Haym Salomon, THE PATRIOT BROKER OF THE REVOLUTION

His Real Achievements and their Exaggeration

An Open Letter to Congressman Celler

BY

MAX KOHLER

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WHY REPRODUCE THIS OPEN LETTER?

(The original is in the Library of Cong-
gress. This is a reproduction of a photo-
static copy.)

Congressman Geller of N.Y., himself a
member of the Jewish race, asked Mr. Max
J. Kohler to advise him whether there was
any truth in the propaganda that Haym
Salomon had loaned a large sum of money
to finance the American Revolution, whose
descendants were urging Congress to pay them "Hundreds
of thousands of dollars," and "The Federation of Polish
Jews in America" were trying to promote a monument to
Haym Salomon in New York City.

Mr. Kohler, V. Pres. of the Jewish Historical Society;
graduate of Columbia Law School; former U.S. District
Attorney's assistant and Special U.S. District Attorney,
was born in Detroit, May 22, 1871. (Jewish Cyclopedia.)

Mr. Kohler debunked the false propaganda concerning
Haym which has deceived several Presidents of the U.S.
as well as other officials and publicists.

Said Mr. Kohler: "I will go further and say I fully
agree with you that we have a fundamental obligation to
our country and to our city in the premises, as loyal,
grateful and truth-loving citizens, despite our wish to
avoid pricking the "Haym Salomon bubble" ... patriotism
must come ahead of delicacy on this subject."

New York refused a site for a monument to Haym, but in
Chicago a monument was erected (as shown below) with
money solicited by the Jews from Christians and Jews.
Haym Salomon is depicted on one side, Robert Morris on
the other and George Washington in "the middle."
My dear Congressman:—

You have asked me to ponder carefully and advise you whether it is not my duty, in the public interest, to inform you and the American public in detail whether the information contained in Russell’s recently published book on “Haym Salomon and the Revolution” (pp. 274-6; 290-5),—augmented by other information you correctly believe I have in my possession — ought not be divulged promptly: (1) to put an end once and for all, to efforts to collect from the United States hundreds of thousands of dollars, claimed by descendants of Haym Salomon, as due them from an “ungrateful country”, in payment of an alleged obligation nearly 150 years old today, and (2) to give this information to yourself and many other members of the House and the Senate and other prominent men, who have been induced to accept membership on the Monument Committee, formed by the “Federation of Polish Jews in America”, (of which Benjamin Winter is Chairman and Z. Tygel, Secretary), to erect a Haym Salomon monument in New York. They would—you now suspect—promptly resign from this Committee, if they knew the real facts as to the Government’s alleged indebtedness to Haym Salomon and the value of his services to our country in general. Your question has stirred me greatly, and you have a particular right to put it, as you yourself publicly rendered most valuable and effective service, at my request, in opening governmental and other offices, to enable people working under my direction to gather the fresh information on the subject involved, and a letter from you on behalf of the project is being used conspicuously by the Committee in its new literature, which has increased weight because you were a member of the Congressional Claims Committee before which the “repayment” bill came officially recently.

I will go further and say I fully agree with you that we have a fundamental obligation to our country and our city
in the premises, as loyal, grateful and truth-loving citizens, despite our wish to avoid pricking the “Haym Salomon bubble”, which has made his name perhaps the most famous Jewish name in American revolutionary annals; patriotism must come ahead of delicacy on this subject. I have been embarrassed heretofore, however, not merely by the consideration just referred to, but also by the fact that I and some of my associates were under a pledge to the late Samuel Oppenheim of New York—an able and untiring American and American Jewish historian, lately Recording Secretary of the American Jewish Historical Society—to let the facts he primarily gathered on this subject, appear in print in connection with his name as discoverer. The action of the Polish organization, however—in putting this material at the disposal of Mr. Russell for his work, and permitting him to publish the same without associating Mr. Oppenheim’s name in any way with the iconoclastic discoveries involved, but, on the contrary, permitting Mr. Russell to plume himself with other person’s feathers—now not merely relieves me of the obligation of remaining temporarily silent—which had been incurred by me on behalf of this Polish Jewish Federation, but on the contrary, itself would seem to make it my duty to speak out now, in justice to Mr. Oppenheim’s memory, though I am wholly guiltless of the breach of faith involved in the Russell publication. Moreover, the Monument Committee had promised me on Feb. 13th, 1930 to suspend all efforts in pushing the Monument project thereafter, until possible important new material had been unearthed, to justify such course in conjunction with the rest. Of this material the Conferees then consulted, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, Judge Julian Mack and myself—who effected suspension of activities for nearly a year—were to be the judges. I had pledged these conferees meantime to secrecy, in view of the facts involved, including the agreement with Mr. Oppenheim. I informed the Monument Committee, moreover, that, if such course were not pursued, I would deem it my duty as a citizen of our country and a resident of the Metropolis—to issue a detailed public statement on the subject. Instead of carrying out this promise, they attempted to reconvene the conference on October 22, 1930—in reliance on alleged important new matter (stated to have been unearthed
by Mr. Russell, but really of no importance whatever) at a
time when, as I informed them, Dr. Wise was sick in bed, and
Judge Mack abroad. Moreover, they refused to furnish me in
advance with the alleged important new evidence, or of the
names of the proposed substitute conferees, so I declined to
attend that conference, but suggested its postponement. In­
stead of doing this, they have now launched a new "nation­
wide" drive on the basis of the Russell book and the exploded
old evidence, now wholly suppressing the facts Mr. Oppen­
heim discovered; and used in support thereof—in an elaborate
new 23 page pamphlet, edited by Z. Tygel, numerous state­
ments in addition by distinguished persons who were—as the
Editor must have known—unfamiliar with Mr. Oppenheim's
iconoclastic discoveries. (For convenience the Publication of
the "American Jewish Historical Society", to be cited in this
connection, will hereafter be called "Pub." simply.)

Well, then, these are the discoveries unexpectedly made
by Mr. Oppenheim—and partially set forth,—though in garbled
form—by Mr. Russell.

1]—Haym Salomon never lent the Government a substantial sum,
probably not even one cent, despite the claims to the contrary advanced
by certain of his descendants, in their own interest,—though latterly
at least, honestly entertained by them,—which have had repeated sanc­
tion in a number of favorable reports of the U. S. Claims Committees of
both Houses of Congress between 1845 and 1964, who were misled,—not
to say deceived—as to the real facts.

2]—If any valid substantial pecuniary claims at any time existed,
they were assigned nearly 150 years ago by the insolvent estate of
Haym Salomon to the Philadelphia "Bank of North America", which
doubtless collected the same, though it took Mr. Oppenheim's patience
and skill as an investigator to unearth the fact for the first time in
approximately a century.

3]—Accordingly, there is no "ungrateful country", avoiding bona
fide obligations involved, much as has been said and written on the
subject, and despite such bona fide, but mistaken, efforts, as those of
the late President Taft, to do "justice" to Haym Salomon's memory and
supposed services. Pres. Taft's address on the subject,—widely circulated
at the time,—was reprinted some years ago [1911] in Madison Peters'
bearing the decidedly misleading and extravagant title "Haym Salomon,
the Financier of the Revolution". More or less similar projects have been
launched from time to time since, besides new urging to have Congress
"repay" this "supposed debt" in money, one recent one having taken
the form of a proposed monument to him in Washington, and another
to be erected in Philadelphia, besides the more fully advanced New York
monument project and a former project to establish a national university
The favorable reports of Committees of Congress have—I regret to say—rested on misinformation, and I fear deliberate concealment, if not worse, on the part of Haym M. Salomon [a son of Haym Salomon], or his agents, who misled the Congressional Committees, and since then, historians and publicists [including myself], until the real facts have now been brought to light.

