

## Letter to Editor from E H Saltiel

Cotopaxi, Colorado,  
In answer to the Young man's letter,  
Mr. E. H. Saltiel writes as follows:  
—The names of December 27, 1882.

appears a paragraph stating that the Russian  
emigration here was in a daily increasing con-  
dition, "making money rapidly, etc." It would  
be highly gratifying to me, if I could receive  
the true colored report, which I expect to be  
impossible to make a strictly fair. The truth  
is that the people here, upon whom these  
people mainly depended for support, was by  
the advice of their late manager and his suc-  
cessor, for the most part left unprotected, and  
if the money here had disappeared, I will  
not think them more, so I wish that they in-  
stead of the people here, were to be  
left for the other side of knowledge of all  
practical methods for present delivery, a well  
desire to this end indeed.

—The views of many of the colonists were  
in me with tears in their eyes and begged  
with the clear intention. I had this reference  
to me in those papers for the purpose of them  
had been such to give a paper that they knew  
to be false, defaming me. These wretched  
managers, however, treated me deeply, and  
I gave, during the winter, employment of one  
dollar and a half per day, in the following  
order: J. H. Shuman, J. Wolfson, Ben Chas-  
terman, Harry Chermak, Isaac Kohnstam,  
M. Dillinger, S. Chermak, H. Chermak, Isaac  
Chermak, H. Chermak, J. Chermak, H. Chermak,  
and H. Chermak. Many of them passed all  
day with the work the whole winter the in-  
struction of a few days ago, some learned  
how to work from each. Twelve, Dillinger,  
and J. H. Shuman, under the, without  
witness, and promise to do with. Harkley  
did not know the rest of the others, and I  
found no more in the dollar per day. I  
have heard all of the wretched work  
work by the piece, at seeing a large sum  
being, but only those few have accepted,  
and are making for wages. The father of  
one family, however, has gone to America  
of two weeks at his own, and takes his share,  
for, Isaac Chermak, with him. The Jews  
which money paid their expenses. The whole  
is, like money, money in their own hands  
of them. The father, Shermak and Shermak,  
are perfectly comfortable, and they brought  
money with them, and are pushing the part  
of their money and all wages that Shermak  
brought to me weekly, and I am glad that  
they have other means. The parents by  
the way, a meeting of a few for such family  
passed beautiful and has helped a great deal,  
and after that, Shermak and Zuck, will  
go along with, as the hands of such are for  
experience and hard, and have education  
harder. Dillinger is good enough to make  
change to that work. Shermak will soon  
nearly get work at his own, probably for  
monthly. The same may be said for Shermak  
and Shermak.

—I regret, however, to be compelled to  
make the long report, to which, as  
a consequence of the, and if it were for  
the sake of the Western Mountain States, will  
give the best of money and great money.  
For money and hope of the money, and  
the money are equal. What's taking the  
time, and if the situation is that it will be  
hard to get the very person that will be  
helpful to the cause and money  
giving money. From the past year and  
present I would be to know that one hundred  
dollar given into the hands of the land of  
education and to the, because of the  
and will be probably of more good than  
the other report, and of experience.  
—What do the land to be more equal to  
one man, but to lead my letter which I  
am to the highest point, and I am glad  
of being.

Sent 27 December 1882  
Printed in Jewish Messenger of 5 January 1883

Annotated by  
Miles Saltiel

## Acknowledgements and sources

This covers a set of documents intended to enable students of the Cotopaxi pioneers to examine the primary and secondary documents regarding the colony. They are provided with annotations, cross references and an index. In addition the "Cotopaxi Papers" include a summary of findings and a collection of quantitative material, including demographic and financial data, plus a paper on mining employment and a paper on historiography. These are identified and acknowledged as follows:

