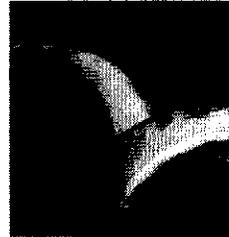
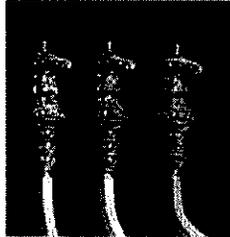


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***Shidduchim, Shandas, and Shaping the Future:  
Family and Social Life in Modern Jewish History***

***Colonial America***

***Dr. Leslie Ginsparg Klein***

***February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013***



THIS COURSE IS DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF:

אסתר חנה ז'ל בת צבי ופרומה עלקא פייגא בת מאיר ופשא לאה ז'ל נח בן אברהם ופייגא ז'ל  
MAY THEIR SOULS BE BOUND IN THE EVERLASTING BOND OF LIFE תהא נשמתם צרוורות בצרור החיים

Important years in Russian Jewish history and Pauline Wengeroff's (PW) life

**Nicholas I 1825-1855 (very reactionary)**

\*Cantonist decree (1827)

- 1830-1833ish, PW born. Don't know exact date.

\*Formally established Pale of Settlement—reinforcing residency restrictions issued by Catherine the Great (1835)

\*Decree that everyone must take a last name (1835)

- 1842, Max Lillienthal comes to Russia
- 1849, PW Engaged

**Alexander II 1855-1881 (more moderate, ended Cantonist decree).**

- 1860s: Disillusionment of Maskilim
- 1871, PW stops keeping a Kosher home
- 1892 Chonon Wengeroff dies
- 1910 PW's memoirs (written in German), *Memoirs of a Grandmother: Scenes from the Cultural History of the Jews of Russia in the Nineteenth Century*, published.
- 1916, PW dies

ABIGAIL FRANKS, NEW YORK, WRITES TO HER  
SON, HEARTSEY, IN LONDON  
1737-1743

*Abigail Bilbab Levy Franks (1696-1756) was married to Jacob Franks (1698-1769), one of the most important merchants and army suppliers in eighteenth-century North America. Abigail was a woman of culture with a good knowledge of English literature and an appreciation of the fine things of life. Her spelling, like that of many of her contemporaries, left much to be desired. She was an observant Jewess and maintained a kosher home, but was critical of some of the Jewish rituals, which she looked upon as superstitions. She and her husband sent two of their sons to London in order to integrate them into the business empire of the Franks brothers, an empire which was international in scope. Undoubtedly she hoped also that in London the boys would find Jewish mates. They did. With justice she feared that if they remained in New York they would marry out. Of the children who did remain at home, two intermarried; the others, it would seem, remained single.*

*Ashkenazi in ancestry, Abigail seems to have kept her Sephardi congregation—most of whose members were, like the Frankses, also of Central and East European provenance—at arm's length. Culturally she was superior to most of them; the Portuguese minority in town tended to keep to themselves; they looked down on the Ashkenazim.*

*Abigail wrote many letters to her son Naphtali (1715-1796) in London. His middle name was Herz or, in English, Hart, but she called him Heartsey. Two of her numerous letters to this beloved son are reproduced in part here. The first, dating from 1737, deals with the death of her brother-in-law Isaac Franks. The second, written in 1743, describes her shock at discovering that her daughter Phyla had secretly married Oliver DeLancey. The Protestant DeLanceys were one of the colonies' most distinguished families, but that circumstance offered Abigail no comfort. Like most eighteenth-century Jews, the Franks were bitterly opposed to intermarriage.*

## XXV

[Abigail Franks to Naphthali Franks,  
December 20, 1741]

New York [Sunday] Decem[ber] ye 20th 1741

Dear Heartsey

I wrote you Last Week by farmer. Since that wee have had the pleasure to hear from You by Via Boston & hope wee Shall Soon have that Satisfaction again, there being more Vessles Expected. As for Our man of war & Store Ships, its thought they will not come in this winter, for As they have bin Our Soe Long, its bleived they have bin on the Coast And Meeting with a Little blowing Weather. They, being Strangers, would not Venture but went of [ ] again, tho' the Weather has bin Soe Very favourable for the time of Year that wee have Constantly had Vessles in Every Week. One Came in this day from bristol And brought Several London Letters. Should have bin pleased to heard from you. I Send You by bryant 2 Cags with peper & one with peaches and one with peper for Mr. Abraham Franks And one for Mrs. Salomons. Alsoe a box in wich is one Jar Sweetmeets for Mrs. Salomons, one for Mr. Abraham Franks, one for Miss Phila Franks, one for your self with 3 Cups of Preserved peaches & 2 with Strawberys. These Last You must turn Upside down out of the Cups, being I put Some Currant Jelly upon them because I had Spilt the Syrup of them. Your Sisters Could Git Noe Squirles<sup>1</sup> this time, but I have bespoke some flying ones Against Next Spring. My Compliments to Mrs. franks. I dont write her by this for I have wrote her twice Since I have rec[eiv]ed any from her: My Love & Service to Mr. Ab[raham] Franks &c. to Mr. Aaron Franks, Mr. Harry Franks & Miss Franks.

<sup>1</sup> Squirrels had a vogue in the eighteenth century as pets. Flying squirrels, native to North America, are mentioned by Capt. John Smith, who called them "assapanick." These animals float through the air by an extension of skin connecting fore and hind limbs.

Mr. Jacob Levy<sup>2</sup> Gives his Love & Service to you. He is an Obliging, good Natured, pritty behav'd young man As Ever I Mett with, but he and his Aunt Disagree Very much, And between Us, I Would Not have ir spoke of again. An angel Could Not Agree with her. Uncle Isaac Levy Can Tell you her Triffling manner, but I beg you will not Say this to Any one, for She and I agree mighty Well. I Never Contradict her; And indeed I don't offen See her Nor any of our Ladys but at Synagogue, for they are a Stupid Set of people. But Mum for that. Hanah Levy was marrid Last Week,<sup>3</sup> And I hope she will doe Very well. If you are Acquainted with Mr. Paterson (or Else Desire Mr. Simson Levy to doe it), Make my Compliments to him, And Tell him I wish him Very Well & Soe does Every branch of my Family. Your friend, Mr. Nap[htali] Myers, makes himself Very Agreeable And Usefull in the Family. I dont att All doubt of his doing well here, for he is Very frugal & carefull.

