 1783.

Mr. Ezekiel Levy,
Richmond, Virginia.

Sir:

My patience is almost exausted with your proceedings with regard my hankerchiefs. You having disposed of them nigh these eight months without sending me the acc't of sales, altho' you have been repeatedly solicited to do it. I therefore desire you will imediately send it, and if you have trusted them away [sold them on credit], it must be on your own acc't, as it was my expres orders not to sell one farthing's worth on credit, as will appear [in] my leters [to] you. I am, for H[aym]. S[alomon].,

Your obe't serv't,
S[amuel]. H[ays].³²

Occasionally Salomon took time out to write a purely gossipy note. A fellow-member of Mikveh Israel, Bar't Moses Spitzer, was on a trip to Charlestown. (In the Philadelphia congregational records Bar't was listed as Barendt Barnett, Bernard.) Spitzer had been appointed a Deputy Grand Inspector of Masonry for Georgia by Moses M. Hays, but there is no evidence proving that he ever participated in the development of the fraternal order in that colony. It was a paper appointment.

Here is Salomon's note to Bar't:

Philadelphia, 20 June, 1783.

Mr. Bar't M. Spitzer,
Charlestown, South Carolina.

Sir:

I am surprised after the many assurances that you gave of writing to me that you have not yet done it. However will admit this as an excuse, that your whole time is devoted to

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the lady's and can't spare time to inform a friend of your welfare, how ever desirous he may be of hearing.

I doubt if the lady's here have the same reason to coplain of your neglect. Am certain you would not make it long before your return, was you to know how disereous the lady's are of your presence. And one in particular who wishes that no pecuniary vews [views] may get the better of the partiality you always entertained for her.

Time will not permit me to inlarge, but be asured that you may command any thing that is in the power of

Your obe't servant.

[Haym Salomon.]⁸³

The impression was abroad that *Reb Hayyim* ["Mr. Haym"] was a *nadib meod*, a "great philanthropist" and a man of wealth, and there is evidence of his generosity to some European suppliants. Salomon, who was no bluffer, admitted in a letter to John Strettel, a London merchant: "My bussiness is a broker, and chiefly in bills of exchange, and so very extensive that I am generally known to the mercantile part of North America." As the chief broker for Morris, as an agent for the French army and navy, for the French diplomatic representative and consuls, for the Dutch and the Spanish, he was in truth no small fry.

Salomon's earnest effort to help his family in the 1780's was something of a strategic error. His relatives, discovering his affluence, now descended upon him—at least through letters. (Jewish relatives, particularly the learned among them, do not ask for help; they demand it as a matter of right. After all, haven't all American relatives always been rich!)

The following letter, an answer to a wandering uncle in

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England—Joseph Elis?—shows that the importunities of his relatives were beginning to get under his skin.

Philadelphia, 10 July, 1783.

[Dear Uncle:]

I rec'd your last letter inclosing a letter for Aaron Levy [the merchant and founder of Aaronsburg]. I will now answer your several letters fully. I have ordered fifty guilders to be paid you by Mr. Gumble Samson in Amsterdam, which letter giving that order you must already have rec'd, and I now send you an order for six guinies.

Your bias of my riches are too extensive. Rich I am not, but the little I have I think it my duty to share with my poor father and mother. They are the first that are to be provided for by me, and must and shall have the preference. Whatever little more I can squeeze out I will give my relations, but I tell you plainly and truly that it is not in my power to give you or any relations yearly allowances. Don't you nor any of them expect it. Don't fill your mind with vain and idol expectations and golden dreams that never will nor can be accomplished. Besides my father and mother, my wife and children must be provided for. I have three young children, and as my wife is very young may have more, and if you and the rest of my relations will consider things with reason, they will be sensible of this I now write. But notwithstanding this I mean to assist my relations as far as lays in my power.

I am much surprised at your intention of coming here. Your *yikes* [family and academic background] is worth very little here; nor can I emagion what you mean to do here. I think your duty calls for your going to your family, and besides these six guinies you will receive in Amsterdam fifty guinies of Mr. Gumble Samson.

You are pleased to say you have done a great deal for my family. Let my father and the *a'bd dk''k Lissa* ["rabbi of Lissa"] write me the particular services you have done to my

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family, and I will consider in what manner to recompense them.

I desire no relation may be sent. Have I not children, are they not relations? When I shall be fully informed of all the young people of our family and their qualifications explained, I may then perhaps advise sending one or two to this country, and I will at my leisure explain to you the nature of this country: *vinig yidishkayt* ["little Jewishness"].

I am, with true respect, dear uncle,

Your affec'te nephew,
Your very hum'e serv't,⁸⁴
[Haym Salomon.]

