

THE
Jewish Veteran

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JEWISH WAR VETERANS OF THE UNITED STATES

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JULY



1937



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DAUGHTERS OF 1776

Jewish Ladies of the Revolution

By ANNE RUTH SELSTAL

We know a great deal about the Jewish patriots of the American Revolution, but not much about their ladies. Miss Selstal pays tribute to the outstanding Jewish women of that day in this Fourth of July contribution.

THE EDITOR.

ALTHOUGH chroniclers of American Jewish history have produced a vast literature dealing with the Jewish patriots of the American Revolutionary era, they have been strangely silent on the fact that the Jewish women of Revolutionary days also occupied a place of prominence in the life of Colonies. On the eve of the Fourth of July it is timely that we pause to pay tribute to these Jewish daughters of 1776.

It is a curious thing that the best known Jewess of the Revolutionary era was the daughter of one of the handful of Jews who remained loyal to King George. She was the witty, flirtatious, beautiful and light-hearted Rebecca Franks, daughter of David Franks, the only member of the family of that name who was a Loyalist. Rebecca found a ready entry to Colonial society because her father, who was a member of the New York Provincial Legislature in 1748, was a prosperous merchant. During the French and Indian War he was the chief provisioner of the army and after the tragic Braddock campaign he helped raise \$25,000 for the defense of the colony. Although he signed the Non-Importation Resolutions in 1765, he refused to join the Revolution. Twice arrested during the war, he was the chief victualler of the British Army.

As the daughter of David Franks and Margaret Evans, a Philadelphia belle, Rebecca became the friend of British and American officers, all of whom admired her. While Major Andre, the British officer who was captured in the Benedict Arnold episode, was a paroled prisoner in Philadelphia, he stayed at the Franks' home where he spent his time making miniatures of the beautiful Rebecca. During the British occupation of Philadelphia she was the reigning belle of the city. British officers made her home their rendezvous, and General Howe, who was a frequent visitor, tells in his letters of the amusing remarks of the witty Rebecca. So famous was she as a satirist and punster that she was credited with being the author of an anonymous poem called "The Times—A Poem by Camilio Querno—Poet Laureate of Congress," which lampooned the Revolutionary leaders. She was in frequent correspondence with leaders in both camps. General Charles Lee, Washington's rival proposed to her, but she married Sir Henry Johnson, a lieutenant-colonel in the British army, who later became a general.

What Rebecca was to Philadelphia society, her cousin Phila was to New York. The daughter of the pious Jacob Franks, one of the founders of the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue, she was much sought after by the gay blades of the New York aristocracy. She married Oliver Delancey, after whose family Delancey Street is named, and as a bride she was taken to live in a house at Pearl and Broad Streets which has become historically famous. It was there that Washington bade farewell to his officers at the close of the Revolution. Rebecca's sister, Abigail, was also a distinguished

lady, who became the bride of Andrew Hamilton 3d, grandson of the man who built Independence Hall in Philadelphia.

While these Franks women were losing their Jewish identity by marrying into prominent Christian families, two other Franks girls were achieving a different sort of fame. One of these was Rachel Franks, the daughter of Moses B. Franks of New York and a cousin of Phila Franks, and the other was Bilhah Abigail Franks, mother of Phila. Rachel Franks was the wife of the famous Haym Salomon, whom she married in 1777. Like the wives of all great men, Mrs. Salomon kept in the background and consequently little is known about her. When Salomon was arrested in 1778 in New York as a British spy, she was left to shift for herself among the hostile Loyalists. Not until Salomon managed to escape and reach Philadelphia was she able to rejoin him. During the years that he has expending his fortune to secure American independence, she lived modestly. And when Salomon died in 1785 at the age of 45, she was left an impoverished widow with four young children.

