

Jews in Early American Politics

By Yvette Miller and Aish.com

Little-known facts about Jews in American politics.

First Jew to hold elected office: Francis Salvador, South Carolina representative to the Revolutionary Provincial Congresses of 1775 and 1776.

First Jew killed in the War of Independence: Francis Salvador, captured, scalped and killed by Cherokee Indians aligned with British forces in 1776.

Jewish financier of much of the American Revolutionary War: Haym Salomon, a Polish immigrant in colonial New York who lent George Washington over \$200,000 - a vast fortune in today's money. Salomon was never repaid and died in poverty in 1785.

1790, George Washington's letter to the Touro Synagogue in Rhode Island affirming the security of Jews: "May the children of the stock of Abraham who dwell in this land continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants, while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid."

First Jewish congressman: Lewis Charles Levin, elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1844 representing Pennsylvania's 1st District.

First Jewish senator: David Levy Yulee, elected when Florida became a state in 1845.

General Order No. 11: In 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant expels all Jews from the state of Tennessee within 24 hours for war profiteering. Three days later President Abraham Lincoln revokes the baseless decree.

7,000: the number of Jews who fought with the Union Army during America's Civil War

3,000: the number of Jews who fought on the Confederate side

1861: the year Rabbi Dr. Arnold Fischel convinced President Lincoln to accept Jewish chaplains in the army

1862: Rev. Jacob Frankel of Philadelphia becomes first Jewish chaplain of the US Army.

The first Jewish United States Cabinet Secretary: Oscar Straus, from 1906 to 1909, appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt.

First Jewish Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court: Louis Brandeis, in 1916. His appointment by President Woodrow unleashed a flood of anti-Semitism. "Isn't it a shame, Mr. President, that a man as great as Mr. Justice Brandeis should be a Jew?" someone once commented. President Wilson replied, "But he would not be Mr. Brandeis if he were not a Jew!"

First Jewish female member of the U.S. Congress: Florence Prag Kahn, in 1925; she was only the fifth woman to serve in Congress

28: The present number of Jewish members (out of 535) of the United States Congress, just over 5%.

7%: The number of Americans who would not vote for a Jew as President.