Document	Principal providers of source material
CP-1 Summary of findings	As below
CP-2 Quantitative material	Generally as below plus Adam Fagin and Leah Klocek, Denver, Colorado, on behalf of author; and Jenny Moore Lowe, Cañon City, Colorado as published at <a href="http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/cotopaxi/land.html">http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/cotopaxi/land.html</a> ; and <a href="http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/cotopaxi/family-names.html">http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/cotopaxi/family-names.html</a>
CP-3 Schwarz. 29 July 1882	Andrew Eason, at that time of Bristol, England; and Rivka Schiller, New York City, on behalf of author.
CP-4 Tuska. c5 August 1882	Professor Adam Rovner, University of Denver, Colorado, in correspondence with author.
CP-5 Saltiel. 19 October 1882	As CP-4
CP-6 Schwarz. 23 October, 1882	Moshe Shaltiel, Miami, Florida, in correspondence with author.
CP-7 Saltiel, 27 December 1882	Author
CP-8 Kohn and Wirkowski. 5 January 1883	Leah Klocek, Denver, Colorado, on behalf of author.
CP-9 Meyer Hart. 8 February 1883	As CP-6
CP-10 Henry. 15 February 1883	As CP-8
CP-11 Schwarz, 2 March 1883	As CP-8
CP-12 Nussbaum, 13 March 1883	As CP-8
CP-13 Roberts. 1941	As CP-6
CP-14 Satt. 1950	Published by Nelson Moore, Cotopaxi Colorado, at <a href="http://www.cotopaxi-colony.com/flora-jane-satt-thesis.htm">http://www.cotopaxi-colony.com/flora-jane-satt-thesis.htm</a>
CP-15 Shpall, 1950	As CP-8
CP-16 Gulliford. 1953	As CP-6
CP-17 The Bardine Assignment	Jenny Moore Lowe, Cañon City, Colorado, in correspondence with author.
CP-18 Historiography	As above, plus Yehuda Aharon Horwitz and Stephanie Ginensky, Jerusalem, Israel.
Index to CP-3 to CP-16	Compiled by Nic Nicholas, London, England.

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Publication information on back cover.

**Generally**

This letter appeared in the *Jewish Messenger* of 5 January 1883, ostensibly in response to an article the paper published on 22 December 1882. It has been overlooked by all later writers save Leo Shpall (CP-15) and Robert Sutton in *Communal utopias and the American experience: Religious communities, 1732-2000*. Praeger. Westport, Conn, 2003. pp112-113.

In October, Saltiel responded (CP-5) to (what he saw as) the provocation of Tuska's letter to the *American Hebrew* (CP-4). Two months later, a newspaper article in the *Messenger* was a second occasion for him to resort to print, this also serving as a circumstantial response to a lost "defaming" petition. To the extent that this was the letter's purpose, it decisively failed. Such allegations never ceased to animate the colonists and the record they established. Its influence was confined to half a dozen vivid phrases which found unacknowledged echoes in the correspondence of the next few months.

The episode has ended up as an instance of the dismal saw that "no good deed goes unpunished": the colonists' accusations have never been forgotten; Any recall of Saltiel's open offer of employment has been distorted.

The letter's value lies in its contemporaneous account of events in November and December 1882 and its pen-portrait of individual colonists. It is noteworthy as offering no hint of a financial dispute with the colonists or HEAS.

It ends with the downbeat recommendation that no more settlers be sent to a futile experiment, its concluding tone far removed from the optimistic defiance of CP-5. Saltiel now acknowledges the colony's failure, which he attributes to mismanagement by Schwarz (unnamed in the passages containing such criticism), the communal aspect of the settlement and the colonists' mismatch of skills and attitudes. However true, these explanations aim off the disastrous location, reasonably to be laid at Saltiel's door.

**Line 15**

The report of 22 December 1882 appears under the heading, *The Russian Emigrants*, and is not attributed to an author. In part it reads:

"Reports from the Cotopaxi, Colorado colony continues (*sic*) to be of the most encouraging nature, and in fact there is now not the slightest reason to doubt that it will be a success in every sense of the word...In their letters to the society the colonists express their warm gratitude for the aid extended to them and promise, at an early date, to repay every dollar advanced."

It led both to this document and a brief rebuttal from Schwarz also in the *Jewish Messenger* of 5 January 1883, challenging it as overoptimistic. Even so, Schwarz concluded that the colonists would

"...get along and work out their own salvation, if they will be let alone and thereby taught that it is now incumbent on them to support themselves and their families".

**Cotopaxi, Colorado**

In reference to the Russian colony here, Mr. E. H. Saltiel, under date of December 27th, writes as follows:

In your issue of December 22th, 1882, there appears a paragraph stating that the Russian refugees here are in a highly flourishing condition, "earning from two to four dollars per day", "making money rapidly," etc. It would be highly gratifying to me, if I could confirm this rose colored report, which I regret to be compelled to state is utterly false.

The truth is that the potato crop, upon which these people mainly depended for support, was, by the advice of their late manager and his assistant, for the most part left ungathered until the severe frosts had destroyed it. I will not blame these men, as I think that their intention was to let the potatoes grow to a larger size, but the utter lack of knowledge of all practical methods for pioneer farming, is well shown in this one instance.