Since I Wrote ye above Your Father has Rec[eiv]ed y[ou]r Letters by Capt[ain] Cary, Wich Confirms my Wish in hearing you was Well. May the good God have you in his Care & bless & Prosper you is the Constant prayers of My Dear Child.

Your Affectionate Mother,  
Abigail Franks

[Address]

To

Mr. Naphthaly Franks att

<sup>2</sup> Jacob Levy, a merchant, returned to England in 1742, but shortly came again to New York. See following Letter XXVI, June 3, 1742. He probably married Rachel Myers Cohen, nee Michaels, the widow of Samuel, in 1744, since he was involved in litigation in the Mayor's Court as one of the executors of Cohen's estate in that year. *Levy v. Eisen et al.* (1744), MCM file 1742-1748, p. 193; *Levy v. Paterson* (1745), *ibid.*, p. 266; *Con. Lib.* 32, cp. 471; *Con. Lib.* 38, cp. 282; *Wills*, 66.

<sup>3</sup> Hannah Levy and Joshua Isaacs married December 16, 1741. This is the third mention of the marriage by A. F. See Letters XXIII, Oct. 18, 1741, and XXIV, Dec. 13, 1741.

Ships was Randsom[e]d<sup>2</sup> for 90,000 p[iecc]s of 8/8. All here are well  
& Desir'd to be Remember[e]d to you & belive me Sincerely,

D[ea]r Brother Hertsy,

y[ou]r most affec[ionat]e Brother & obed[en]t Serv[an]t

David Franks

Flour 7/9 to 8/<sup>3</sup>

Bread 9/

Exch[ang]e 7/2

Wheat 2/9 to 10<sup>d</sup>

To Mr Nap[htal]y Franks

[Address]

To

Mr. Naphtaly Franks

att Tom's Coffee house

near the Royall Exchange

Cornhill

London

5

via Cape fear p[er] Capt[ain] Cornish

<sup>2</sup> This reference probably is to the capture of several ships by New York privateers during King George's War. See Letter XXII, Sept. 6, 1741, note 3.

<sup>3</sup> These were the current selling prices at Philadelphia for the commodities listed. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 18 and May 5, 1743.

## XXXI

[Abigail Franks to Naphthali Franks, June 7, 1743]

Flatbush<sup>1</sup> [Tuesday] June 7th 1743

Dear Heartsey

My Wishes for your Felicity Are As great as the Joy I have to hear You Are happily Married.<sup>2</sup> May the Smiles of Providence Waite all ways on y[ou]r Incinations And your Dear Phila's, whome I Salute with Tender affections, pray[in]g kind Heaven to be propitious to Your wishes in making her a happy mother. I Shall think the time Teadious Untrill I Shall have that happy Information, for I dont Expect to hear it by the return of these Ships<sup>3</sup> and, therefore, must Injoy Your care in Writing by the first Opportunity (after the birth of whatever it shall please god to bless you with) Either by Via Carolina, barbadoz or any other. I am now retired from Town and would from my Self (if it Where Possible to have Some peace of mind) from the Severe Affliction I am Under on the Conduct of that Unhappy Girl. Good God, Wath a Shock it was when they Acquainted

<sup>1</sup> Flatbush, Brooklyn, was the site of a country residence of the Frankses, although there is no record of their owning property there. They may have rented or been summer guests. A.F. may have been living away from town and not using her Harlem residence in order to obtain privacy as a result of Phila's marriage. (The city was also the scene of a yellow fever "epidemic," which spread along the docks facing the East River. See Cadwallader Colden's account mentioned in note 4 to Letter XXXIV, Dec. 4, 1746.) Flatbush at this time was used as a resort area. Gov. George Clinton wrote in 1751: "I am at Flatbush with family . . . we ride, & shoot & dance & sing & live as Merry as possible." George Clinton to Robert Hunter Morris, Aug. 18, 1751, Morris Papers. Years later, in 1781, Rebecca Franks, daughter of David and granddaughter of A.F., resided in Flatbush where her neighbors were the Van Hornes, her close friend being Cornelia Van Horne. Rebecca Franks's letter, dated Aug. 10, 1781, HSP.

<sup>2</sup> See Letter XXVIII, Dec. 5, 1742.

<sup>3</sup> A.F. was probably referring to Capt. John Griffith on the *Britannia* or John Bryant on the *Londons*, both of whom were reported cleared for departure on June 27, 1743, in the *Weekly Journal* of that date.

me She had Left the House and Had bin Married Six months. I can hardly hold my Pen whilst I am a writing it. Its wath I Never could have Imagined, Especially After wath I heard her Soc often Say, that noe Consideration in Life should Ever Induce her to Disoblige Such good parents. I had heard the report of her goeing to be married to Oliver delancey,<sup>4</sup> but As Such Reports had often bin of Either off

<sup>4</sup> The marriage on September 8, 1742, of Phila with Oliver Delancey (1718-1785), son of Stephen Delancey and youngest brother of Susanna Warren, is something of a mystery. Seemingly the event should have been the talk of the town; yet contemporary journals, diaries, newspapers, and letters are strangely silent. A rare notation of the marriage is found in a letter of Henry Beckman to Gilbert [Livingston], dated March 20, 1743: "It is reported that Oliver D. Lancy is marry'd to Mr. Franks daughter] Vaylo a Jeww." Beckman Papers, NYHSL. The marriage was a shock to A.F. It was the one event she dreaded most. Inter-marriage was to Abigail, as sophisticated and as worldly as she seemed, a calamity. This seemed to be her greatest fear in the colonial wilderness. Although the event is not specifically referred to in the extant letters, her son David also intermarried. He was betrothed to Margaret Evans only six months after this letter was written. See Letter XXXIII, Nov. 25, 1745, note 1.