Of all the Franks women, Bilhah Abigail was the most Jewish. Although her father, Moses Levy, was acceptable in Christian as well as Jewish society because of his socially prominent business friends. Bilhah Abigail remained a strict Jewess. It was as natural for her to marry the pious Jacob Franks as it was for Rachel Franks to be the dictator of Philadelphia society. Bilhah Abigail was a worthy mate for Jacob. She organized the ladies of the Spanish-Portuguese Congregation into a unit to obtain funds for the building of the synagogue. The congregational records show that her enthusiasm was so inspiring that every Jewess in New York contributed something. Her efforts stamped her as the spiritual mother of synagogue women's auxiliaries.

Less spectacular than the women of the Franks clan was Miriam Gratz, daughter of Joseph Simon of Lancaster who played a major part in the development of Colonial trade with the Indians. Miriam, who married Michael Gratz, her father's partner, was the domestic type but because her husband's business took him away from home for months at a time, she had to familiarize herself with the business. The Simon home in Lancaster was the gathering place for traders, Indians, soldiers and trappers. In her husband's absence Miriam ruled over a commercial empire that extended as far

north as Canada and as far west as the Ohio River. She could drive a bargain with the most canny trader. It was also her duty to keep the firm's agents in touch with each other by post and in this she had frequent occasion to come in contact with men like George Rogers Clarke and the soldiers from the Ohio and Tennessee valleys, who made the Simon home a stopping off place.

This picture of the Jewish women of the Revolutionary era would not be complete without mention of Esther Hays, Reyna Touro, Mrs. Philip Minis and Mrs. Mordecai Sheftall. Esther Hays, wife of David Hays, a patriot farmer of Bedford in Westchester County, was a true daughter of the Revolution. When her husband volunteered to drive a herd of cattle through the British lines to the American forces during a food shortage, Mrs. Hays was left alone with a new born baby and two Negro slaves. Her Tory neighbors became suspicious of her husband's absence and demanded that she tell them where he had gone. But cajolery, bullying and threats were unavailing against the brave Jewess' patriotism. Finally the enraged Tories burned down the Hays' home to revenge themselves on the defiant patriot, who was carried to safety with her infant by her slaves.

Reynaw Touro was the widowed sister of Moses Michael Hays, who settled in Boston in 1775. They were the first Jews in that stronghold of Puritanism but Hays, a man of wealth and culture, moved in the first circles of society. His sister was an accomplished hostess and she gave many notable parties to raise war funds. Her oldest son, Judah, was the famous Jewish philanthropist who helped finance the Bunker Hill Monument in the city to which his mother came as a stranger. Mrs. Minis was the wife of Philip Minis, a Jewish patriot from Georgia who not only advanced money to the Revolutionary cause but fought in the ranks. When the British captured Savannah Mrs. Minis was so widely known as an American patriot that the British officers punished her by forcing her and her daughter to do menial tasks. Mrs. Sheftall, the wife of Mordecai Sheftall, who was so aggressive a rebel that the British had him on a blacklist and threw him into prison when they took Savannah, was no less a patriot than her husband. After her husband and son were captured, she fled to Charleston, arriving just before the British besieged the city. At the risk of her own life she devoted herself to nursing the defenders of the city who were suffering not only from the continuous cannonading but from a raging smallpox epidemic.

Such were the Jewish daughters of 1776: the beautiful and light-hearted Rebecca Franks; the heroic Esther Hays; the tragic Rachel Salomon; the patriotic Mrs. Minis; the self-sacrificing Mrs. Sheftall; the pious Bilhah Franks; the cultured Reyna Touro; and the home-loving and practical Miriam Gratz.

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The Declaration of Independence

On July 4th, 1776, in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, fifty-five men affixed their signatures to a document which has taken its place among the great charters of human liberty. In signing the Declaration of Independence the founding fathers were not merely giving birth to a political decalogue which was to lay the political foundation for the world's greatest democracy, but were in effect proclaiming the liberty of oppressed people for all time. The words of the Declaration of Independence became clarion calls to the oppressed throughout the world. The fires lit in Philadelphia on that Fourth of July 161 years ago later burst into flames in France, Latin-America and other parts of the world where tyrants held sway. No better phraseology of man's inherent right to freedom has ever been devised.