President Coolidge was even recently misled into saying—and the Monument Committee should then have known the error involved, if they didn't actually know it—that “he [Haym Salomon] negotiated for Robert Morris all the loans raised in France and Holland” [for our struggling country]. It is elementary that Robert Morris had nothing to do with “negotiating” these loans—and much less did Haym Salomon, and the statement,—taken literally—is nonsense. The fact is that Haym Salomon as broker “negotiated” the drafts representing a fraction of these loans which came to America, and someone cleverly confused the words “loans” and “drafts”, in one of the congressional reports in question, in order to give an entirely erroneous and exaggerated impression of what Haym Salomon actually did. Haym Salomon himself advertised the fact extensively, [for instance, in the “Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser” of January 1st, 1785]—an item I personally unearthed over 35 years ago, as stated at the time by Dr. Hollander when he printed it, [Pub. No. 3, pp. 9-10]—that “By being broker to the Office of Finance, and honored with its confidence, all those sums have passed through his hands, which the generosity of the French Monarch and the affection of the merchants of the United Provinces, prompted them to furnish us with, to enable us to support the expense of the war”. Of course this clearly shows that he claimed merely to have negotiated the drafts, not the loans themselves. Even this statement, however, is partially erroneous, because the great bulk of the money, loaned to us by France, Holland, and Spain, through the invaluable efforts of Franklin, John Adams, and Jay, and Arthur Lee and Deane incidentally, was spent abroad at once for ammunition and other supplies, and never came as drafts or cash to this country at all. Miss Ruth Benjamin—an able and conscientious student of American history and research worker, whom I retained on behalf of the Monument Committee after Mr. Oppenheim became ill [and soon after died] and of whose work I will speak more fully presently—accurately reported to us on this point, quoting Dewey’s “Financial History of the United States” [p. 147]: “Between 1777 and 1783 the United States borrowed from France $6,352,500; Holland $1,304,000; Spain $174,017... Of the sums loaned by France, little was actually received by the treasury in this country, as it was expended in France for supplies, but one installment served a good purpose in paying the interest on domestic loans, and another was the specie foundation of the Bank of North America”. It is probable that Haym Salomon did not know the fact that almost all this money was expended abroad and hence could not have passed through his hands, but even if he did, a moderate amount of “puffing” and “exaggeration” is not unknown even in our own day, when ethical business standards are much higher than they were in 1785, and if it was intentionally exaggerated, it is the only questionable statement by him I have been able to discover, after thorough investigation. I think all his other statements were truthful and absolutely accurate. However, he knew the value of advertising, and was probably the most extensive advertiser in the country between 1781 and the date of his death in 1785.

Haym Salomon himself never advanced any such claims, nor do I believe that his descendants of the last few decades knew or even
suspected the falsity of the claims advanced. On the contrary, Haym Salomon was a true and self-sacrificing patriotic citizen of our country, who rendered it valuable and important services in “the times that tried men’s souls” of the American Revolution, though nothing seems to have been due his descendants from our Government in dollars and cents, and I seriously doubt if he deserves a monument more than hundreds of other patriots, to whom none was ever erected.

In any event, no monument ought to be erected to him on the basis of misinformation and concealment of the most important of the facts involved. I cannot accept the view probably entertained by the Monument Committee that the Russell book adequately divulges these main facts,—though in such a hidden manner, amidst clever exaggeration of the value of his services and boundless and extravagant rhetoric and bombast, that only few people have discerned from it the true facts of Haym Salomon’s career. It embodies hidden, though clever, propaganda on behalf of the “Monument project” and was written and published under a commission from the “Federation of Polish Jews in America” or its subsidiary, the Monument Committee, as I will presently endeavor to show.

Well, then, here are the facts, more concretely stated: A few years ago this monument project was launched by the “Federation of Polish Jews in America”, concededly much less for the sake of Haym Salomon’s memory, than to demonstrate thus objectively that Polish Jews were not mere late arrivals here,—who started to come at and after the Russian “May laws of 1882”,—but had rendered most distinguished and valuable services to our country, among others in the person of Haym Salomon during the American Revolutionary epoch. The organization, in fact, persisted to my knowledge in pushing the monument project, despite the receipt of letters, copies of which happen to be in my possession, even from descendants of Haym Salomon, begging it to desist.

The first check came in 1925, when the Municipal Arts Commission of New York City, having been asked to assign a site in Madison Square for the Monument,—wrote to the head of the Manuscripts Division of the N. Y. Public Library for an estimate of Haym Salomon’s services, to enable them to
judge whether he deserved this honor. That gentleman suggested that they get the opinion instead of Worthington C. Ford of Boston, the leading historical spirit of the Massachusetts Historical Society and possibly the leading authority on this period of our national history. Without taking much time to investigate the facts, Mr. Ford rendered to the Commission a sweeping and one-sided, unfair opinion against all claims to fame for Haym Salomon, which appeared in the New York “City Record” of October 24, 1925, and as it is brief, may be reprinted in full here.

In answer to an inquiry, Dr. Ford replied on August 29th, 1925 that, in his opinion, “the various supporters of the Salomon story have produced no evidence in its favor; that no one who has studied the finances of the Revolution has recorded or knew of such evidence; that the Morris papers give nothing, and that story itself is incredible. What documents have been brought forward are of no value, and in default of proper documents, the tradition is too exacting to be acceptable, and I see no reason for connecting Haym Salomon’s name with the nation’s history, and only as an estimable merchant has he claims to any recognition”. Mr. Ford had previously written at length along these same lines, in the “New York Evening Post” of June 29, 1911, but I cannot understand how a scholar of his standing could have stated, contrary to the unquestionable facts published by Dr. H. Friedenwald, his predecessor as Superintendent of Manuscripts of the Congressional Library, in the “Jewish Encyclopedia” Vol. X pp. 652-5 (1905) for instance, that the “Morris’ papers give nothing.” Probably refutation of this unjust but sweeping generalization ultimately induced the N. Y. Municipal Arts Commission to assign the monument site now intended for the memorial.

Subsequently, the Municipal Arts Commission rejected the proposed site, about July 15, 1927, and the late Louis Marshall wrote a confidential letter to various Jewish papers dated July 23, 1927, (copy of which, the Monument Committee had had for years), hinting at the existence of the evidence herein referred to, and warning them not to charge that the just decision of the Commission was influenced by
“anti-Semitic bias”. In view of this strong letter from Mr. Marshall and earlier utterances of his herein referred to, I will allow the Monument Committee to justify its course in counting Mr. Marshall among advocates of the measure in their latest elaborate pamphlet, and even publishing his portrait (p. 10) in this connection. Following the letter from Mr. Ford, the Polish Jewish organization arranged to convene a private conference of a group of persons, actively interested in American Jewish history, as also other leading American Jews, including the late Louis Marshall. Almost all present—and particularly Mr. Marshall (in writing) and myself (I having been asked to attend particularly, because I was, and am a Vice President of the American Jewish Historical Society) and certain other leading spirits of that organization opposed the “monument project” as undeserved and unwise, and some of us suggested instead, a monument to “Religious Liberty” which our beloved country had so largely originated, and under which Jews and non-Jewish victims of European intolerance had prospered here so greatly; on such monument, its erection by the Polish Jewish Alliance might be suitably and prominently inscribed. In fact, around 1876, chiefly at the instance of the Independent Order B’nai B’rith, a monument to “Religious Liberty” by the American Jewish sculptor, Sir Moses Ezekiel, had been erected by American Jews in Philadelphia, and in 1905 a Committee on the Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the Settlement of the Jews in the United States (of which the late Jacob H. Schiff was Chairman and I, Honorary Secretary, and which included among its leading spirits also Louis Marshall, Oscar S. Straus, Cyrus Adler, Isaac N. Seligman, Wm. Salomon—a distinguished descendant of Haym Salomon—Adolph Lewisohn and Judge Sulzberger)—had planned to erect a monument to “Religious Liberty in New York City, but after some time, we abandoned the project, as tending to divert monies from the Russian Jewish Relief Fund—started to aid the victims of Kishineff and other Russian pogroms—, though the “Proceedings” of that anniversary were published in book-form, including addresses and communications from ex-President Cleveland, Pres. Roosevelt, Bishop Greer, the Governor and the Mayor of New York, Pres. Eliott, Bishop Lawrence, and many other Christian and Jewish citi-
zens and leading periodicals. But at this conference of Feb. 2, 1926, Mr. Winter on behalf of his organization, rejected this plan for reasons hereinbefore specified. All present, however, agreed that Mr. Ford had done an injustice to Haym Salomon’s memory, and that—monument or no monument—Mr. Ford’s verdict should be challenged, after making additional investigations into Haym Salomon’s services, besides those published in the “Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society,” where his name appeared repeatedly and at length as a favorite subject, though largely, of course on the basis of the Congressional Reports, rendered between 1845 and 1864, on claims to repayment of a huge alleged money debt, running into hundreds of thousands of dollars, advanced by the son of the patriot, aforementioned Haym M. Salomon.

I was prevailed upon to accept the Chairmanship of this Committee, my associates being Mr. A. M. Friedenberg, Corresponding Secretary of the Historical society named, and Mr. Leon Huhner, its Curator. The Polish Society put funds at our disposal for paying investigators to be retained, my Committee itself serving without compensation as a labor of love. It was believed that a thorough and skilled investigation might bring to light new material, enhancing Haym Salomon’s fame. After careful consideration, my committee in 1926 retained with Mr. Winter’s approval, Mr. S. Oppenheim, (Recording-Secretary of said Historical Society), to give exclusive time for some months in various cities to this task. I personally gave much thought to ferreting out likely places and means of research, and gave Mr. Oppenheim letters of introduction to important Philadelphians and others, which unlocked “sealed” sources of information, and you were of great service to us, in connection with various Washington offices, bureaus and depositories. Moreover, the investigations were all conducted in my name, thus making it all the more incumbent on me to publish the discoveries made.