By the fall of 1783 Salomon found time for a more active interest in congregational life and became a member of the *junta* of Mikveh Israel. The trustees and their "rabbi" were men who knew the cost of freedom through bitter experience for, with the exception of one man, they were all refugees. These were the men who addressed themselves, in December, 1783, to an old problem: the limitation of their political and religious liberties.

When, in 1776, a new constitution was adopted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, section ten of the Frame of Government had the following provision: "Each member [of the House of Representatives] before he takes his seat, shall make and subscribe the following declaration, viz.: 'I do believe in one God, the creator and governor of the universe, the rewarder of the good and the punisher of the wicked. And I do acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by Divine Inspiration.'" Such a declaration could be made in good conscience only by a Christian. The provision—with its belief

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in the divinity of Jesus—was a serious obstacle to Jewish citizens; it barred them from serving as members of the state legislature.

Jews in this country had a tradition of fighting for their rights ever since the time of Asser Levy, who, in 1655, protested against the refusal to permit him to stand guard on the walls of New Amsterdam. After the adoption of the act of 1740, when Jews were allowed to become citizens, Aaron Lopez was compelled to fight for the privilege of naturalization. He had been denied that right in the colony of Rhode Island. Moses Michael Hays, in 1776, had been vigorous and forthright in refusing to take a special oath after some overzealous people had tried to “smear” him as a Tory.

Jews understood the meaning and the significance of the Declaration of Independence; the universality of its concept was imbedded deep in their religion. Jonas Phillips, we will recall, had sent a copy to Gumpel Samson in Amsterdam, in July, 1776, just a few weeks after it was issued.

Philadelphia Jewry was fully aware that there was a church minority who were eager to deprive all but Protestant Christians of the privileges of civil and religious equality, even in the millennial days of '76. This conservative group was convinced that the proposed new state constitution, even though it imposed a Christian test oath, was much too liberal. Their leader, Henry Melchior Mühlenberg, the outstanding Lutheran of his generation, believed that if the new constitution was adopted, Christian people would be “ruled by Jews, Turks, Spinozists, Deists, per-

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verted naturalists." The American republic would become another "Sodom"!

A Mr. "R.," in *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* for September 24, 1776, wanted to impose constitutional safeguards that would expressly deny Jews and Turks the opportunity of becoming large landowners in the state and officers of the government. Such a situation would create "national slavery"; it would be "unsafe for Christians."

Two days later "A Follower of Christ" wrote even more frankly in the same newspaper: "An Episcopal church, a Presbyterian meeting-house, a Roman Catholic church, a mosque, a synagogue or heathen temple, have now in Pennsylvania all equal privileges! Will any Christian power call this state for the future a Christian state? Will it not be an asylum for all fugitive Jesuits, and outcasts of Europe? . . . If blasphemers of Christ and the holy blessed Trinity, despisers of revelation and the holy Bible, may be legislators, judges, counsellors, and presidents in Pennsylvania. Wo unto the city! Wo unto the land."

For Jews this was medieval bigotry, un-American and dangerous doctrine. But as long as the war was on, they did not feel it expedient to protest against "section ten." However, in 1783, when the conflict was over and the enemy had been routed, the issue of political freedom could be raised. The spirit of liberty was in the air: the wide estates of the Tories were broken up and distributed; the old English laws of primogeniture and entail that made for aristocratic control and tradition were abolished; the Anglican church was in the process of disestablishment; the

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Catholics were given more opportunity; and even anti-slavery sentiment began to flourish.

The doughty trustees of Mikveh Israel addressed the following memorial to the Pennsylvania Council of Censors, an official committee of the state charged with safeguarding the rights of the people:

[December, 1783.]

To the honourable, the Council of Censors, assembled agreeable to the constitution of the State of Pennsylvania.

The memorial of Rabbi Ger. Seixas of the synagogue of the Jews at Philadelphia, Simon Nathan, their *parnass* or president, Asher Myers, Bernard Gratz, and Haym Salomon, the *mahamad*, or associates of their council, in behalf of themselves and their bretheren Jews, residing in Pennsylvania, most respectfully sheweth:

That by the tenth section of the Frame of Government of this commonwealth [adopted in 1776], it is ordered that each member of the general assembly of representatives of the freemen of Pennsylvania, before he takes his seat, shall make and subscribe a declaration which ends in these words, "I do acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration," to which is added an assurance that "no further or other religious test shall ever hereafter be required of any civil officer or magistrate in this state."