The Declaration of Independence sowed a seed which was destined to take root and grow in every land of oppression. With its ringing words in their ears and hearts, the brave men of 1776 set out to build a new nation dedicated to peace and equality for all men. Under its inspiration they found an asylum for the persecuted of every land and clime. Seven bloody years of war were required before the ideals of the Declaration of Independence could become a fact.

Since that glorious day on every battlefield, in every land where men fought to make men free, even to the Marne and the Argonne, the most potent weapon, the eternal torch which guided an embattled and harassed world, was the Declaration of Independence. It became the universal pattern and symbol to free the world of tyranny and to imbue the oppressed with hope and deliverance.

Today when the world is beset with a variety of "isms" which are the antithesis of the Declaration of Independence and whose advocates would ruthlessly destroy the ideals which it symbolizes, it is well for us as Americans to remember that noble document and the men who conceived it. Few of us

have ever troubled to read the Declaration, although we often quote from it. The high ideals and objects of the Jewish War Veterans are based on its concepts. In these troublous and uncertain times of potential political and economic change it behooves us to turn back to the Declaration of Independence and make its ideals our own for in its high-minded sentiments lie the answers to the problems that now beset us.

Jewish Chaplains

A preliminary investigation by J.W.V. has shown the existence of a deplorable situation with regard to Jewish chaplains in the military and naval services of the United States. So far as available records indicate there are no full time Jewish chaplains in the Army, Navy or Marine Corps, although the Officers Reserve Corps includes 17 Jewish chaplains. Among the full time chaplains assigned to the C.C.C. camps there is only one rabbi at present but there are 16 Jewish chaplains serving C.C.C. camps on a part-time basis. With regard to Jewish chaplains in the U. S. Veterans Hospitals, the situation is better, there being rabbis holding such appointments.

There are no exact figures for the number of Jews in the country's armed services or in the C.C.C. camps, but some idea of the need for full-time Jewish chaplains may be obtained from the record of services performed during 1936 by the Army and Navy Service Department of the Jewish Welfare Board. This department conducted welfare and religious activities at 270 army posts, naval stations and government hospitals in the United States and outlying possessions and provides for the religious needs of some 4,000 Jewish men last Passover. These figures demonstrate that there is a need for a few full-time Jewish chaplains.

The fact that a permanent Jewish chaplain was recently assigned to West Point for the first time indicates that the government authorities are sympathetic. This is a job for the proper officials of J.W.V.

Now There Are Three

In the May issue of The Jewish Veteran, Comrade Maxwell Cohen, national Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, contributed an article called "Five Who Survive," in which he told about the five J. W. V. Jewish survivors of the Civil War. Only a few days after that article appeared two of those survivors, Col. Isaac de Costa and Henry Bornstein, passed away.

Both were past 90 and both were active in J. W. V., despite their advanced age. Colonel De Costa was a past commander of Cutler Post No. 3 of New York, while Comrade Bornstein belonged to Boston Post No. 22. Those who knew these two grand old men will mourn them deeply. They were great patriots and fine gentlemen. J.W.V. will miss them.

Hitler vs The Vatican

When the Hitler regime first came into power in Germany there were far-sighted men and women who predicted that by its very nature the Nazi government would have to make war on the Catholics and Protestants. At the outset, of course, the Nazis struck at the Jews, the weakest and most exposed element. Then they attacked labor. Next came the Protestants. And now the Catholics are feeling the iron hand of persecution. There were a few Catholic leaders in this country and abroad who saw what was coming, but the Catholic Church as a whole hesitated to cross swords with Hitler. Its leaders felt that some compromise might be reached which would preserve the church in Germany. But this optimism has now been proven groundless. Today the plight of the Catholics in Germany is only slightly better than that of the Jews. All that remains for them to share the fate of the Jews is for the Nazis to extend to them the anti-Jewish boycott.