Much to our amazement and disappointment, however,—quite early in his quest—Mr. Oppenheim found public records in the office of Philadelphia’s “Register of Wills”—as their
Surrogate’s Court is called—nearly 150 years old, and ancient, original, records of the Bank heretofore named—founded by Robert Morris at a time of great national distress—which unmistakably refuted the correctness of the chief facts underlying the Congressional Reports referred to, which our “Pubs.” had accepted as established, and instead of augmenting Haym Salomon’s claims to fame, they annihilated the chief distinctions associated with him. Before setting forth a summary of his discoveries, I wish to point out that Haym M. Salomon, a son of the patriot, devoted the bulk of his time for decades, in part as early as 1827 and down to 1864 at least, in endeavoring to have Congress recognize his demands for payment of an alleged pecuniary claim in favor of his father’s estate, and in aid of it, he practically “camped” in Washington for many years. He was born some months after his father died at the age of forty-five, and his father’s estate—according to the official Administration accounting, still in the Philadelphia public files, mentioned—was insolvent, so that his mother and his infant brothers and sister had a hard struggle to get along at all. His father never advanced any such claims, though he could have done so during the period when they were supposed to have been contracted, between July 1781 and his death on January 6th, 1785, but he left a mass of papers from which this son inferred—doubtless in good faith at the start at least—that the claim was meritorious.

Mr. Oppenheim’s conclusions—embodied in reports to me, duplicate of which was at once furnished to Mr. Winter and Mr. Tygel’s organization under the stipulation above-mentioned, and which they undoubtedly in turn communicated long afterwards to Mr. Russell—demonstrated the following facts (among others) to be true, which I augment from other sources. Haym Salomon arrived in Philadelphia about August 25, 1778, practically penniless, after having escaped from British soldiers in New York—who had imprisoned him on account of activities on behalf of the American cause—and seized his entire fortune, which he stated to have been between 5000 and 6000 pounds, and which there is no known evidence of ever having been refunded to him or his family. He had apparently arrived in America in 1772, and was born in Lissa,
Poland in 1740, had apparently travelled considerably after leaving Poland at some unascertained date, and was married in January, 1777, in New York to Rachel Franks, daughter of Moses B. Franks of New York, who belonged to a distinguished American family, which included Jacob Franks of New York, who had been Commissary to the British Government during the French and Indian War, and handled hundreds of thousands of dollars (pounds) worth of property. Another kinsman was David Franks of Philadelphia—who had charge of alleviating the ills of British prisoners captured by the Americans during the Revolution on behalf of England, and the latter's famous daughter, the belle and wit, Rebecca Franks, later wife of General Sir Henry Johnson. Another kinsman was Col. David S. Franks, friend of Jefferson, Jay and Franklin, who was delegated by Congress later to carry the signed copy of the Treaty of Peace of 1783 to England, and was a marshal in President Washington's inaugural procession in 1789. Another kinsman was Col. Isaac Franks of Philadelphia, an American revolutionary patriot and soldier. With these connections and innate financial genius and a remarkable grasp of foreign languages, acquired on his travels, he was able to float about $200,000 worth of securities for Robert Morris during 1781-2, the latter having been Superintendent of Finance of the infant Government, and in July, 1782, he authorized Salomon to call himself "Broker to the Office of Finance" of the United States, as Robert Morris' diary showed. Dr. Friedenwald, in the article cited, extracts the statement from Morris' diary: "This broker has been useful to the public interests. I have consented (to his request to call himself 'Broker to the Office of Finance'), as I do not see any disadvantage can possibly arise, but the reverse, and he expects individual benefits therefrom".

I have, however, for convenience sake, anticipated the course of events, though I wish to add that an original "Letter Book", containing copies of letters written by or on behalf of Salomon between July 1781 and July 1783,—which had belonged to Haym Salomon himself, and was presented to the American Jewish Historical Society by one of his descendants,—shows that as late as 1782, he was able for the first time to spare money to aid his indigent parents in Poland by sending them...
funds, as this letter-book avers, (Letters Jan. 9th, 1783 and June 20, 1783), and he protested on July 10, 1783, that his means did not permit him to take care of a nephew, whom his Polish relatives were sending to America at that time without his prior authorization. He wrote: “Your ideas of my riches are too extreme. Rich I am not, but the little I have, I think it my duty to share with my poor father and mother”.

I personally placed these letters at Mr. Russell’s disposal, for use in connection with his then intended biography, and he printed some letters from this letter-book, (pp. 230-4, 305-8). Mr. Russell himself told me, after reading them, that they alone disposed absolutely of the theory that Salomon had any considerable fortune to lend our Government, even if he had wished to.

In a letter written by W. E. Woodward, the historian, in answer to a letter of inquiry I caused Miss Benjamin to write to him, in an effort to ferret out new material in aid of Haym Salomon’s fame—he having written most glowingly about the Jewish patriot and his large and un-repaid “loans” to our Government, which he even styles “gifts” in his life of Washington (pp. 363-4)—that author wrote very penetratingly: “It seems to me that the real mystery about Salomon is how he managed to make so much money in such a short time. He must have been a great financial genius”. Of course, the terse answer to Mr. Woodward,—misled, as so many others have been by the Congressional reports in question,—full of errors and exaggeration, penned by their authors in good faith, but ignorant of the imposition and fraud they were victims of—is that he “didn’t make much money”. Had he been in possession of the sums he is credited with having lent our Government, he would have been one of the richest men in America. Salomon’s financial connection with the U. S. Government began only a few months before the Battle of Yorktown on Oct. 19th, 1781 in effect ended the War in our favor, and years after Burgoyne’s surrender at Saratoga. While we were in sore financial straits in 1781, the War would nevertheless have been won by us, had Haym Salomon never lived, and Russell’s effort to depict him as practically the saviour of our country is absurd, though he was, no doubt, Robert Morris’ chief assistant.
Eckenrode, an able Virginia historian, in reviewing the Russell book in the “N. Y. Evening Sun” on October 31st, 1930,—well remarks under the caption “History Plus Fiction”: “If Salomon had never lived, the American cause would have triumphed. It was not from a single broker, no matter how patriotic, that the means were obtained to carry the War to a successful conclusion, but from France and Holland”.

But to return to Mr. Oppenheim’s discoveries: He established, from the bank-records, (which he had photostated for me) that Haym Salomon’s course of dealings with our Government was to secure U. S. Government paper to negotiate by sale thereof, he receipting for the same, and as he disposed of the same—quite uniformly at an enormous discount—he would draw his own checks in payment. Haym M. Salomon, his son or the letter’s agents succeeded in persuading several committees of Congress that these checks—proceeds of the sale of Government paper—really represented loans by him to the Government from his own funds, a result accomplished, evidently, by concealing the course of dealings referred to, showing that he first received Government paper to sell for it, and the size of his own fortune. The scheme was further manipulated by a device permitting him to introduce what we lawyers call inferior “secondary evidence” of the alleged loans, namely, evidence that the original Government notes or other proofs of indebtedness to him had been lost. He evidently opened the door to the receipt of such evidence by the unsubstantiated, improbable claim that his original vouchers and papers had been lent to President Tyler for examination, and been lost while in that custody. No plausible reason, however, suggests itself, why the President should have wanted to examine these papers, especially as the “Repayment Bill” never reached him, never having passed both houses of Congress at one session, but repeatedly having been reported favorably by Committees of each. It was, however, once disapproved of (30th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Report No. 219, 1848) for want of sufficient evidence to establish it, whereupon Haym M. Salomon or his agents proceeded to “get evidence”, as hereinafter demonstrated. I might add that, thanks to your letters of introduction, an original receipt for his documents signed
by Haym M. Salomon March 24, 1851, running to the Clerk of the Senate, was unearthed and copied for me—in the search of bona fide evidence corroborating his claims,—and this traces the “documents” by the last writing unearthed, into Haym M. Salomon’s own possession, and not into President Tyler’s, and the latter had ceased to be president in 1845.

Mr. Russell maintains that Haym Salomon charged the Government a much lower commission than other brokers—Robert Morris fixed the same at one half of one per cent—while Mr. Russell maintains that the prevailing rate was 5% (thus evidencing Salomon’s patriotism). Mr. Russell’s statement that 5% was the prevailing rate is unproven by him, and may or may not be true, but even if true, the facts show that Robert Morris was a “faithful watch-dog of the Treasury”!