Your memorialists beg leave to observe that this clause seems to limit the civil rights of your citizens to one very special article of the creed, whereas, by the second paragraph of the declaration of the rights of the inhabitants, it is asserted without any other limitation than the professing the existence of God, in plain words, "that no man who acknowledges the being of a God can be justly deprived or abridged of any civil rights as a citizen on account of his religious sentiments." But certainly this religious test deprives the Jews of the most emi-

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ment rights of freemen, solemnly ascertained to all men who are not professed atheists.

May it please your Honors: Although the Jews in Pennsylvania are but few in number, yet liberty of the people in one country, and the declaration of the government thereof, that these liberties are the rights of the people, may prove a powerful attractive to men who live under restraints in another country. Holland and England have made valuable acquisitions of men, who, for their religious sentiments, were distressed in their own countries.

And if Jews in Europe or elsewhere should incline to transport themselves to America, and would, for reason of some certain advantage of the soil, climate, or the trade of Pennsylvania, rather become inhabitants thereof, than of any other state, yet the disability of Jews to take seat among the representatives of the people, as worded by the said religious test, might determine their free choice to go to New-York, or to any other of the United States of America, where there is no such like restraint laid upon the nation and religion of the Jews, as in Pennsylvania.

Your memorialists cannot say that the Jews are particularly fond of being representatives of the people in assembly or civil officers and magistrates in the state, but with great submission they apprehend that a clause in the constitution, which disables them to be elected by their fellow citizens to represent them in assembly, as [is] a stigma upon their nation and their religion, and it is inconsonant with the second paragraph of the said bill of rights. Otherwise, Jews are as fond of liberty as other religious societies can be, and it must create in them a displeasure when they perceive that for their professed dissent to a doctrine, which is inconsistent with their religious sentiments, they should be excluded from the most important and honourable part of the rights of a free citizen.

Your memorialists beg farther leave to represent that in the religious books of the Jews, which are or may be in every

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man's hands, there are no such doctrines or principles established as are inconsistent with the safety and happiness of the people of Pennsylvania, and that the conduct and behaviour of the Jews in this and the neighbouring states, has always tallied with the great design of the Revolution; [they beg farther leave to represent] that the Jews of Charlestown, New-York, New-Port, and other posts occupied by the British troops, have distinguishedly suffered for their attachment to the Revolution principles; and their brethren at St. Eustatius, for the same cause, experienced the most severe resentments of the British commanders.

¹⁰ The Jews of Pennsylvania, in proportion to the number of their members, can count with any religious society whatsoever the Whigs [the patriots] among either of them. They have served some of them in the Continental army; some went out in the militia to fight the common enemy; all of them have cheerfully contributed to the support of the militia and of the government of this state.

¹¹ They have no inconsiderable property in lands and tenements, but particularly in the way of trade, some more, some less, for which they pay taxes. They have, upon every plan formed for public utility, been forward to contribute as much as their circumstances would admit of, and as a nation or a religious society, they stand unimpeached of any matter whatsoever against the safety and happiness of the people.

¹² And your memorialists humbly pray that if your honours, from any other consideration than the subject of this address, should think proper to call a convention for revising the constitution, you would be pleased to recommend this to the notice of that convention.⁸⁵

¹³ The memorial reflects almost every nuance of apologetics which the modern Jew has employed in his search for a fuller life. In touching upon the philosophic bases of freedom, in stressing the political rights to which he was entitled, and

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in pointing to the economic advantages which the Jew brought to every country that had the wisdom to grant him the liberty he sought, the document is a classical example of similar memorials in other lands.

When this memorial was read by the Censors it was ordered to be laid on the table, and was forgotten—for the time. Yet there were some who recognized the reactionary nature of the disability. A correspondent who commented on this memorial in *The Freeman's Journal* of January 21, 1784, said "that he could wish, as a friend to the state of Pennsylvania, and as a friend to Christianity, that the religious test that should be required before the admission to any office whatever in the commonwealth, were, what the declaration of rights avows to be sufficient, simply this, 'I believe in one God, the creator and governor of the universe, the rewarder of the good and the punisher of the wicked.'" Continuing, the correspondent wrote that "he conceives that this abridgment of our religious test would be attended with the most beneficial consequences. It would benefit the state, by inviting hither a great number of Jews, who for their wealth, their information, and their attachment to the cause of liberty, might be of extensive and permanent service. It would tend to the propagation of Christianity by impressing the minds of the Jews, from this generous treatment, with sentiments in favour of the gospel, etc."

Protests of this type were not without influence. Although in general a much more conservative attitude was reflected in the new constitution of 1790, in one respect at least it was more liberal. The disability against Jews was

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removed, and it was now declared "that no person, who acknowledges the being of a God and a future state of rewards and punishments, shall, on account of his religious sentiments, be disqualified to hold any office or place of trust or profit under this commonwealth."