**Lines 17 and 18**

"...rose colored..." finds an echo in Henry's "...rosy-colored..." (CP-10, page 1, line 25).

**Lines 20 to 24**

CP-18 page 10 traces the distortions of the potato crop story. This is the only contemporary account of its failure, evidently seen as catastrophic, particularly as combining with the more or less coincident credit-stop (see the initial annotation to CP-6, page 1). Saltiel attributes the crop failure to mismanagement by Schwarz and Tobias, making the first public criticism of the latter. Tobias was mentioned by Saltiel in CP-5, but is absent from this letter's compendium, indicating that he was no longer in Cotopaxi. Schwarz' accounting (CP-6, page 18, lines 10 and 11) indicates that the two returned to New York together.

**Line 23**

"...practical methods..." anticipates the "practical Colorado farmers" of Kohn (CP-8, page 4, line 19), transmuted into the "competent Colorado famer" of Henry (CP-10, page 6, line 8); and "practical farmer of Schwarz (CP-11, page 7, line 19), all suggesting they had seen this letter or other documents taking its lead.

1 The wives of many of the colonists came to me with tears in their eyes and begged work for their  
2 husbands. I had felt reluctant to assist these people further, as some of them had been made to  
3 sign a paper that they knew to be false, defaming me. Their wretched condition, however,  
4 touched me deeply, and I gave, during November, employment at one dollar and a half per day,  
5 to the following men:

- 6 J. S. Shamas,
- 7 J. Vorzitzer,
- 8 Berl Chorowsky,
- 9 Marcus Chorowsky,
- 10 Samuel Neuman,
- 11 H. Dublitzky,
- 12 S. Chuturan,
- 13 Hirsh Lauterstein,
- 14 M Menkowsky,
- 15 J. Present,
- 16 M. Chuturan, and
- 17 D. Krupitzky.

**Line 1**

"...with tears in their eyes..." anticipates the "tears running down his cheeks" remembered by Prezant (CP-13, page 7, lines 2 and 3), which Roberts associates with "...appeals to Mr Saltiel [for] money..." Saltiel himself associates tears with women's requests for work for their husbands.

**Line 3**

The lost "paper", here described as "false" and "defaming", is not to hand. The itemised account of the settlers' particulars and Saltiel's own actions may be seen as placing on the record his reply to complaints, in late October or early November, of his ignorance of settlers' identities and indifference to their welfare.

The reports of conditions are confusing. Saltiel recounts an outright crisis, with the colonists desperate for subsistence after the crop failure. By contrast, the scabble for land on 19 November tells us that the pioneers had not yet given up on Cotopaxi farming.

In March 1883, Schwarz wrote of the settlers expressing commitment to farming in the colony. This was in "letters of satisfaction", from Lauterstein and Zedek (CP-11, page 7, lines 4 and 5; and lines 15 and 16), received by HEAS in January - as also from Minkowsky (see annotation to CP-11, page 4, lines 12 and 13).

**Lines 6 to 17**

This list of twelve colonists excludes nine males of working age who were in Cotopaxi over the period.

- The lovelorn minor, Ed Grimes, who decamped to Denver in mid-December (CP-14, page 18, n21);
- Snyder, earlier disaffected (CP-5, page 11, lines 6 to 8) and now paid by the other settlers to go to Denver, taking his newly married daughter (page 3, lines 8 and 9);
- Zedek and Nudelman who found work as carpenters and builders (page 3, line 18)
- Two Millsteins, with the family characterised by Saltiel as "probably comfortably off" (page 3, line 18);
- Michael Shammes, whose family was similarly characterised (page 3, line 18);
- Tobias, who had returned to New York (annotation to page 1, lines 18 to 22). and
- Sholem Shradsky, who at 55 was regarded as elderly.

It includes eight who continued to take mining shifts into April 1883 (CP-17, n17). These are:

- Berl Chorowsky (Shradsky);
- Marcus Chorowsky (Shradsky);
- Herschel Dublitzky (Toplitzky);
- Hirsh Lauterstein;
- M Minkowsky (Menkowsky, Mirkowsky, Mitkowsky);

- S Newman;
- E Shammes (Isaac, or JS Shammes or Shamez); and
- Sigmund Vorsitzer (Washer).

No doubt as a sequitor to the "...false...defaming...paper..." of which Saltiel complains (line 3), this list and its associated commentary themselves skirt defamation. Although they conform to the convention of making no public criticism of named persons (a virtual necessity in so litigious a milieu), they are painfully deliberate in itemising and characterising every head of family.