But to return once more to Mr. Oppenheim’s startling discoveries. Stronger evidence having been demanded by Congress, it was secured as follows: The claim now was chiefly based on securities Salomon had owned at the time of his death, which were represented as issued in payment of “loans” he made the Government. In fact, as above shown, he didn’t have the money to make such, or any other substantial loans. Next, these were current as “money” at the time, though largely depreciated, but some were “investments”; their possession, even prima facie does not indicate that they represented original loans to the Government. Moreover, Haym Salomon was a dealer in these very securities, and bought and sold them daily, according to his own advertisements, so in his hands there was even less reason to suppose that they represented advances in such sum, which he had made the Government.

But Mr. Oppenheim went further, and looked up the history of the securities involved, listed in detail in the “inventory” and “account” of Haym Salomon’s administrators soon after his death, and showed that nearly all these issues ante-dated his arrival in Philadelphia and connection with the Government!

Mr. Oppenheim had photostats made of the original surrogate court records of Philadelphia, which showed that the proof submitted many years after Salomon’s death by his son,
Haym M., was false, in that the bulk of the securities which he owned at the time of his death, on which the claim of loans to the Government rested, were described in a document purporting to be officially certified in 1828 as "liquidated currency", whereas they were "unliquidated", according to the original records, thereby increasing nearly all the amount involved forty-fold! Mr. Russell slurs over this serious incident in his book (pp. 291-2); he is emphatic that "it is clear that Haym M. Salomon never suspected them" (these discrepancies), though there isn't a particle of evidence as to how they occurred. Let us, too, be charitable to the dead! Perhaps the clerk in the Philadelphia public office made a mistake, when giving this "certified copy", and the item $199,214.45, figuring in the Congressional reports in alleged certified copies as "Continental liquidated Dollars" instead of "unliquidated", was so misdescribed by mistake. Perhaps it was made worthwhile for the clerk to falsely certify to the paper in this form, increasing the holding forty-fold, according to the prevailing law, under which "unliquidated dollars" were scaled down to one fortieth of their face, in accordance with a measure of their depreciated value, making a holding of about $5000 figure as $200,000 liquidated; this item constituted 4/7ths of the whole estate. Perhaps, on the other hand, the certified transcript of the Administrator's accounts was fraudulently altered, after execution, but before submission to Congress, with or without Haym M. Salomon's knowledge. We cannot determine today who was responsible, but $200,000 out of the alleged holdings of $353,729.33 is thus reduced to $5000.

Mr. Oppenheim's next important finding is that the Philadelphia Surrogate court records affirmatively attest from the Haym Salomon Administrator's Account that the bulk of the remaining securities were turned over by the Administrators to his chief creditor, the Bank of North America, to be applied to the reduction of their claim, when sold! No doubt, they turned them in to the Government, or otherwise disposed of them, and the government or the States, after such transfer, owed the money they were to be redeemed at to such bank, and not to the Haym Salomon estate. So much for the enormous unpaid claim, which an "ungrateful country" has never
acknowledged or paid! Mr. Russell slurs over the incident, after partially concealing it, with the admission (p. 290) that there was no basis for any “legal claim” in favor of his estate, and “because these securities were delivered to the creditors, the heirs were left penniless”! This important document, however,—part of the accounting—proved affirmatively that no such claim existed in favor of the Haym Salomon heirs, as was passed by Haym M. Salomon in Congress thereafter for decades, and here I cannot absolve him or his agents from the charge of fraudulent concealment of material facts. Instead of adopting the usual course of submitting a certified copy of the whole “Account”—a document of only five sheets,—the very unusual course was pursued of submitting merely “Certified Extracts”. Haym M. Salomon or his agents are certainly chargeable with knowledge of the contents of the entire “Account”. Nay, more, as an ex-Assistant U. S. District Attorney, I think their course in putting cleverly phrased questions to the Government’s accounting officers years later—calculated to disclose everything but the unusual thing that happened—a transfer by the Estate to this creditor—a series of questions, apparently exhaustive of what might have happened—were couched in four different forms, and their answer,—negating payment to Salomon’s Administrators, widow and children, etc.;—submitted to the Claims Committee of Congress, and was embodied in the Committee’s report sixty-five years after the patriot’s death, and after records were destroyed by fire and indexes missing or imperfect, as proof of a subsisting indebtedness to the Haym Salomon Estate (U. S. Senate Report No. 127—36th Congress, 1st Session, March 9, 1860, quoting answer of March 25th, 1850 of the first Auditor of the Treasury). Mr. Oppenheim also secured photostat copies of the Salomon account with the Bank of North America, Robert Morris’ Bank, which evidenced the fact that Haym Salomon would receive Government securities to dispose of as “Broker of the Office of Finance of the Government”, and as he disposed of the same, would remit monies from time to time in the form of his own checks to Morris or other Government officials. These checks are therefore not evidence of “loans”,—as their face might indicate, but proceeds of sales made by him on behalf of the Government, though Congressional commit-
tees at Haym M. Salomon's instance, not familiar with this course of procedure, incorrectly treated them as "Loans". So much then for the real items underlying Haym Salomon's claim!

Mr. Russell, in his book—after treating substantially all the claims advanced on behalf of Haym Salomon as true, and going them one better,—in his concluding chapters—and especially in one entitled "Congress Comes into the Story" (pp. 274-6, 282-300)—concedes substantially the facts I have just stated. The heading, however, is itself misleading, and scarcely any one unfamiliar with what actually occurred, would be apt to look in such chapter for correction of what preceded, or to discover what actually occurred from such method of treatment. Moreover, throughout, he accepts the discredited and generally uncorroborated statements of Haym M. Salomon, and the Congressional Reports based thereon, as gospel truth. This "propaganda"—figuring as veracious history or biography,—resorts to numerous other questionable measures. For instance, an interested and extravagant account by Haym M. Salomon of his father's supposed services to the Government, which he sent to Jared Sparks, the famous American historian, and which was found among that historian's literary remains, figures (p. 105 etc.) very equivocally as "the Sparks M. S.", as though written by Sparks! There is nothing whatever to indicate that Sparks credited any of these statements, except that in 1865, a correspondent mentioned to him the fact that Sparks had told him many years ago, to the best of his recollection, that Haym Salomon's "association with Robert Morris was very close and intimate, and that a great part of the success that Mr. Morris attained in his financial schemes was due to the skill and ability of Haym Salomon"—a statement substantially true. Moreover, Sparks himself wrote to Haym M. Salomon that "among the numerous papers that have passed under my eye, I have seen evidences of his (Haym Salomon's) transactions, which convince me that he rendered important services to the United States in their pecuniary affairs." (Pub. II pages 5 and 6), a statement doubtless referring to the Robert Morris Diary and papers. Mr. Russell's only new "finds"—really likely to be true—seem to be that Haym Salomon "advanced"
$830.30 to Armand's Revolutionary legion and $276.30 to Karen's Regiment and $1481.35 to Vanheer's Corps. (pp. 203-43. These petty sums may, or may not have been "loans"; they are taken from Salomon's accounts above-mentioned, but that does not prove that they were "loans", for in those days too, merchants carried accounts on their book, which, on occasion, proved to be uncollectible, or which they forgot to have marked off when paid. On the other hand, Mr. Russell resorts to many decidedly questionable devices in connexion with this piece of propaganda work. For instance, in his boundlessly enthusiastic preface, he carefully omits mentioning any figures as to the amount of money raised by Salomon for Robert Morris; itemization of the aggregate of the comparative bag-gatelle of $200,000 involved, would have shown the absurdity of his exaggerations. Next it is proper to observe that there is no credible evidence—other than Haym M. Salomon's interested and discredited contentions, carried over into the congressional reports,—that any papers whatever bearing on the subject, were destroyed by fire or otherwise, either in the War of 1812 or at any other time, or by autograph hunters (pp. XII-XIII), though the motive underlying the suggestion is obvious, and has already been considered in another connection herein. Mr. Russell's own narrative, in its concluding section, again makes the claim that Salomon had "given his all" to the cause of the American Revolution (p. 300).

There isn't a particle of evidence of the truth of the statement (p. 5) that Salomon's ancestors had dwelt for centuries in Portugal, though some of his descendants who belonged to a Spanish and Portuguese synagogue, would like to give credence to the claim, and he himself belonged, both in New York and Philadelphia, to a congregation employing that ritual, for the simple reason that there was no other synagogue then in existence in those cities.