Oliver may possibly have married Phila for the legacy left by her uncle Isaac, but more likely it was for affection since he must have realized that the family could have refused to give her the dowry. Also Oliver, coming from one of the most noted New York families, must have met opposition within his own family for marrying a Jew. On Phila's part, the number of eligible Jewish young men in New York was small. Even A.F. had little regard for them. See Letter XXVIII, Dec. 5, 1742. Moreover, many, if not most of A.F.'s friends, were non-Jews. Phila may have met Oliver at the home of his eldest brother, Peter Delancey, who owned a house in the Dock Ward directly adjoining the Frankses. Phila, who was born June 19, 1722, was about twenty at the time of her marriage, and Oliver, born on September 16, 1718, was about twenty-four. *PAJHS* 1 (1893), 103-104.

Some time after their marriage, Oliver and Phila lived in the Delancey country seat, near present day 12th Street, west of Ninth Avenue in Greenwich Village. An interesting account is given of the area by Dr. Alexander Hamilton, a Maryland physician traveling through the northern colonies, who on June 22, 1744, wrote: "At twelve o'clock we passed a little town, starboard, called Greenwich, consisting of Eight or ten neat houses, and two or three miles above that on the same stoar, a pretty box of a house with an avenue fronting the river belonging to Oliver Dulancie." Bredenbaugh, ed., *Gentleman's Progress*, 52.

your Sisters, I gave noe heed to it further than a General Caution of her Conduct, which has allways bin Unblemish[c]d, And is Soc Still in

Just prior to the Revolution, the couple lived in Bloomingdale, another suburb of Manhattan. In November 1777 their house was burned by American rebels. D. A. Story, *The Delanceys* (Canada, 1931), 75. The assumption that the couple lived in Fraunces Tavern is not correct and arises from the fact that a Frances Delancey resided there. Bayard Genealogy and Family Notes, 5, a typescript in NYHSL.

If contemporary reports are to be believed, Oliver was something of a "tough." He was indicted shortly after his marriage, on November 3, 1742, for assaulting Judah Mears, the brother of A.F.'s stepmother. Minutes of General Sessions, Vol. 1722-1743, p. 326, NYCCO. In 1749, Gov. George Clinton wrote that Oliver and his friends had attacked a poor Dutch Jew and his wife, broke their windows, and swore that they would lie with the woman. Using indecent language, they warned the couple not to bring charges since they were members of prominent families. George Clinton to John Catherwood, Feb. 17, 1749, *Doc. Res.*, 6: 471. Later in the same year, Clinton reported that Oliver had stabbed and killed a Dr. Colchoun in a drunken brawl. *Ibid.*, 513. In an election held the following year, the governor wrote that Chief Justice James Delancey had his "two Bullies, Peter and Oliver, to frighten those, that his artful! Condesention & Dissimulation could not persuade to vote their conscience." George Clinton to Robert Hunter Morris, Aug. 29, 1750, Morris Papers. Of course, it must be remembered in evaluating these reports that Clinton was a bitter enemy of the Delanceys, and these letters may have been written to embarrass them. Peter Warren, writing in 1750 to Oliver, informed him "you must give me leave in confidence to tell you that the name of Delancey has been so Injuriously and Scandalously represented that at present there is no possibility of doing you any service in a Public Way." Warren to Delancey, Aug. 11, 1750, Peter Warren Papers, NYHSL. The note obviously refers to the Delancey-Clinton controversy.

Oliver also appeared to be something of a "dandy," spending considerable time and money on the wigmaker and barber. See William De Witt Day Book, 1739-1752, NYHSL. On April 2, 1743, "Mrs. Dience" (probably Phila) paid to shillings for a "towr" and £1 for a "wigg for her selfe." *Ibid.*

For genealogical material, see John Warrs notes, Delancey Papers, MCNY. The marriage produced seven children, two sons and five daughters--Ann [Mrs. Henry Cruger], Susanna [Lady Draper], Stephen, Oliver, Phila [Mrs. Payne Galway], Charlotte [Lady Dundas of New Brunswick] and Maria [Mrs. Robert Dixon]. Phila was the godparent of the daughter of Pierre de Joncourt and

the Eye of the Christians, whose allow She has DisObliged Us but has in noe way bin Dishonorable, being married to a man of worth and Charector. My Spirits Was for Some time Soe Depressd that it was a pain to me to Speak or See Any one. I have Over come it Soe far as not to make My Concern Soe Conspicuous, but I Shall Never have that Serenity nor Peace within I have Soe happily had hitherto. My house has bin my prisson<sup>5</sup> Ever Since. I had not heart Enough to Goe Near

Jeanne Couillet, born May 26, 1749, who incidentally, was called Phila. *Col- lections of the Huguenot Society* 1 (1886), 224.

Oliver not only was a merchant with a store in the house of Myndert Schuyler but also was a land speculator. G/AM, no. 37, 75 and 138, Peter Warren Papers, Sussex Archaeological Society, Lewes, England; *Gazette*, May 16, 1748; Jay Day Book, 312; Stephen and Oliver Delancy Papers, Bound Volume 1647-1804, items 20, 24, 28 and 39, NYHSL; Index, Grants of Land under Water Bureau of Topography, Room 2040, Municipal Building, New York City; Request of Richard Lush for location of Oliver Delancy land in Onsego County, Jan. 20, 1792, Commission of Forfeiture Papers, Clerk's Office of the Court of Appeals, Albany. He served in the British Army during the Revolution as an officer, and had a distinguished military career. Prior to the War, Delancy served as a member of the Provincial Assembly. *Valentin's Manual* (1864), 575.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Myers Cohen and Rachel, his wife, deceded two adjoining houses to J.F. and his wife. The property located on the north side of Duke Street had been deceded on Aug. 4, 1727, to Rachel who was then the widow of Samuel Levy [A.F.'s uncle] by Jacob Bratt and Nicholas Ayres. The property was bounded on the east and west by that of Lawrence Wessels and Abraham Splinter and on the north by Slyck [Mill] Street. Con. Lib. 12, cp. 336-358, Office of the Secretary of State, Albany; Con. Lib. 31, cp. 185-191. This property, located in the Dock Ward, was close to the Synagogue on Slyck or Mill Street. Leo Herszkowitz, "The Mill Street Synagogue Reconsidered," *A/HQ*, 53 (1964), 404-410. The Franks residence in the Dock Ward in 1733-1734 was close to those of Robert Livingston, Abraham Depeyster, Adolph Philipse, Frederick and Jacobus Van Cortlandt, and Stephen Bayard, all wealthy and influential men in the community. NYAL, Feb. 24, 1733, and Feb. 18, 1734. This was probably J.F.'s residence and his place of business, which was at Queen Street: an advertisement in the *Weekly Journal* of March 17, 1735, mentions that the house of the goldsmith, James Heister, is opposite to Mr. Franks, merchant, in Queen Street.