Salomon and his associates had made their appeal on behalf of the Jews of Pennsylvania, yet all these signers, with the exception of Barnard Gratz, the Philadelphian, eventually returned to their home, New York, or prepared to move there.

In the spring of 1784 Salomon bought a house at the corner of Wall and Pearl Streets, New York. He formed, with Jacob Mordecai, a partnership which advertised that they would open an auction house, receive merchandise and wares for sale on commission, and act as brokers to buy and sell commercial paper and bank stocks.

Salomon seemed at the peak of his powers, a relatively young man of forty-four, with a young wife and an increasing brood, but his health was poor. He made final provisions for his aged parents: he sent his mother a gold chain, and for his father back in Poland he purchased denization rights and a burial plot.

Several months later *The Pennsylvania Packet* of Philadelphia carried the following simple notice on January 11, 1785: "Thursday last, expired, after a lingering illness, Mr. Haym Salomons, an eminent broker of this city; he was a native of Poland, and of the Hebrew nation. He was remarkable for his skill and integrity in his profession, and for his generous and humane deportment. His remains were on Friday last deposited in the burial ground of the synagogue,

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in this city." Four children, all under seven, and a young widow remained behind to mourn him.

We can now revert to the original question. Several years after the death of Max Kohler a monument was finally erected to the memory of Salomon, not in New York, but in Chicago. Did Salomon merit the monument, as the Federation of Polish Jews contends? Or was Kohler right?

The *Dictionary of American Biography* informs us that Salomon either gave or lent to the government and to its servants sums aggregating almost \$700,000 which were never repaid. Yet the facts are—Kohler demonstrated this in his *Haym Salomon, the Patriot Broker of the Revolution*—that he did not lend or give the government sums of such size. Indeed, he never had them to give away; he could not have had them, for by his own admission he landed in Philadelphia in 1778 without any money. It was not until 1782 that he was again back on his feet and able to send some money to his impoverished family in Eastern Europe. It would have been impossible for him to have made such fabulous sums in four years; had he done so, he would have been the richest man in America, and there is no real evidence to prove that he ever possessed substantial wealth.

Salomon himself, moreover, never made the claim that the government owed him huge sums. It was the son who did so, many decades after the father's death. While it is a fact that the extant records show that Salomon paid the government, through Morris, large sums of money, those sums were for drafts and bills which were sent by the French, Dutch, Spanish, and others to the United States

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and turned over to Morris for negotiation and sale. Salomon sold these bills, deposited the money initially to his own account in the bank, and then turned it over to Morris and the government. He was an agent; the money only passed through his hands. It was all government money, not his own. Later generations, either deliberately or unwittingly, chose to believe that his own money was handed over, because the records showed that it was originally deposited in his name.

Why, then, a monument to this man? If it is understood that Salomon is a symbol of the participation of the American Jew in the struggle for independence, then he merits the memorial. The American Revolution was a "Battle of the Nations" for freedom: English, Scots, Irish, Germans, Dutch, and a host of others . . . the "huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse . . . the homeless, tempest-tost." All these groups have helped build America, and monuments have been erected to representative leaders of the ethnic elements, to individuals like Kosciusko and Pulaski.

Salomon did a craftsman's job for Robert Morris. He was without doubt the most competent bill broker in America—and an honorable man. We have every reason to believe that his work met with the unreserved approval of the French, the Dutch, and the Spanish. Of course he received his commissions. But Robert Morris was paid, too; while Superintendent of Finance he carried on a thriving private business and emerged an even richer man than when he started.

When Salomon died—in the midst of a severe postwar depression—he left a modest estate, but his obligations swal-

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lowed it up. He died insolvent. Merchants who found it difficult to pay were indebted to him for considerable sums. He made himself personally liable, through his own signature, for many of the drafts and bills of exchange which he handled on behalf of the government. And when these bills were not honored, he accepted liability without protest. This may have ruined him. Practically all of his estate was assigned to his chief creditor: the Bank of North America, Morris' bank.

At the risk of his own life—in New York, from 1776 to 1778—he helped French and American prisoners to escape; he induced Hessians to desert; he went to prison for his patriotism when he could well have made his peace and fortune with the English in New York; he fled from his home and left behind him wife and infant; he floated securities to the amount of \$200,000; he helped keep Madison and others in Congress by lending them money without charge; he fought for political and religious liberty in Pennsylvania; and he gave liberally, munificently, that his fellow-Jews might worship the God of their fathers in dignity and devotion in a synagogue of their own.

He was Colonial America at its best. As a symbol and as a man he merits not only the respect and the affection of this generation, but also the monument which his admirers built to do him honor.

Notes

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33. *Ibid.* Printed in Russell, *Haym Salomon*, p. 234.
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