There isn't a particle of evidence in existence to substantiate the claim (pp. 14-16) that Salomon was associated with Pulaski and Kosciusko in their efforts to save Poland, much less that he was "closely attached to Pulaski". This attempted identification on Haym M. Salomon's part is readily
understandable, in an effort to arouse support for his claim, and in those days, we knew much less about Polish history and the careers of these great men than now. It has been said that it requires some skill to lie cleverly and successfully. In fact, an examination into the facts tends absolutely to rebut the story, and makes it very doubtful, if he ever met either of them, and Mr. Russell ought to have known enough of Polish history to have rejected this legend. We know from Haym Salomon’s own records that, though born in Poland in 1740, he had travelled for many years elsewhere before he came to the United States in 1772, and in the course of his travels, he mastered many languages, which stood him in good stead here. There isn’t a particle of evidence that he ever returned to Poland before he came to America at the age of thirty-two, and the probabilities are all to the contrary. Pulaski was born in 1748, and became famous in Poland, only shortly before he led a forlorn hope on behalf of Polish patriots against Catherine II’s tyranny in 1772, in which year, he left Poland, and later came to the United States, joined Washington’s army in 1777,—was probably in and around Charleston, S. C. when Salomon came to Philadelphia in 1778, and died in Savannah of wounds contracted on the battlefield October 11th, 1778. Similarly, Kosciusko, born in 1746, was sent away from Poland as a boy to be educated in Germany, Italy and France, and returned to Poland in 1774, when Salomon already resided in New York. While he distinguished himself first in America in our armies, there is nothing to show that he and Salomon ever even met here, and Kosciusko’s distinguished services in Poland began in 1791, years after Salomon’s death!

I have referred to Haym Salomon’s travels, and they were an important factor in his career, and the most interesting letter in the Salomon letter-book deals with this subject, though Mr. Russell did not know enough about Jewish history, to appreciate the significance of these passages, and even this postscript is not reprinted in his “samples of Salomon’s letters”. In his brief petition to Congress for employment, dated August 25th, 1778,—after his escape from his British captors in New York,—Salomon mentions the fact that he was released from the Provost prison, where he was held as a spy soon after
the British capture of New York in 1776, “through the inter­position of (the Hessian commander) Lieut. General Heister (who wanted him on account of his knowledge in the French, Polish, Russian, Italian, etc. Languages)”. He certainly did not learn these foreign tongues in the stifling Ghetto of Lissa in Poland, where he was born, and to acquire these must have taken considerable time. In the interesting letter of April 29th, 1783, already referred to, in which he protests at the action of his Polish relatives in sending over unasked, his nephew to him, because his means did not permit his supporting him, he added: “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 Relatives to have their Children well educated, particularly in the Christian languages. Should any of my Brother’s Children have a good head to learn Hebrew, would contribute towards his being Instructed”. Incidentally, I have noticed that even his letters to his parents he asks others to write for him, so it is probable that he had wholly forgotten the Yiddish of his youth. The passage quoted is very interesting and significant. Here was another Mendelssohn—but without Mendelssohn’s learning or gift for acquiring learning—almost contemporaneously with Mendelssohn’s Bible translation in Germany—, urging Polish relatives—out of his own valuable experiences—to raise themselves above narrow Polish Ghettos, where Yiddish and Hebrew alone were understood in general, and learn “Christian” languages, and emerge into the general world! They were not to drop their religion—for he himself mentions in this very passage also the value of Hebrew as a training for the mind—and he was a generous supporter of the Jewish synagogues in New York and Philadelphia, and even a trustee of the Philadelphia congregation, for a period beginning in 1783, but his voice in the night was in effect in favor of dropping Jewish “nationalism” and becoming a citizen, in fact, and not merely in name, of the country of residence! Would Poland today, even, act in this spirit, and permit her Jews to get the equal education the minorities treaties and her own Constitution provides for, and reciprocally, then, would the bulk of
her Jews heed Haym Salomon's advice, emerge from their Ghettos, learn modern "Christian" languages and become true citizens of Poland!

But space does not permit enumeration here of Mr. Russell's other numerous similar commissions and omissions, such as a propagandist—and not a conscientious historian,—would engage in. I do feel called upon to state, however, why I have referred to Mr. Russell's book as unavowed propaganda, written under a commission from the Monument Committee. Of course if, ex post facto, the statement in the pamphlet just issued by the Monument Committee, edited by Z. Tygel, already referred to, bearing the italicized statement at the top of Mr. Russell's article in it (pages Four-Five) "Written especially for the Haym Salomon Monument Committee", was intended to relate to the book, as well as this article, nothing more need be said on this point. But other facts tend to the same conclusion, even apart from the overwhelmingly strong intrinsic evidence afforded by the book itself. The Monument Committee asked me, after the Madison Square site had been refused in July 1927 by the Municipal Arts Commission,—to write a detailed refutation of Mr. Ford's opinion in aid of their project, but I, of course, refused, and when a similar request was made to Miss Benjamin, I advised her to refuse, too, which she did, the new desired credible offsetting evidence in Salomon's favor not yet having been adequately found. In fact, even before the commencement of her retainer, it was expressly provided that not she, but a better known American historian, was to write any book that might be justified by the discovery of adequate new evidence. Though Mr. Russell did not mention the Monument Committee when he called on me last summer, and I gave him access to the Salomon Diary belonging to the American Jewish Historical Society, (which—he pointed out—Madison Peters, too, had used 20 years ago;), there can be no question but that he was given the important Oppenheim and Benjamin reports, copies of which, (with photostats) I had promptly furnished to the Monument Committee pursuant to our original understanding, though he ignores them as discoveries of this material, in violation of the agreements I had made with them, with the knowledge and

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approval of the Monument Committee, on its behalf. Next comes the conclusive fact that the Monument Committee, before the actual publication of the book, asked me to confer with them regarding Russell’s book and discoveries, as aforesaid.

I also desire expressly to absolve the Monument Committee of endeavoring, since our conference of 1930, to aid passage of the financial claim bill in Congress (introduced in perfect good faith at the instance of a Southern descendant of the patriot by Senator McKellar as S. 4925 of the 69th Congress, 2nd Session, in aid of which he had the so-called “Sparks M. S.” reprinted as a Senate Document). I state this categorically, because at that conference I told the conferees that I had informed a member of Congress that, if the bill were given any serious consideration in Congress, I was ready to be heard with photostatic documents in opposition. I also, almost simultaneously, notified the relatives of the patriot responsible for the introduction of the bill of the substance of this letter, getting a registered return receipt—as also a Northern descendant—and warned them that I believed, as an ex-federal prosecuting officer, that they might subject themselves to criminal liability, if they pressed the bill to passage, in view of the facts mentioned, which I believed were until then quite unknown to them. The Southern relatives in writing promised me to drop the measure, and both they and the Northern relative informed me that they were urging the Monument Committee to drop their project, in order to avoid scandal, and I believe they carried out their promises. The Northern relative sent me a copy of his letter to Mr. Tygel, dated December 23rd, 1929, in which he stated that he “heartily concurs in the general thoughts expressed” in my letter to his Southern relatives, and requested that “in view of the . . . facts disclosed by Mr. Kohler, the monument project should be promptly dropped in as politic a way as is possible”. He further unequivocally disassociated himself from the financial claims bill, which he states he had regarded as “unthinkable”, even before the receipt of my letter. I withhold his name, because I am convinced that the continued use of the same on the Committee and in the pamphlet was unauthorized by him, and I do not
want to give him unnecessary pain. But what should be said of the action of Mr. Tygel in the premises, and those of his associates as were familiar with the facts here outlined!

I also desire to state that the conference of 1930, above referred to (attended by Judge Mack and Dr. Stephen Wise and myself, among others) was held at the home of Hon. Nathan Straus Jr., for whom I have the highest regard. He had previously, for some months, served as "Chairman of the Organization Committee" of the Monument Committee, and I understand that many of the letters and Committee acceptances of the persons enumerated in the new pamphlet in question were previously secured by him, of course in perfect good faith. When I called his attention to the Oppenheim discoveries, he convened the conference above referred to, and concurred in the conclusion that the project should be dropped, until new discoveries outweighing the disclosures, justified going on with it, if ever. Messrs. Tygel and Winter attended this conference, and were outvoted. It is significant that his name no longer figures, even as a member of the national committee. It would have been a violation of my pledge of secrecy—in view of the agreement with the late Mr. Oppenheim—for him or the other conferees to have notified all those who accepted membership on the Committee of these discoveries—besides being decidedly unpleasant, and the matter seemed in the interim academic, as the project was meantime shelved.