In 1740, J.F.'s property is described in the Will of Jacobus Van Cortlandt as

the Street door. Its a pain to me to think off going again to Town, And If your Fathers buisness would Premit him to Live out of it, I never would Goe Near it Again. I wish it was in my Power to Leave this part of the world. I would come away in the first man of war that went to London. Oliver has Sent Many times to beg Leave to See me, but I never would, tho' now he Sent word that he will come here. I dread Seeing him and how to Avoid I know noe way. Neither if he comes can I Use him rudly. I May Make him Some reproaches, but I know My Self soe well that I Shall at Last be Civill, tho' I never will give him Leave to Come to my house in Town. And as for his wife, I am Determined I never will See nor Lett none of y<sup>e</sup> Family Goe near her. He intends to write to You and My brother Isaac to Endeavour a reconciliation. I would have You Answer his Letter, if you dont hers, for I must be Soe Ingenious [as] to confess nature is Very Strong, and It would give me a Great Concern if She Should Live Un happy, tho' its a Concern she does not Meritt. As to the Other Affair you wrote me About, You may be Very Eassy on that head. The Person Concern'd will give You All the Satisfaction you desire. Wath you say about y[ou]r Sisters coming to England, I shall Very readily agree to it and the Sooner the better, if it was only a Means of her not Seeing the Other, wich She will hardly be able to avoid Unless She intircly Excludes her Self from all Company, wich She has don for this three months past, tho' Phila has not bin in Town<sup>6</sup> Since she Left Us, but

occupying the westernmost position of a double house (probably the two adjoining houses referred to in the Cohen deed) in the Dock Ward bounded by the houses of Samuel Bayard and Peter Delancy. The rear lots were divided by a partition wall which went down to the wharf, probably Coenties Slip. The double house is now 80-82 Pearl Street. Will Liber no. 13, 552-561, New York Surrogare's Office, 31 Chambers Street, New York City; NYHSC 3 (1895), 310.

From 1744 to 1770 the Franks residence and/or business address is placed in Dock Street by newspaper advertisements. *Revised Weekly Post Boy*, May 7, 1744; *Gazette*, Dec. 24, 1750, March 31, 1760, Aug. 15, and Oct. 3, 1763, Feb. 20, 27, April 9, and May 14, 1764; *Mercury*, May 9, 1757, and May 12, 1766; *New York Journal*, May 10, 1770.

<sup>6</sup> Phila, as this letter and David's of April indicate, lived at home for six

has (wathver I have forbid) found means to Send Messages, for as they Lived Very Affectionately. It Subsists Still, And I am Sure She will find all the means she can to See Richa. I thank you and your Dear Phila in the behalf of your Sisters & My Self for the Profusion of Pres[en]ts sent Uss. I Shall make mine Up but cant Tell when I Shall Wear it, for in the mind I am in now I have noe Inclination for dress or Visiting. Ye Girls will Make theres Up as Soon as they goc to Town, wich will be ye Latter end of the Summer. They was Just in mourning for my aunt Isaacs<sup>7</sup> whoe had bin Just Dead when they received them. The reason why I did not Write to Mr. Aaron Franks was not from [lack of] a Due Sence of Obligations and Gratitude, but from an Apprehensiveness of being Trouble Some. You may Assure him I am Sensible of the many kindnesses and Favours rec[ei]ved from him, And it gives me pain to Express my Gratitude, because wathver I Can Say falls Short of wath is his due from my Family and my Self, tho' If I can bring my mind into any State of Ease, I Shall write him by this. I wish I could find Any thing Agreeable to send to my Dear Phila. Moses Sends her a pott of Sweet meets and morderchay Gomez's wife<sup>8</sup> has Given me a Small pot for You, wich I dare Say is Exceeding Good, And I hope You may Use it with pleasure. All Friends Say many kind things to You And wish you a great deal of Joy. I shall take Care and Send Some quails next fall and secure them better than ye Last. Make my Compliments to Uncle Abraham Franks with thanks for his kind Letters, wich I Shall not Answer by this And, therefore, Desire you would make an Excuse for me. Your

months after secretly marrying. She left home in the latter part of March 1743, and probably went to Delancey's home in Bloomingdale. Henry Beckman to Gilbert [Livingston], March 20, 1743, Beckman Papers, NYHS.

<sup>7</sup> Aunt Isaacs, see Letter XV, Oct. 17, 1739, note 6.

<sup>8</sup> Rebecca DeLucena married Mordcai Gomez on May 4, 1741, after his first wife Hester Campos had died. Mordcai held considerable property in the city and had an extensive mercantile business. For Mordcai and Rebecca's marriage contract, dated April 30, 1741, see *Con. Lib.* 32, cp. 205. For Mordcai's Will and further biographical information, see *Wills*, 84-91.

brother david I hope will doe Very well. The Ship is not yet Arrived at Phil[ade]l[phia]. As to w[a]th you Say Concerning My brother Nathans Marrying,<sup>9</sup> your reasons are perfectly Just, but then on the Other hand it is a great Disadvantage for a man to keep house with-out a good Mistress, Soe that a Wife to him is a Necessary Evil. My brother mich[a]ll keeps his health And Good Charector, wich is to me a great Satisfaction. Sollomon] Hart is absconded in Very Unhappy Circumstance. His wife and child is with [*abscond two words made illegible by the fold*], wich is all they've got for the honor of being Allied to M H[ar]t. Its Commonly Said the rich man is gods Steward. M H[ar]t is a Very Savinge one whoe will Lett a brother Perish when Such a Truffle as £200 might make him happy.<sup>10</sup> The married Sister wrote him She had some Tickets in the Lottery,<sup>11</sup> and if She

<sup>9</sup> Nathan Levy's first wife may have been Bila, who died in September 1741. See Letter XXII, Sept. 6, 1741, note 5. This is a reference to Nathan's second marriage to someone whose first name was Michal.

