

I tell this story a lot. In 1970, I had just graduated from Oxford and I celebrated by joining with four pals to rent a Chevrolet Impala in New Haven (the New York rentals were out of cars for the Labour Day weekend) and driving to Los Angeles. Two days in, we stopped for an early supper in Walsenberg, Colorado. One of my companions picked up the local paper and laughingly passed me the front page of the holiday supplement. It told of an Emanuel Saltiel, who promoted a failed colony for Russian Jews in 1882 to 1884 on the plateau above Cotopaxi, Colorado. The story said he was a pretty bad lot, luring immigrants out for a pool of sweated labour for his zinc mine.

When I got home, we couldn't place Emanuel—my own immediate family arrived in London too late for him to be one of us—and for over twenty years a facsimile of the paper did no more than decorate a bookshelf. Fast forward to the early nineties, when we Saltiels got the genealogy bug and Moshe Shaltiel of Chicago ran down the story. Emanuel was born in Bath, England, grew up in the shadow of the Tower of London, took the boat to New Orleans as a teenager, lied about his age to muster to the Confederacy, got captured by Sherman's army before Atlanta, and remustered to the U.S. Cavalry from which he was discharged at Fort Laramie, Wyoming. And that was just the start: he then walked to Denver, founded a newspaper, compiled a business directory of the Wyoming Territory, and went into the mining business, in Denver, New York and elsewhere. He married three times; brought over his brother, Wolf, to the States; and contributed to the foundation of the Denver Jewish Hospital, where he served as trustee. The two brothers have descendants throughout the States.

In 1997, Ilan Ziv, the maker of the TV-film, *Shealtiel: a Family Saga* decided that he wanted to include Emanuel's colourful history and I went out to

the Rockies to play a part in the filming. Like I say, this is a story I have told before.

Now we get to a part I don't tell so often: once in Colorado, we met the local authority on Jewish history in those parts, Professor Jeanne Abrams of the University of Denver. I was dismayed to discover that all concerned had settled upon Emanuel as an out-and-out villain. There was little I could do in the face of this concerted antagonism, but later I was slightly sick at myself, feeling I had done his shade little service in my few moments on camera. When I got home, I wrote Ilan a note setting out what I took to be the flaws in the allegations against Emanuel. To Ilan's credit, he took my comments sufficiently seriously to draw some of the sting out of his intended por-

The view from Gloucester Square

trayal. I rewrote my note to him as an article and published it in the *Gazette* as "In the Footsteps of Emanuel Saltiel".

Once again, fast forward—this time for nearly six years. In late 2003—and we are now back with the oft-told tale—Philippe and Beatrice Saltiel of France visited their son, Laurent, who lives in Denver. They took time out to travel to Cotopaxi and visit the township library which has a shelf or two on the colony. On his return Philippe suggested that I send them a more balanced view, so I rejigged my "Footsteps" article and emailed it to LaQuita Dunne, the Cotopaxi librarian. In early 2005, Vibeke Sæltiel Olsen of Amsterdam emailed me that a local author had cited it in an article for a Colorado history magazine. I sent them a letter which they published.

Back to new stuff. Vibeke's prompt must have set me to idle Googling, because it was around then that I found the text of the unpublished Master's thesis which forms the generally

accepted account of Emanuel's villainy. I down-loaded this and began to compare it to my own take. As I did so, I realised that the thesis was pretty patchy. Eventually I worked up a full-blown critique and put it on our website.

Moshe got wind of this and sent me the 1882 report on the colony by its general manager. This has been overlooked by historians of the colony but on examination it scuppers once and for all the sweated labour thesis. I emailed Professor Abrams and she got it immediately, asking me to work up a piece for her *Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Notes*. Felicity suggested I flesh out the story by checking original records so I ran down (and in one case got translated from the Russian) newspaper reports now held at Harvard and the Library of Congress. These confirm Emanuel's innocence and explain how the story of his wrongdoing arose. On Christmas Eve 2005, I found myself at the BBC in London, on the line to Dan Meyer of Colorado Public Radio. This went out on 6 January 2006, and you can hear it on our website ([History > Welcome > Emanuel](#)) or on

www.cpr.org/cgi-bin/comatters/comatters_play.aspx?play=2379&type=comatters.aspx.

That dratted Emanuel Saltiel! How he has persecuted me! He came from Bath, London, New Orleans, Atlanta, Fort Laramie, Denver, New York and who knows where else to become a stone in my shoe for thirty-five years or so. And for the thick end of a decade, I have been haunted by the uneasy feeling that I should have done better by him on film. But you know what? Sometimes the slow game plays out. The discoveries of the last few months and their scholarly publication should clear his reputation for any open-minded observer. For sure, it's been a long story, but now—at long last—I am close to being able to make peace with his shade. I do believe we are close to being able to call it a wrap.