Turning next to the elaborate 23 page publication just issued by the Monument Committee, in connection with their new drive, to be officially launched at a "National Conference" at Delmonico's, New York, Feb. 24th, 1931, signed by Senator James E. Watson, G. Z. Medalie (now U. S. District Attorney of the Southern District of New York) and Benjamin Winter. I have no doubt but that only the latter has even dreamt of the facts herein stated, otherwise they would not have lent their names to the project. The same is true of all those figuring as members of the National Committee in the pamphlet, except Messrs. Tygel and Winter and the descendant of the patriot above referred to, whose name I believe to have been unauthorized after the letter to me I have quoted.
The 23 page pamphlet in question is, however, a most extraordinary document. I need make no further comments as to the action of Messrs. Tygel and Winter—much as I deprecate their course, and particularly Mr. Tygel's. I stated at the threshold what I think they regarded as justification for going on with the Monument project, to wit, the "hidden" disclosures of Mr. Russell's book and Mr. Russell's estimate of Haym Salomon. I cannot, however, for a moment, justify Mr. Tygel's course, in using a lot of articles and letters which he must have known, not merely contained false and exploded statements, but statements which their authors would never have made, had they had his knowledge of the facts. This includes particularly Prof. Albert B. Hart's enthusiastic over-estimate of Haym Salomon's services, and Mr. Tygel gives much prominence to the article of this distinguished historian. It also includes ex-president Coolidge's erroneous and extravagant estimate, of course made in perfect good faith on the basis of information furnished to him, which he unwisely credited. It also embraces the quotation from ex-President Taft's above-quoted address, in the course of which he was erroneously induced to say of Haym Salomon that, with Robert Morris, he "financed the Revolution; a man who apparently gave all he had"... and subsequently "devoted his... fortune to helping along the cause of the Revolution".

I will not pause to analyze or quote more or less similar tributes, printed in the pamphlet,—all subject to the same comments—emanating from Gov. Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York, Gov. Fisher of Pennsylvania, Lieut. Gov. Herbert H. Lehman, Mayor James J. Walker, the unfair invocation of the authority of Pres. Wilson while Governor of New Jersey, and of the late Congressman Kahn, and of Cong. Mooney and the picture of Felix M. Warburg. The same applies to the letters from Chief Justice Hughes, Secretary of Labor Davis, of Senators Copeland, Wagner, Watson, Caraway and Vandenburg, Congressmen Sirovich, Perlman and H. G. Hoffman, yourself and Congressman Dickstein, and of Ralph Pulitzer, Adolph Lewisohn, ex-Attorney General Ottinger, First Secretary of the Polish Legation Podoski, Samuel Undermyer, Judge Miller, Hon. Alfred M. Cohn, George Gordon Battle, District
Mr. Charles E. Russell's long and “specially prepared” article in this new pamphlet calls for further comment, however, especially as he, as a well-known historian and journalist, certainly knew better than to write as he did, and I think his attitude largely misled Messrs. Winter and Tygel. The “disclosures”—reserved for or hidden in his book in the concluding chapters,—are here wholly ignored. Unbounded and reckless eulogy of Haym Salomon prevades the whole article. Haym Salomon is recklessly described by him as “the man that stood behind Morris and actually produced the actual sums with which the Revolution moved on”, whose “services were inestimable”. The fact that Haym Salomon’s pecuniary services began a few months before the Battle of Yorktown settled the War, is, of course wholly ignored, however illuminating. It is stated by him that Morris “sent for Haym Salomon in every emergency, and as the diary indicated, never in vain”, in reckless disregard of the fact that the “sending” was “in vain” in a large number of the 75 or more references to Salomon in the Morris diary, as figured years ago by Dr. Friedenwald. The next statement that Morris would entrust “the sale of bills of exchange to nobody else” is squarely contradicted, and it is in fact not improbable that another Jew, Isaac Moses of Philadelphia—whom Russell mentions in his book (pp. 180-1)—in fact loaned our Government large sums. In view of his own conclusions in his book, I will leave Mr. Russell to justify his further statement that Haym Salomon met Morris’ demand, in part from “his private funds”. The same applied to the quotation (p. V.) misdescribed as from Senate Claims Committee report of the 69th Congress that Salomon’s “large private fortune and the proceeds of his extensive commercial earnings were freely applied to the use of the Revolutionary Government”, etc., for which use and misdescription Mr. Russell may or may not have been responsible.

So much for the basic and fundamental grounds, on the
score of which it has been claimed that Haym Salomon deserves a monument in New York. There are, however, incidental additional items, and as to these, I think Salomon shows up well, though I personally do not see that they justify a monument, especially when, as I understand, no monument has thus far been erected even to Robert Morris. A number of them are quite significant, in rebutting Mr. Worthington Ford’s unjust and sweeping verdict that Salomon was merely an estimable business man, who is not entitled to the gratitude of his country. A sense of fairness, moreover, requires that they be taken into account. One of these is the material aid he gave to James Madison, while a member of Congress, and apparently others. The name of the distinguished patriot Madison appears for a small sum among unpaid accounts of Haym Salomon, and he probably borrowed much larger sums of him. Russell’s book treats of this matter in some detail (pp. 238-242, 284-5). It is undoubtedly true,—as testified to by Madison and Madison’s own biographies—that he might have been compelled to retire from Congress, had not Salomon lent money to him under conditions making it extremely doubtful, if it could ever be repaid. He himself wrote to a friend that “I have for some time been a pensioner on the favor of Haym Salomon, a Jew broker”. Again, on another occasion he wrote: “The kindness of our little friend in Front Street near the Coffee House is a fund that will prevent 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 that aim at a profitable speculation. To a necessitous delegate he gratuitously spares a supply out of his private stock”. To have kept Madison in public life certainly was no mean achievement, and I have myself detailed Madison’s great but inadequately recognized public services in a supplemental American chapter in Luzzatti’s “God in Freedom” published only a few months ago) in the chapter entitled “The Fathers of the Republic and Constitutional Establishment of Religious Liberty”. Madison’s comments lend some support to the claim that Salomon was equally generous in lending money to Edmund Randolph, then member of congress—later Attorney General and Secretary of State of the United States—though this is not equally well
authenticated. Similarly it is claimed with some show of probability that he was equally generous to Joseph Reed of Pennsylvania, Arthur Lee, Thomas Mifflin, Arthur St. Clair, Major McPherson, his wife's kinsman David S. Frank, Theodore Bland, Joseph Jones, John F. Mercer, the distinguished jurist James Wilson, later Justice of the Supreme Court, and possibly others, though the statement is scarcely justified that "Madison testified to these things"! Mr. Russell lists items from the Haym Salomon Ledger account (p. 246), which may, or may not have represented loans to these persons, as distinguished from charges incurred. All the items are small, except those against Gen. Mercer ($5373.64), James Wilson ($3452.90) and J. Ross ($8000), which probably were not loans at all, though the sums must be reduced materially from unliquidated, to liquidated currency.

Possibly even more important are some discoveries Miss Benjamin made—long before Mr. Russell busied himself with this theme—under my direction, in looking up my suggestion that Haym Salomon probably did not merely serve as broker, but may have indorsed paper for the Government, making himself liable thereon personally, and it turns out that he in fact made such endorsements, and was held liable thereon—apparently in large sums. Mr. Russell has apparently simply—without acknowledgment—appropriated these discoveries, and even asserts (p. 212) "One other great service he performs, though to this day no one has noticed it, nor given the slightest credit for it. With a magnificent disregard of his own interests, he endorses the paper of the broken-backed government. No one else will do this—Salomon endorses its paper and its officers' paper and its Allies' paper, and makes himself personally liable for all. We have the evidence; no need for speculation or surmise". He also sets forth in full (p. 213), an advertisement unearthed by Miss Benjamin, which had been inserted by Haym Salomon in Philadelphia newspapers, April 19th, 1783, giving notice that holders of "full Sets of Bills of Exchange, drawn in his favor and endorsed by him on Monsieur Boutin, Treasurer of the Marine Department of France" shall "on application have the money refunded". What happened is easily understood. Most of the French loan money
was spent abroad, and when the American authorities here drew on France, in excess of the sums left for payment here, the bills of exchange were dishonored. It was no mere nominal arrangement, to endorse such paper for our Government in those days! He even adds my own conjecture—embraced in Miss Benjamin's reports—that such compulsory payments for the benefit of a financially crippled Government, at this period, "the critical period in American history", and so soon before his own death;—may have "brought down his own house, at the time of his death!"