<sup>10</sup> Solomon Hart, a merchant and *shohet* [ritual slaughterer] of Congregation Shearith Israel, married Rachel Isaacs sometime late in 1740. As A.F. indicates, he ran away in 1743, and by the following year he still had not returned. Peter Jay sued Solomon in Mayor's Court in 1744, and the records indicate that the defendant was not found. See Letter XV, Oct. 17, 1739, note 5, and Letter XVI, July 6, 1740, *Jay v. Hart* (1744), MCM, vol. 1742-1748, p. 85. The M. Hart whom A.F. mentions was undoubtedly Moses Hart, a wealthy London merchant and Solomon's brother. A Solomon who is known to have been the brother of Moses Hart died in England in 1768. Moses Hart was the father of Simha Hart Franks, N.F.'s mother-in-law, and therefore N.F.'s grandfather by marriage. At his death, he did not leave a legacy to N.F.'s wife or any of her brothers or sisters. This led to a complicated legal case that eventually reached the House of Lords. Norman Bentwich, "Anglo-Jewish Causes Célèbres," *JHSE* 15 (1946), 112-120. A printed copy of the judgment is in the archives of the American Jewish Historical Society.

<sup>11</sup> The government lottery of 1743 had among its prizes two of £10,000 and four of £5,000. Eighty thousand tickets were sold at £10 each. A total of £304,230 was to be awarded. The drawing took place on November 21, 1743, but was apparently not of any help to Solomon. *Gentlemen's Magazine* 13 (1743), 161 and 611. Moses Hart had previously won a lottery and Solomon's sister may, therefore, have had hopes of winning. See Letter XX, April 26, 1741, note 3.

got a good Prise, she would Send him a pr[c]s[en]t. If the prayers of the poor Prevaill, She may have Success if Sol[omon] Hart puts Up prayers for her, being he is Realy Poor & Needy.

Now Lett me Say Something for the Distress wee are more nearly Concern'd in, and that is poor good Moses Solomons. Is that Unhappy Youth to Spend the best part of his Life, as it Where, in a Goal? For Such may be Termed the Confin[e]d Life he is in att pr[c]s[en]t. Wee rec [etv] ed Letters from him Last week, wherein he Complains Pittyously of the Ill Treatm[en]t he meets with from his friends, whoe he hardly hears from, and when he does, never Lett him know wath will be the Consequence of his Detention or wich way he may be cleared. Its Very Severe that he Must be the Victim of anothers Villiany. The manner in wich he Committed his Error was wath a person of Greater penetration in buisness might have fell into. His Letting Mr. [Sam] Levy come off was noe fault, because Mr. Levys pretence was to Come here in order to make Up his Own Affairs that he might the better be inable'd to assist in Dischargeing there Joynt Debts: wich I am affraid he has not much in his power to per form.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Letters XXVI, June 3, 1742; XXVII, Aug. 29, 1742; XXVIII, Dec. 5, 1742; and XXXII, Nov. 22, 1743. J.F. wrote in a letter to Moses Solomons, dated Nov. 25, 1743, that the latter would shortly be on his way to London and from thence to India, "where you soon make up your lost time." Misc. Records, Vol. 69A, 1736-1749, p. 4, Probate Court Records, Charleston, South Carolina.

On the commercial activities of Jews with India in the eighteenth century and on, including persons bearing the names of Franks, Hart, and Solomons, see Walter J. Fischel, *The Jews in India: Their Contributions to the Economic and Political Life* (Jerusalem, 1960), 174-175 (Hebrew), which lists a number of Ashkenazi and Sephardi merchants maintaining ties between India and England and dealing in diamonds and coral. These traders had branches in London and in Madras, and Fischel gives data on the activities during the first half of the eighteenth century of individuals bearing such names as Aaron Franks who lived in Madras and who may have been related to the Frankses in England. Aaron Franks asked for permission in 1728 to travel to Europe because his affairs required it. Marcus Moses, his partner, petitioned "to return to England by one of the slops bound thither this season." Persons bearing the family names of Hart, Solomons, Salvador, Franco, de Castro, Espinosa, Nunes, Moses, and Pacheco were among the merchants in the Madras area. Shortly before coming to these

Your Father will Give You a farther Acc[oun]t of this Mellancholy affair, wich I wish may in some Measure be Happly Terminated. My Compliments to Mrs. Compton & Capt[ain] Riggs. I beg they will be Soe good to forgive me that I dont Answer there agreeable Favour by this: my Spirets is too Depress'd to writic. It is with reluctancy I doe write to Any one at pr[c]s[en]t. Therefore whoever I Omit, You must Excuse me to them. I think I've Spun this to a Considerable Lenght and shall Conclude with the Repetition of my prayers for Your Health and Happyness. I am,