This would enable any careful reader of the letter to identify those failing to meet Saltiel's standards as "fair attentive workmen" (page 3, lines 2 and 3). By deduction, these are

- Hirsh Lauterstein the quarrelsome Morris Minkowsky, and S Newman, though in the event all three did take mining shifts;
- the Chuteran brothers, the older notified as a pauper by the Arapahoe County Clerk within six weeks;
- Zattel (Charles) Prezant who put his own construction on the occasion of the settlers' tears (see line 1 above); and
- the "Hebrew teacher" David Krupitsky (Grupitsky, Gorpitsky), the sole person named by Henry as possibly qualifying for further support (CP-10, page 7, line 10).

1 Some of them proved utterly unfit for work, the others under the instruction of a first class  
2 miner, soon learned how to sort ore from rock. Two men, Dublitzky and J. H. Shamas, made fair,  
3 attentive workmen, and promise to do well. Dublitzky did better than most of the others, and I  
4 raised his wages to two dollars per day. I have offered all of the unemployed colonists work by  
5 the piece, at sorting a large ore dump, but only two or three have accepted, and are making fair  
6 wages.

7  
8 The father of one family, Snyders, has gone to Denver to obtain work at tailoring, and taken his  
9 daughter, Fannie Chuturan, with him. The benevolent society paid their expenses. The funds in  
10 this society amount to about one hundred dollars.

11  
12 Two families, Milchstein and Shamas, are probably comfortably off, as they brought money with  
13 them, and also purchased the pair of little mules and old wagon that Schwartz bought for the  
14 colony; and I am told that they have other animals. The purchase by the H. E. A. Society of a cow  
15 for each family proved beneficial, and has helped a great deal.

16  
17 Two other families, Nudelman and Zedek, will get along well, as the heads of each are fair  
18 carpenters and builders, and have industrious families. Dublitzky is good enough workman  
19 always to find work. Chorowskys will occasionally get work at my mines, probably permanently.  
20 The same may be said for Neumann and Vorzitzer.

**Lines 1 to 6, 19 and 20**

Some colonists worked the mines before mid-October (CP-6. page 12, lines 12 to 16; page 13, lines 1 and 2; and page 15, lines 11 to 15).

These passages combine with page 2, lines 3 and 4, to tell us that in November, Saltiel extended a universal offer of employment in response to tearful pleas. He is transparent about wages; reminds us that settlers selected for agriculture may not make good miners; and notes as the natural order of things that the pioneers are exercising their discretion to take work occasionally or decline it altogether.

**Lines 10 and 11**

Compare Saltiel's report of \$100 in the "Benevolent Society" to Hart's estimate of \$60 (CP-9, page 3, line 11) or Schwarz' estimate of \$100 - possibly taken from this letter (CP-11. page 7, line 10).

**Line 13**

This is the only place in the letter where Schwarz is named.

**Lines 13 and 14**

Reading between the lines, the Miilsteins or Shammes families bought the mules and cart so that the proceeds could flow to the colony, for the benefit of those without cash.

**Lines 18 to 20**

In this at least, Saltiel is prescient: the Chorowskys, Dublitsky, Neumann and Vorsitzer worked the mine till it closed in April.1883.

1 I regret, however, to be compelled to state that the farming experiment, *in colonies*, is a  
2 lamentable failure, and if attempted further in the Far Western Mountain States, will cause both  
3 loss of money and great misery. The training and tastes of our Russian coreligionists are against  
4 Western farming customs, and if the experiment should ever be repeated here, the only persons  
5 that will be benefited will be the clerks and managers drawing salaries. From the past year's  
6 experience I am led to believe that one hundred dollars given into the hands of the head of each  
7 discreet family to start business for himself will be productive of more good than thousands  
8 expended on colony experiments.

9  
10 We will do the best that we can with those now here, but to send any more would be cruelty to a  
11 helpless people, and a total waste of money.

**Line 1; lines 5 to 8**

"...*in colonies*..." is italicised in the original. These passages indicate that even at this point, Saltiel attributes the failure as much to organisation as locale, though "...start business for himself..." (line 7) may indicate comprehensive disenchantment with agriculture. .

**Lines 5**

Saltiel's disobliging remark about clerks and managers anticipates Kohn's similar treatment of "clerks and assistant clerks" at CP-8, page 4, line 18; once again suggesting that Kohn had seen this letter.

**Lines 10 and 11**

The bleak tone of this concluding sentence contrasts forcibly with the defiant finale of Saltiel's letter just two months earlier (CP-5, page 11, lines 15 to 18).



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