Closely related to this is the fact, which Salomon freely advertised at the time,—and which must have been true—that he was also "Broker of the Consul General of France and to the Treasurer of the French Army" (Pub. 3 p. 9) and fiscal agent of the French Minister. In fact, various entries in Robert Morris' diary confirm this claim. Of these, perhaps the most important one appears under date of June 8th, 1784 reading: "I agree with Mr. Haym Salomon, the Broker who had been employed by the Officers of his Christian Majesty to make sales of their Army and Navy Bills, to assist me in the Sale of the Bills I am to draw for the monies granted as aforesaid, his Brokerage to be settled hereafter, but not to exceed a half per cent". One may surmise why Mr. Russell omits this item. It is along these lines particularly that valuable new evidence as to Salomon's activities may hereafter come to light, for so far we have been unable to find any references to him in the French records. Accordingly, I was much interested in the answer Miss Benjamin received to a letter I directed her to write—from a well-known American biographer, intimating that he believed he had seen Salomon's appointment as French disbursing agent and accounts in the "Archives Nationales" in Paris. I promptly thereafter communicated with Mr. Anchel of Paris, connected with the French National Archives, but to my surprise, he reported that no such documents can be found there, and—that, moreover, this gentleman's name does not appear on the list of those who secured admittance to the archives! I followed the matter up further by communicating with Prof. Jameson, the distinguished historian and former president of the American Historical Association, to ask him
kindly to ascertain whether the forthcoming “Guide to American History in the French Archives” refers to Salomon, but was grieved to learn from him, not only that that was not the case, but the compiler of the still-unpublished “Guide” had no recollection of seeing Salomon’s name in the course of his long investigations.

Mr. Russell devoted an enormous section of his book to Haym Salomon’s supposed experiences in opposing the British on behalf of his newly adopted country—and long before he became a citizen even—, culminating in his escape from the British just before he submitted his petition for employment to Congress in Philadelphia, dated August 25th, 1778 (1 Pub. 87-8). Haym M. Salomon or his aides had drawn on their imagination very largely in connection with the patriot’s New York sojourn, so as to “adorn the tale”, but not content with this, Mr. Russell has enormously enlarged this narrative by drafts on his imagination—of which all we actually know fills less than the two pages, just cited—his ‘padding’ included 108 pages of his book. I accept the patriot’s own narrative, as contained in his petition to Congress, notwithstanding the fact that it remains wholly uncorroborated except as to his imprisonment in the Provost,—despite months of continuous search for corroborative proof, and except that the son 43 years after his father’s death seems to have produced an alleged corroborative certificate referring to an alleged accompanying affidavit of doubtful genuineness and accuracy as to an alleged itemized ‘hazardous commission’ from Washington (2 Pub. 15-16). All Haym Salomon himself stated was that some time after the entry of British troops into New York City he was taken up as a spy and commited by Gen. Robertson to the Provost. Nothing is said here about any commission from Washington, and nothing about a death sentence,—and it seems very unlikely that this new arrival,—who came to America only in 1772,—should have become a frenzied anti-Britisher before 1776. In any event, he himself does not refer to any anti-British activities, until after British entry into New York after the battle of Long Island was fought in August, 1776, and the claim subsequently advanced by Haym M. Salomon—credited by Russell (p. 86-108),—is that he was concerned in a
scheme to burn all the British shipping off New York City and their store-houses in the City, a commission which it is incredible that Washington gave anyone, and which Congress and the Council on War forbade! The course of the story is probably the fact that nearly 500 buildings in New York city were burnt Sept. 21, 1776 and the British falsely ascribed this to Washington, in order to enrage the inhabitants of New York against the Americans (Wilson’s Memorial History of New York, II 526-7). If true, and it was discovered, such spy certainly would have been punished more severely than by imprisonment and prompt release, and the enormous volume of Washington papers would have disclosed this extraordinary and brutal method of dealing with an unfortunate American city, captured by the British! Salomon’s own petition proceeds to narrate that his knowledge of many languages induced Gen. Heister to release him from prison, and have him appointed to the commissary department as purveyor for the officers—also an incredible thing to do in connection with such a dangerous spy! Nor was Salomon one who was disposed to hide his light under a bushel! Russell himself says (p. 108) that this affidavit “remains in some ways an inscrutable mystery”.

Salomon’s petition states that there in New York he was of great service to the French and American prisoners and assisted them with money and helped them to escape, as also to induce Hessians to desert, and thereby he rendered himself so obnoxious to the British headquarters that their guards pursued him, but he was fortunately able on August 11th, 1778, to escape, proceeding to Philadelphia. His loss of his fortune (probably chiefly his wife’s dowry) to the British—next specified—had already been referred to, and his compulsory temporary abandonment of his wife and infant child of a month old (Ezekiel S., an older brother of Haym M.) as also his kindly solicitude for another prisoner in the provost, M. Demezes. Strangely enough, not a word of confirmation even of this narrative, has so far been secured, but we have found his name on the list of American prisoners in British hands, slightly misspelt, which is not strange as to such an unusual first name. On the other hand, he was apparently conducting his New York business right along, as shown by his many ad-
vertisements in the New York papers of the time—a course not inconsistent with his appointment in the commissary department, etc., and he was able to marry Miss Franks in 1777, a daughter of a very influential Jewish resident of New York. All the probabilities run against the accuracy of this alleged certificate and alleged affidavit, turning up mysteriously only after 40 years! But on the score of the reference to 1775, Haym M. Salomon or his aids turned him into an intimate friend of Gen. McDougall, many years later (2 Pub. 7), and Mr. Russell embroiders the tale further by making him out to have been an ardent “Son of Liberty” long before the Revolution, and to write pages about American activities in New York before the Revolution, and until Haym Salomon’s escape in 1778, on most of which Haym Salomon’s name does not even appear. Years later, the legend was originated by someone, and carried into some of the Congressional Committee reports—probably in the light of the fire that destroyed several hundred houses in New York City in September, 1776, soon after the British occupation began, which was accredited by the British to the Sons of Liberty under McDougall—that he was concerned in an attempted firing of the City and British shipping (Russell, pp. 77-8). So stories grow! But the proponents of the Monument project, who employ this legend as an argument in favor of erecting a statue to Salomon in New York City, seem to be sadly lacking in a sense of humor, for New York City would scarcely thus celebrate such “achievement” by erecting a monument on the strength thereof! But one may reject as absurd the contention that Salomon deserves a monument for what he did in New York before his escape, however patriotic his motives may have been. The question, however, whether, all in all, he deserves a monument, is one as to which opinions may differ. Moreover, he was not the first good and great man, whose son was anything but good and great!

Space compels me to hurry rapidly over his other achievements in Philadelphia. He was one of several who petitioned for the removal in 1783 of the obnoxious sectarian “Test Oath” —requiring an oath in the belief of the New Testament for election to the Pennsylvania Assembly and other public office (Jew. Ency. Vol. X, p. 654) and adopted in 1776 over Frank-
lin’s protest—which was removed in 1790; the interesting text of this petition, unearthed by Miss Benjamin, lies before me as I write. (See Russell pp. 301-4). He was an extremely generous contributor to the fund for building the first synagogue in Philadelphia (Russell, p. 198), and it is remarkable that Benjamin Franklin and some other distinguished Christians contributed to the erection of this edifice, in unconscious imitation of a list of Jewish subscribers to a fund for building a steeple for Trinity Church 77 years previously, as I pointed out elsewhere (Luzzatti’s “God in Freedom” p. 685). Franklin’s course in subscribing $5 to this Philadelphia fund was illuminatingly explained by him in a letter on March 9th, 1790, written from Philadelphia to Ezra Stiles, in which he said: “All sects here, and we have great Variety, have experienced my good will in assisting them with Subscriptions for building their new Places of Worship, and as I have never opposed any of their Doctrines, I hope to go out of the World in Peace with them—all” (Id. p. 685). It seems, by the way, an almost unique incident, and a remarkable tribute to their American patriotism, that the New York Jewish congregation should have moved almost en masse to Philadelphia at the beginning of the British occupation, headed by their Rabbi, closing their New York synagogue, and worshipping instead at Philadelphia. It is not strange that such patriots should have chosen Haym Salomon as one of their Synagogue trustees in Philadelphia soon afterwards, and that he planned to join many of them in returning to New York to live, soon after the Revolution, when death from consumption suddenly overtook him. Miss Benjamin has also unearthed some items showing that he was one of a group of Philadelphians interested at this early day, in the development of navigation by air-ships. I think, however, without further elaboration, that Mr. Ford’s unjust and sweeping denial of claims to fame for Haym Salomon has been here rebutted conclusively.