My Dear Son,  
Your Affectionate Mother,  
Abigail Franks

shores, Michael Gratz "probably, early in 1758 or late in 1757, . . . sailed for India, seeking joint account with his London kindred." William Vincent Byars, *B. and M. Gratz: Merchants of Philadelphia, 1754-1798* (Jefferson City, Mo., 1916), 12. Meyer Schomburg in his diatribe against some London Jews (*TJHS* 20 [1964], 102 [sheet 6-7]) condemns those Jews who on the Sabbath day are overmuch concerned with matters financial, in these words: "In addition, they walk on the day of rest by design in the street of the changer which is called Exchange Alley, to enquire and find out on that day from merchants and brokers if there has been a rise or fall in the price of India (*Hodas*) securities which are called 'India Bonds'; or of the India (*Hodas*) securities which are called the 'southern sea' or South Sea notes of the treasure-house called '*Benea*.'" The interest of Jews of London, Amsterdam, and New York in India trade continued during the eighteenth century. See, for example, Walter J. Fischel, "From Cochim (India) to New York: Samuel Abraham, the Jewish Merchant of the 18th Century," *Harry Wolfson Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday: English Studies, Volume 1*, ed. Saul Lieberman and Leo W. Schwarz (Jerusalem, 1965), 255-274, and the "Log Book of the Ship Samson," *PAJHS* 27 (1920), 239, which is inscribed "Isaac H. Levy's Journal, 1798," and shows conditions, etc., of a voyage between New York, Madras, and Calcutta. The sloop started back from Madras to New York on October 17, 1798, but by March 6, 1799, had not yet reached New York. Compare Walter J. Fischel, "The Indian Archives: A Source for the History of the Jews of Asia (from the Sixteenth Century On)," in *The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Volume of the Jewish Quarterly Review*, ed. Abrabam A. Neuman and Solomon Zeitlin (Philadelphia, 1967), 210-224.

MANUEL JOSEPHSON PETITION TO BUILD A  
PHILADELPHIA CONGREGATION TO BUILD A  
RITUAL BATHHOUSE

1784

*Manuel Josephson (ca. 1729-1796), an emigrant from Germany, was one of the best-educated men in the Philadelphia congregation. A sometime sutler during the French and Indian War, Josephson became a merchant in New York and finally settled in Philadelphia. He was a good Hebraist and was interested in general culture; in religious matters he was a fervent traditionalist.*

*In 1784, Josephson presented the following petition to the board of Mikveh Israel, asking that a ritual bathhouse (mikvah) be built for the women of the congregation. His motivation is classical in its orthodoxy: inasmuch as the American Jew had been blessed with desirable privileges, it was incumbent upon him to thank God by scrupulously observing the Divine Law. If he failed to do so, all the curses threatened in Holy Writ would descend upon the transgressor.*

*By 1786, the ritual bathhouse had been erected and placed under the supervision of the zealous Josephson.*

[1784]

It having pleased the Almighty God of Israel to appoint our lot in this country, the rulers whereof he has inspired with wisdom and a benevolent disposition toward us as a nation, whereby we enjoy every desirable privilege and great preeminence far beyond many of our brethren dispersed in different countries and governments,

And in order to manifest our gratitude for those peculiar favors and blessings, we ought, in a very sincere manner, observe a strict and close adherence to those laws and commandments ordained by Him and delivered to our master Moses, of blessed memory, which have been handed down to us in a regular succession to the

present time, wherein we are told [Exod. 19:5 "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people"] that the Almighty has made choice of our nation in preference of all others, on condition (*ibid.*, "If ye obey my voice and keep my covenant") that we hearken unto his voice and observe his covenants; and on the other hand, if we neglect our duty, He has denounced [Lev. 26:14, etc., etc.] severe and tremendous sentences against us, to avoid which we should endeavour with all our might to regulate our conduct in every respect conformable to His Holy Law, rectify every deviation therefrom, and supply every omission so far as in our power.

In order thereto, we, the subscribers, having taken these matters to heart and duly reflected on the many defects this congregation called Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia labours under, and to our great regret and sorrow we find one in particular, which strikes us most forcibly and cannot but affect with astonishment and horror every judicious and truly religious mind. This is the want of a proper *mikveh* or bathing place, according to our Law and institution, for the purification of married women at certain periods. The necessity of having and using such place will readily appear from the text [Lev. 20:18] where a transgression of this ordinance is highly criminal to both husband and wife. Nor does it rest with them only, but the very children born from so unlawful cohabitation are deemed *bene middot* [children conceived during the menstrual period], which makes this offence the more heinous [heinous] and detestable, in as much as it effects not only the parents, but their posterity for generations to come. And should it be known in the congregations abroad that we had been thus neglectful of so important a matter, they would not only pronounce heavy anathemas against us, but interdict and avoid intermarriages with us, equal as with [a] different nation or sect, to our great shame and mortification.

Now, therefore, in full consideration of the foregoing, we have unanimously agreed that a proper *mikveh* or bathing place for the sole use of our congregation be forthwith built, and that no delay may be made in accomplishing so necessary and laudable a work. We do hereby, each of us for himself, most solemnly and religiously engage and promise to pay such sum of money as is

annexed to our respective names, without any hesitation or demur whatever, unto such person or persons as shall hereafter be nominated for the purpose of receiving the said subscription money and to see the said work carried on and completed. And we flatter ourselves that every married man will use the most persuasive and every other means to induce his wife to a strict compliance with that duty so incumbent upon them, that so the Almighty may look down in mercy upon us and send the Redeemer to Zion in our days. Amen, so be it.

Philadelphia, 21st May, 1784.

Rosh Hodesh Sivan (the first of Sivan), 5544.

## A JEWISH MARRIAGE CEREMONY

1787

*A good description of a Jewish marriage ceremony in early America is afforded by Dr. Benjamin Rush in a letter to his wife. Rush, in his day the best-known physician in the United States, had been invited by the Jonas Phillips to attend the ceremony uniting their daughter Rachel with a Virginian named Michael Levy. In 1792, Rachel gave birth to a son whom the couple named Uriah Phillips Levy. The child was destined to have a fabulous career. He ran away to sea at the age of ten, joined the United States Navy during the War of 1812, and finally, in the days before the Civil War, became the "Commodore" of the American squadron in the Mediterranean. Uriah's was a stormy life, for he faced boards of inquiry twice and courts-martial six times. Many of his troubles may be ascribed to the circumstance that he was a Jew in an age when Jews were not welcome in the Navy; nor was his road made any easier by the fact that, in addition to being a successful businessman, he was nothing if not "hard-boiled." He lavished a great deal of time and energy on the effort to abolish flogging in the Navy, and his tombstone in Cypress Hill Cemetery bears the inscription: "Father of the law for the abolition of the barbarous practice of corporal punishment in the Navy of the United States."*

Philadelphia, June 27, 1787.