From the utterances of the Pope, Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago, Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich and other distinguished Catholic prelates, it is now plain that world Catholicism has abandoned hope of making peace with Hitlerism. All signs point to open war. If Hitler were as good a historian as he is a bully and braggart, he would never have crossed swords with Catholicism. No secular power in modern times has ever vanquished the Vatican. If and when the Catholic Church unlooses the full strength of its power against Nazism, the days of Hitler and his gang will be numbered. And when that time comes—most people think it is not far off—we shall find Catholics, Protestants and Jews standing shoulder to shoulder in a holy crusade against Nazism—the greatest menace to civilization.

Refugee Department

This is one of our most important tasks, and probably our least publicized,—mainly due to our modest Chairman, Bruno Frankel.

The Jewish War Veterans Association of Germany recommend all of their comrades to visit JWV Headquarters for assistance and guidance. Hundreds of other refugees come to our offices. Three afternoons a week, Bruno is there to aid, counsel, guide, and sympathize. In addition to procuring jobs for them, which most of them want and need, he must find them temporary food and lodging, locate their friends and relatives, translate their letters, and write others for them. Not a little money comes out of his own pocket in the most needy cases.

Bruno does not complain, but this is not a "one-man" job. A few comrades in the Metropolitan district are urged to volunteer their services. There are many comrades in our various posts who employ men who might be able to use one of these refugees. Sam Klein of St. Louis and several other posts have already been helpful. But all too few. This appeal is made to ALL comrades, who feel this work is important, and can volunteer some kind of help.

SONS OF THE REVOLUTION

Forgotten Heroes of 1776

By FRANCIS ROTH

The names of some of the lesser known Jewish patriots and their achievements in the American Revolution are revived by Mr. Roth in this timely historical review on the occasion of Independence Day.

THE EDITOR.

ALTHOUGH there were scarcely more than 3,000 Jews in British America at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, so large a proportion of them took part in the struggle for American independence that the list of those who can claim that supreme badge of American patriotism, kinship with a son of the Revolution is amazingly large. No one has attempted to compile a list of the Jews who now belong to the Sons of the Revolution, but a review of some of the highlights of Jewish participation in the American Revolution shows that the Jews who are entitled to membership in that organization are more numerous than one would imagine.

Anyone even vaguely familiar with the facts knows all about Haym Salomon, Col. David Franks, Mordecai Sheftall and other Jewish heroes of 1776. But there were many others, less well known to fame, who won a niche among the Jewish sons of the revolution. The faded inscriptions on the crumbling tombstones in the oldest Jewish cemetery in North America, now hidden behind an iron fence within a stone's throw of New York's Chinatown, tell an eloquent story of Jewish patriotism. In this tiny burial ground lie the remains of many Jewish sons of the Revolution, who fortified the cemetery to impede the advance of the British.

In the shadow of teeming tenements these tombstones attest the heroism of American Jewry in 1776. There one can read the names of Jews who helped make American history. There are the remains of Manuel Noah, who served on the staffs of General Marion and Washington; of David Hays, who risked his life to forage for food for Washington's army; of Rabbi Gershom Mendes Seixas, who rather than officiate in his synagogue during the British occupation of New York closed it and moved to Philadelphia; of Jonas Phillips, who served as a private in the Continental Army; and of Simon Nathan, who helped provision and equip the Continental Army; and of many others unknown to fame.

But there are other cemeteries, with other inscriptions that tell a similar story. In Pennsylvania one finds the remains of Solomon Bush, who was a lieutenant-colonel in the Pennsylvania militia; Major Lewis Bush, who was killed at the battle of Brandywine; and Colonel Isaac Franks. The cemeteries of South Carolina, Georgia and Virginia bear mute testimony to the bravery of Philip Minis, David Cardozo, Isaac Israel, Nathaniel Levy, David Sarzedas, Francis Salvador, Moses Cohen, Solomon Polock and Marks Lazarus. And if one searched in New England's cemeteries one would find the names of Michael Hays of Boston, William Levi of New Hampshire, David Judah and the Pinto brothers, Abraham, William and Solomon, of Connecticut.