Naturally, it was not only Committees of Congress which were misled and deceived by the nefarious Haym M. Salomon propaganda. A historian thereby misled was Moses Y. Beach of New York, who wrote a biographical list of the “Wealthy Citizens of New York City” published by “The Sun” as early
as 1845, which passage I quoted over thirty years ago in good faith in my biographical sketch of Salomon’s kinswoman, Rebecca Franks, and which was carried over from this publication by Ada Sterling in her well-known book “The Jew and Civilization” (New York, 1924). The latter work quotes Mr. Beach as follows (p. 32): “If this man had received his just due from the National Government he would now be worth more than a million dollars. There is now in the archives of the Government documentary evidence that his father, a wealthy Jew of Philadelphia, loaned without security to the United States a sum not less than $335,000”. Similarly, ex-Governor McCall of Massachusetts, in his book “Patriotism of the American Jew” (New York, 1924) devoted almost a whole chapter to Haym Salomon (pp. 85-93), in which he was eulogized in even more extravagant terms. I read the work in proof-sheets, and even then strongly urged that these passages ought to be toned down considerably, but the enthusiasm of the author—or rather editor of the work—would not modify his rhetorical enthusiasm; and his characterization, too, may be summarized by quoting the passage (p. 86): “He easily ranked next to Robert Morris as the man who made it possible to finance the war”. The chief source of the information contained in this work—with its extravagances—was an article in the “Saturday Courier” of Philadelphia of October 30th, 1847, entitled “Financiers of the Revolution—Number One”, evidently inspired by Haym M. Salomon, which was reprinted in “Pub.” Vol. 27, pp. 466-473 as part of the collections of the late Rev. J. J. Lyons. Nor did the latest writer on the Jews in America escape that unconscious taint, for Rabbi Lee J. Levinger in his “History of the Jews in the United States” (Cincinnati 1930) waxes scarcely less enthusiastic (pp. 121-124), and he adds, (p. 121): “I have read these original bills and committee reports in the Library of Congress and I believe their proof is conclusive”, without a suspicion of Haym M. Salomon’s deceptions, and he concluded (p. 124): “He (the patriot father) seems to have trusted implicitly in the national honor. This honor has not yet been vindicated, even to the extent of striking a gold medal for the family in recognition of their great service, as was recommended by a committee of the House in 1892”.
On the other hand, Albert M. Friedenberg, Corresponding Secretary of the American Jewish Historical Society,—who was familiar—as a member of the Committee, of which I was Chairman, with these iconoclastic discoveries, recently wrote a brief but terse review of Russell's "Haym Salomon and the Revolution", under the caption "Haym Salomon Romanticized", for the "American Hebrew" of Jan. 2, 1930 as follows:

"Mr. Russell has produced a pleasant and favorable romance, of which Haym Salomon is the central figure. It is a romance, not a work of history, because it is largely based on tradition instead of facts. Moreover, the romance is padded with extraneous matter entirely unrelated to Haym Salomon. Pleasant the romance is, although Mr. Russell's journalese in time loses its piquant forcefulness, and begets the reaction of boredom. Favorable it is, too, because the author, like a special pleader, is ever seeking to make a veritable demigod of his hero. I wish the editor would accord me the space needed to go through this book, chapter by chapter and page by page, and to point out Mr. Russell's errors and misstatements. For example, Haym Salomon did not lend large sums; if, indeed, he lent any money, to the government. Mr. Russell implies as much in his final pages, but nowhere does he unequivocally make this statement. There is no proof adduced to support the assertions that Haym Salomon financed without requital France and Spain in this country at the close of the Revolution, and that scores of patriots were pensioners on this bounty. Proof is not supplied, because it cannot be supplied, and where an assertion is made without proof in a work which purports to be a serious contribution to history, the writing is neither more nor less than romance. The occasional footnotes scattered through Mr. Russell's pages are not impressive. His citations are of secondary and tertiary sources and of official reports which cannot withstand destructive refutation. Mr. Russell set out to make a book and that task he has fulfilled. But more than this the present reviewer cannot and will not say."

It has been no pleasant task for me to write this letter. I would far have preferred that the result of the investigation I made and supervised had resulted in establishing Salomon's
claim to a monument. I have devoted many weeks continuously to efforts to unearth material in his favor, beginning thirty-five years ago, when I spent much time going through newspaper files of the Revolutionary period to supplement Prof. Hollander's and Prof. Herbert B. Adams, edition of the so-called, but misnamed, "Sparks document", prepared about 1845 by Haym M. Salomon, and printed in Pub. No. 2. My efforts in connection with the supervision of the investigations of Mr. Oppenheim and Miss Benjamin were in the direction of endeavoring, conscientiously, to rebut Mr. Worthington Ford's unjust verdict. As seen, they did, in part, yield valuable results in this direction. It was not my fault that Mr. Oppenheim discovered, very unexpectedly, documentary proof, destructive of the chief claims of Haym M. Salomon and the Monument Committee. But truth is truth and must prevail! You have stirred my conscience by your inquiries. As lawyers, moreover, we both know that even courts have, on occasion, been deceived by false and fabricated evidence!

My plan had been, after having shelved the pecuniary claims measure in Congress, and temporarily at least, the drive for the Monument, to have sought out further material, and ultimately have arranged for the publication of a work on Haym Salomon which, while narrating all the facts pro and con, herein referred to, would have embodied possible additional material in his favor, tending at least, to offset the "cons". The Oppenheim Memorial Volume which the American Jewish Historical Society intends to issue, might have been the proper medium for this. It is not improbable that new material in his favor will be hereafter unearthed, particularly regarding his work in connection with negotiating the drafts received in connection with the French, Dutch and Spanish loans—which we have only vague particulars about—and his comparatively unimportant New York experiences at the hands of the British, likely to be found in the rich collections contained in the Clemens Library at Ann Arbor, in the British archives relating to the Revolutionary War, and the invaluable collections of British Revolutionary War papers, recently purchased by Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach, president of the American Jewish Historical Society. I do not say, nor believe,
that they will, however, justify a monument. But the "Monument Committee" has forced my hands by its new and ill-advised drive, (including publication of the Russell book) and the new pamphlet, and my sense of duty to my beloved country and to the city of my residence for over fifty years and to the cause of historical truth, have dictated my publishing the disclosures herein contained. I am not unaware that my motives in doing so may be misunderstood or misrepresented, and that on the other hand, the items herein collated, annihilating, as I view them, the right to a monument, may attract much more attention from a sensation-loving press than my refutation of Worthington Ford's rash and unjust generalizations against Haym Salomon's claim to fame. Monuments should not be built on the basis of fabricated evidence and concealment of material facts. Subscriptions should not be thus lured from the unwary, nor municipal sites for monuments thus secured, or retained. My duty—as I conceive it—is now to give publicity to the facts herein set forth, in view of the ill-advised and reckless course of the Monument Committee. I think that fair-minded persons will, on mature consideration, approve my course. However: "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise" is the conclusion I have come to, after some hesitation, upon mature deliberation. February 18th, 1931.

Very truly yours,

Max J. Kohler

P. S.—Since the above was written, the Monument Committee held its intended "First National Conference" on the evening of the 24th instant. That afternoon I called Mr. Winter's attention to the grave impropriety of going ahead with this meeting, particularly on the basis of the very unfair and misleading pamphlet his Committee had just distributed, above referred to, and I told him that I would do my duty—as I had told him last year I would,—since they persisted in their course—and issue a public statement giving all the facts to the public. He begged me not to do so, but I told him a civic duty was involved for me, as well as a duty to historic truth and proper conduct. He did not tell me—though I knew this—that
several prominent people whom I had communicated with earlier in the day, had sent him messages, disassociating themselves absolutely from the monument project, in the light of the facts I then communicated to them. I notice from newspaper reports (N. Y. Times of the 25th inst. and Jewish Daily Bulletin of the 26th instant) that at the meeting in question, it was resolved to raise $150,000 for the monument, and that its cornerstone is to be laid July 4th next. I also notice that a statement was read from President Hoover, in which "the aid of his (Haym Salomon's) . . . wealth" was erroneously referred to as having been "of critical importance in the Revolution". Doubtless this statement, like the others referred to, was secured from the President through a suppression of material facts, and he surely would not have given it, had he known the facts hereinbefore stated. Doubtless, various other persons at the meeting were also wholly unfamiliar with the facts herein disclosed.

February 26, 1931.

MJK.

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Pages from Haym Salomon’s Letter-Book, showing correspondence in February, 1782 between Joshua Isaacs of Lancaster, Pa. and Salomon, about the possibility of making considerable profit by buying up the Bills of Exchange of imprisoned British officers of Cornwallis’ army at a large discount.