My dear Julia,

Being called a few days ago to attend in the family of Jonas Phillips, I was honored this morning with an invitation to attend the marriage of his daughter to a young man of the name of Levy from Virginia. I accepted the invitation with great pleasure, for you know I love to be in the way of adding to my stock of ideas upon all subjects.

At one o'clock the company, consisting of sixty or forty men, assembled in Mr. Phillips' common parlor, which was accommodated with benches for the purpose. The ceremony began with

prayers in the Hebrew language, which were chaunted by an old rabbi and in which he was followed by the whole company. As I did not understand a word except now and then an Amen or Hallelujah, my attention was directed to the haste with which they covered their heads with their hats as soon as the prayers began, and to the freedom with which some of them conversed with each other during the whole time of this part of their worship. As soon as these prayers were ended, which took up about twenty minutes, a small piece of parchment was produced, written in Hebrew, which contained a deed of settlement and which the groom subscribed in the presence of four witnesses. In this deed he conveyed a part of his fortune to his bride, by which she was provided for after his death in case she survived him.

This ceremony was followed by the erection of a beautiful canopy composed of white and red silk in the middle of the floor. It was supported by four young men (by means of four poles), who put on white gloves for the purpose. As soon as this canopy was fixed, the bride, accompanied with her mother, sister, and a long train of female relations, came downstairs. Her face was covered with a veil which reached halfway down her body. She was handsome at all times, but the occasion and her dress rendered her in a peculiar manner a most lovely and affecting object. I gazed with delight upon her. Innocence, modesty, fear, respect, and devotion appeared all at once in her countenance. She was led by her two bridesmaids under the canopy. Two young men led the bridegroom after her and placed him, not by her side, but directly opposite to her. The priest now began again to chaunt an Hebrew prayer, in which he was followed by part of the company. After this he gave to the groom and bride a glass full of wine, from which they each sipped about a teaspoonful. Another prayer followed this act, after which he took a ring and directed the groom to place it upon the finger of his bride in the same manner as is practised in the marriage service of the Church of England.

This ceremony was followed by handing the wine to the father of the bride and then a second time to the bride and groom. The groom after sipping the wine took the glass in his hand and threw it upon a large pewter dish which was suddenly placed at his feet. Upon its breaking into a number of small pieces, there was a

general shout of joy and a declaration that the ceremony was over. The groom now saluted his bride, and kisses and congratulations became general through the room. I asked the meaning of the wine ceremony was over, of the canopy and of the drinking of the wine and breaking of the glass. I was told by one of the company that in Europe they generally marry in the open air, and that the canopy was introduced to defend the bride and groom from the action of the sun and from rain. Their mutually partaking of the same glass of wine was intended to denote the mutuality of their goods, and the breaking of the glass at the conclusion of the business was designed to teach them the brittleness and uncertainty of human life and the certainty of death, and thereby to temper and moderate their present joys.

Mr. Phillips pressed me to stay and dine with the company, but business . . . forbade it. I stayed, however, to eat some wedding cake and to drink a glass of wine with the guests. Upon going into one of the rooms upstairs to ask how Mrs. Phillips did, who had fainted downstairs under the pressure of the heat (for she was weak from a previous indisposition), I discovered the bride and groom supping a bowl of broth together. Mrs. Phillips apologized for them by telling me they had eaten nothing (agreeably to the custom prescribed by their religion) since the night before.

Upon my taking leave of the company, Mrs. Phillips put a large piece of cake into my pocket for you, which she begged I would present to you with her best compliments. She says you are an old New York acquaintance of hers.

During the whole of this new and curious scene my mind was not idle. I was carried back to the ancient world and was led to contemplate the passovers, the sacrifices, the jubilees, and other ceremonies of the Jewish Church. After this, I was led forward into futurity and anticipated the time foretold by the prophets when this once-beloved race of men shall again be restored to the divine favor and when they shall unite with Christians with one heart and one voice in celebrating the praises of a common and universal Saviour. . . .

Adieu. With love to your mama, sisters, and brothers, and to our dear children, I am your affectionate husband,

B. Rush

INTERMARRIAGE AND CONVERSION TO  
JUDAISM  
1793-1794

*Intermarriage was a problem in the colonies from almost the first day. Communities were small, individuals lived in the countryside, social relations were easy and natural, and intermarriage was inevitable. The typical Jewish settler wanted a home and children, and when there were no Jewish women, he married a Gentile.*

*The fact that a Jew married out of the faith did not necessarily mean that he himself deserted the religion of his fathers. There can be no doubt that on numerous occasions the Jewish village merchant held to his ancestral faith to his dying day and would gladly have brought his Gentile wife into town for conversion had he been given any encouragement by the Jewish community, but conversion was frowned upon by the congregations.*

*As early as 1763, Shearith Israel in New York passed a law forbidding the acceptance of proselytes or marriage with a proselyte. It is not too difficult to understand the motivations of these early Jews. They may have maintained—in defense of their attitude—that they did not have the proper religious authorization to admit converts; they may have argued, with some cogency, that English Jewry had promised the civil authorities not to engage in proselytizing and that they were merely following current English synagogal practice, but all this was certainly a rationalization. Underlying the taboos was the desire on the part of the struggling young community to maintain itself in the face of powerful assimilatory influences. Once they let down the bars, they knew or believed that they would be lost as a Jewish group. Back of it all was their grim and almost fanatical determination to survive as a distinct religious entity.*

*In 1793, a member of the Philadelphia community, Moses Nathans, brought his problem of intermarriage before the congregation. He and the Gentile mother of his children had never been married according to Jewish law. However, she was willing to become a Jewess and sought the privilege of conversion and of Jewish marriage. The husband's friends were sympathetic to the request. Nevertheless, they felt that they could do*

nothing on their own account and referred the matter to the ecclesiastical court of the Spanish-Portuguese synagogue in London. Accordingly, the president, Benjamin Nones, sent the following letter, selection A, to the British capital. Very likely a similar note was dispatched to the Great Synagogue (Ashkenazi) in the same city. In the meantime, the man concerned—a member of the board!—was, from the point of view of synagogal ritual, looked upon as unmarried.