Nowhere in the original thirteen colonies that proclaimed their independence on July 4, 1776 does one seek in vain for Jewish patriots. Abraham Seixas served as a lieu-

tenant with the Georgia militia in which Cushman Pollock was a private. The famous Lushington's Company of Charleston, South Carolina, included ten Jews, among them Isaiah Isaacs, Zadok Solomons, Attival Moses, Nathan Phillips and Meyer Solomon. Among the victuallers of the Continental troops were Benjamin Levy, Jacob Hart, Isaac Moses, Samuel Judah, Joseph Simon, the Gratz brothers and Aaron Levy. In addition to the huge sums advanced to the Revolutionary cause by Haym Salomon, such Jews as Meyer Moses and Mordecai Meyers of South Carolina, Hyman Levy of New York and Michael Hays rendered invaluable service.

Philip Moses Russell was at Valley Forge with a Virginia regiment, together with Andrew Moses, Captain Jacob Cohen, Francis Goldman, John Isaac, David Stern, Henry Samuel and Lewis Steinberger. Sheftall Levi of Georgia served a guide for the French volunteers and Levy Andrew Levy was a dispatch courier for Washington. Among the Jews who equipped privateers during the Revolution were Aaron Lopez, Benjamin Seixas, Abraham Sasportas, Isaac Moses, Levi Solomons.

These are the names of only some of the Jewish sons of 1776 who laid down the tradition of Jewish patriotism that has been adhered to by succeeding generations of American Jews. It is an inspiring record of self-sacrifice, devotion and heroism that deserves to be better known. The men who compiled this record were among the real founders of the republic. They risked and gave their lives for American liberty. They fought to establish that democracy which has come to be universally regarded as the greatest of all time.

Their contribution to the achievement of American independence was manifested in many ways. They were soldiers who fought and bled and died in the armies of Washington, Lafayette, Pulaski, De Kalb, Marion. They were merchants who signed the non-importation resolutions and helped feed the army. They were financiers who raised the funds needed to equip the army. They furnished clothing, munitions and horses. They were ship-owners who sent their vessels over the seven seas to harass British merchant men. They served in the official families of officers and made themselves useful in the commissary department. Wherever there

was work to be done, fighting to be done, service to be rendered, there Jewish patriots were to be found.

These then were the Jews of the American Revolution, patriots all.

Hall of Fame

"Let our government look at France, where Jews and Freemasons sit in the French government, but where there is, nevertheless, freedom in the Catholic schools," Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich said in an address to Catholic pilgrims in which he assailed Nazi persecution of religion.

* * * * *

The United States and all other democratic governments ought to undertake joint diplomatic intervention with Poland to prevail upon her to safeguard the rights of her Jewish minority, Supreme Court Justice William T. Collins told the annual convention of the Federation of Polish Jews in America.

* * * * *

Invited to submit affidavits of their Aryanism, as condition of the German production of their play, "Dodsworth," Sinclair Lewis and Sidney Howard refused on the ground they had no idea who their ancestors were in the last few hundred years and asked the German producer to address them by their legal names, Sinclair Levy and Sidney Horowitz.

* * * * *

Dr. Charles S. MacFarland, secretary emeritus of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ, who four years ago opposed the anti-Nazi boycott and urged that Hitler be given a chance to prove himself, denounced the Fuehrer in an open letter in which he charged him with breaking every promise he made, "firfeiting the respect of the civilized world" and leading Germany to an abyss.

* * * * *

The annual convention of the Knights of Columbus of New York adopted a resolution declaring that "any discrimination of employers against employes because of race or creed should be considered un-American and un-Christian."

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Because Andor Palffyi, Christian mayor of the Hungarian city of Szeged, refused to change street names in honor of anti-Semitic leaders, he has been challenged to 100 duels by as many members of the Nazi Arrow and Cross Society.

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If Mexican anti-Nazis choose to depict Hitler as being incarcerated in a jail there's nothing the Mexican government can or will do about it, the Mexican foreign office said in refusing to apologize to Germany for alleged insults to the head of its government by grotesque statues of the Fuehrer that appeared in a workers' parade.