The bazzan's records show that he married the woman in 1794 in accordance with Jewish ritual. It was in the same year that the board of Mikveh Israel received a petition, item B, from Anna Barnett asking to be accepted as a convert. In all probability she was either married to a Jew or hoped to be married to one. Very few Gentiles converted to Judaism out of love for the faith.

## A

To the *Beth Din* [court] of K. K. [the holy congregation] Shagnar a Shama'im of London, whom God augment.

Philadelphia, Aug't 7th, 1793.

Gent'n:

We the *parnas* [the president] and *adjuntas* [board members] of K. K. Mickvey Israel of this city have the honor to address your respectable board on business of importance to Jewdaisme at large and to our young and rising congregation in particular; and, we flatter ourself you will, as soon as it may be convenient, favor this congregation with your answer and advice.

The case is this: a *yahid* [member] of this congregation has lived in a public way with a *agyab* [Gentile] woman who has kept house for him about [eight] years and has had by her three children, two of which are boys, which he had *nimolim* [circumcised] at the eighth day.

The same person now applies to us, with the consent of the woman, to make her a *giyyoret* [proselyte], as also to grant him permission to marry said woman with *bupab u-kiddushin* [accord-

ing to the Jewish ritual]. We must say in favor of the above *yahid* that he has and does keep up, as far as we know, to our rules, and contributes toward the support of our cong'on, as others do.

We have represented to the best of our knowledge the case and conduct of the person, and therefore request your opinion on the subject, and what we have to do.

Your answer will much oblige this congregation in whose behalf, we are, gent'n,

Your most obed't, h'ble serv'ts,

Benjamin Nones Esq., Parnass.

## B

Philadelphia, November 13, 1794.

Gentlemen:

Permit one, who has not the happiness to be born a Jewess and favoured immediatly from the God of Isral as you are, to request your attention to my peticalar case and trust that nothing has been or shall be wanting on my part to render me worthy of being admitted in associate of your congregat'on and to become a Jewiss. This I ask not as a favour, but as a right, feeling as I do the [need] of living up to the divine precepts of the Bible. I am ready and willing to submit to such ceremonies as are necessary to obtain this my demand, the greatest of all my worldly wishes, and may the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob take you under his holy protection and instill into your minds to do what is just and right in his sight, and grant a speedy answer to this the petition of your humble friend,

Anna Barnett

Letter written by Rebecca Samuel in Yiddish in the 1790s (exact date unknown); sent from Petersburg, Virginia to Hamburg, Germany.

Dear Parents:

I hope my letter will ease your mind. You can now be reassured and send me one of the family to Charleston, South Carolina. This is the place to which, with God's help, we will go after Passover. The whole reason why we are leaving this place is because of [its lack] of *Yehudishkeit* [Jewishness].

Dear parents, I know quite well you will not want me to bring up my children like Gentiles. Here they cannot become anything else. Jewishness is pushed aside here. There are here [in Petersburg, Virginia] ten or twelve Jews, and they are not worthy of being called Jews. We have a *shohet* [slaughterer of animals and poultry] here who goes to market and buys *terefah* [nonkosher] meat and then brings it home. On Rosh Ha-Shanah and on Yom Kippur the people worshipped here without one *Sefer Torah*, and not one of them wore the *tallit* or the *arba kanfot*, except Hyman and my Sammy's godfather. The latter is an old man of sixty, a man from Holland. He has been in America for thirty years already; for twenty years he was in Charleston, and he has been living here for four years. He does not want to remain here any longer and will go with us to Charleston. In that place there is a blessed community of three hundred Jews.

You can believe me that I crave to see a synagogue to which I can go. The way we live now is no life at all. We do not know what the Sabbath and the holidays are. On the Sabbath all the Jewish shops are open, and they do business on that day as they do throughout the whole week. But ours we do not allow to open. With us there is still some Sabbath. You must believe me that in our house we all live as Jews as much as we can.

As for the Gentiles, we have nothing to complain about. For the sake of a livelihood we do not have to leave here. Nor do we have to leave because of debts. I believe ever since Hyman has grown up that he has not had it so good. You cannot know what a wonderful country this is for the common man. One

can live here peacefully. Hyman made a clock that goes very accurately, just like the one in the Buchenstrasse in Hamburg. Now you can imagine what honors Hyman has been getting here. In all Virginia there is no clock [like this one], and Virginia is the greatest province in the whole of America, and America is the largest section of the world. Now you know what sort of a country this is. It is not too long since Virginia was discovered. It is a young country. And it is amazing to see the business they do in this little Petersburg. At times as many as a thousand hogsheads of tobacco arrive at one time, and each hogshead contains 1,000 and sometimes 1,200 pounds of tobacco. The tobacco is shipped from here to the whole world.

When Judah [my brother] comes here, he can become a watchmaker and goldsmith, if he so desires. Here it is not like Germany where a watchmaker is not permitted to sell silverware. They do not know otherwise here. They expect a watchmaker to be a silversmith here. Hyman has more to do in making silverware than with watchmaking. He has a journeyman, a silversmith, a very good artisan, and he, Hyman, takes care of the watches. This work is well paid here, but in Charleston, it pays even better.

All the people who hear that we are leaving give us their blessings. They say that it is sinful that such blessed children should be brought up here in Petersburg. My children cannot learn anything here, nothing Jewish, nothing of general culture. My Schoene [my daughter], God bless her, is already three years old; I think it is time that she should learn something, and she has a good head to learn. I have taught her the bedtime prayers and grace after meals in just two lessons. I believe that no one among the Jews here can do as well as she. And my Sammy [born in 1790], God bless him, is already beginning to talk.

I could write more. However, I do not have any more paper.

I remain, your devoted daughter and servant,

Rebecca, the wife of Hayyim, the son of Samuel the Levite