



Charlotte Joseph (1803-1883), a devoted aunt and caregiver to her sisters' many children, clasps a sprig of flowers for this formal portrait.

Charlotte Joseph (1803–1883): A Devoted Aunt Who Saved the Day

Charlotte Joseph devoted her life to family. Born in 1803, in Georgetown, S.C., she was the eighth of ten children of Lizar and Sarah Judith Joseph (née Judah). The Joseph's third child and eldest daughter, Eleanor, was born in 1794 in the tiny village of Black Mingo, S.C. Next after Eleanor was Molsey, followed by two boys, then another daughter before Charlotte, then two more girls. From a young age Charlotte helped care for her siblings. She never married, and later she cared for the children of her sisters.

In 1820, when Charlotte was 17 and Eleanor long since married and in her own household, Sarah Joseph died. Presumably Charlotte ran the household for her father and siblings living at home. When Lizar Joseph died seven years later, Charlotte, then 24, became head of the household, with her unmarried sisters, Sarah and Clara, in her care. She inherited six bondsmen and -women from her father.

Three years after the death of their father, Eleanor, age 36, was widowed when her husband, Israel Solomons, died at age 60; they had been married sixteen years. Eleanor, a lovely woman but incapable of providing for her children, moved to Charleston from Georgetown to give her sons better opportunities to find work.

In the 1830 United States Census for South Carolina, Charlotte Joseph is listed as head of a household in Georgetown that included one sister and four nephews. In 1832, Eleanor's son Lizar Solomons, age 14 (b.1818), indentured himself as a house carpenter. Three years later, in 1835, Lizar's older brother Abraham Alexander—age 19 (b.1816) and frequently referred to as A.A.—was licensed as an apothecary in South Carolina.

(A.A. Solomons's employer, a Charleston druggist, later moved him to the Savannah office of the pharmacy business. Ten years later, in 1845, A.A. bought out the former owners, and renamed the business Solomons Brothers. Subsequently other family followed him to Savannah. Brother Joe became head of the business after A.A. died.)

Meanwhile, 1835 was also the year that Charlotte's sister Molsey died. Molsey's husband, Sampson Solomons, was a cousin of Eleanor's late husband, Israel. Now, in addition to caring for her unmarried sisters and helping with Eleanor's children, Charlotte began looking after Molsey's children. In the next generation, Eleanor's son Joe would marry his first cousin, Molsey's daughter Ziporah ("Zip").

Busy with the practical aspects of providing for the young children in her

OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

A small image gallery here and on page 33 records Aunt Charlotte's sturdy personage. At right, she stands next to a column against what appears to be a painted backdrop. Two images on page 33 show her seated outdoors with her knitting (top) and in an oval frame wearing a striped dress (bottom).





care, Charlotte did not leave an extensive record of her life. Still, her down-to-earth practicality—and Jewishness—were reflected in her “receipts” (recipe) book. The book itself is now lost, but it was shown at an exhibit in Charleston in 1964 and, according to the exhibit catalog, it contained receipts for cakes, puddings, cookies, salads, and medical cures, as well as items of special Jewish interest such as receipts for “Hamans Ears”, “Matsoe Clice” and “Sabbath Cakes.”

One item that has survived is an album quilt Charlotte made for her sister Eleanor, a legacy that continues to be treasured (page 38). Typical of quilts made in the South in the mid-19th century, it is the only such quilt known to have been made for a Jewish woman.

Charlotte Joseph’s devotion to her many nieces and nephews was acknowledged by the simple inscription—“Aunt Charlotte”—they placed on her tombstone. A telling hand-written caption (now lost) under one photograph of her declares that she “took command of the Solomons family in the crisis following the death of Israel Solomons and brought them safely through.”

OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

Amsterdam July 14 1815.

My Dear Sisters and family

how can you write to your brother and say that you will not write to him again unless he answers your letter Do you think that it is my fault Do you think that you do not receive letters from me often it is owing to the place where I live in the middle there does not go direct to it and the letters very often get miscarried and another reason is that I have not sufficient time from my business to look out for opportunities that the letters might go by and when I do write I am afraid that the letters do not come to hand as I wrote to you all about a year ago and find that they have not come I have sent you my miniature I hope that you will receive it with as much pleasure as I do in receiving your hair which you send me I was quite anxious to send one for my sister but the cutter asks such an extravagant price that I could not think of doing so you must be satisfied with this until I can get a more convenient way and might I pray that I could see my friends I should not mind a few hundred dollars to see them but what signifies all this it is but building castles in the air how is it possible for a man with a family of small children and the youngest not more than 7 months old as you have never here before I call her Sarah after you my dear sister I will here state to you the business which I follow and how you may remain here if it is in my power to think of leaving home I import goods from England to Holland and also send goods there to a country of that kind it requires the strictest attention I have to give and well as take a great deal of stock and my time is scarce entirely to myself it requires a great deal in Holland to keep up on credit

Letter From Reuben Simon Krijn



Reuben Simon Krijn was the half-brother of Charlotte's mother, Sarah Judith Joseph. Born in Philadelphia, he moved to Holland as a young man, and there he spent his adult life. Earning a living was difficult, but he did manage to have one portrait made (above), to send to his sister Sarah in South Carolina. In the accompanying letter (page 34), he thanked her for the lock of hair she had sent him and mentioned that he hoped to be able to send two more portraits for his other two sisters.

Amsterdam
July 14, 1818

My Dear Sisters and families,

how can you write to your brother and say that you will not write to him again unlys he answers your letters doo you think that it is my fault. doo you think that you doo not receive letters from me oftener it is owing to the place where you live in. the vessles does not go direct to it, and the letters very often get miscarried and another reason is that I have not sufficient time from my buisness to look out for oppertunitys, that the letters might go by, and when I doo write I am affraid that the letters doo not come to hand. as I wrote to you all about a year ago and find that they have not bin recieved. I have sent you my minature. I hope that you will wear it with as much pleaseur as I doo in wereing your hear which you sent me. I was quite anxious to send one for my other 2 dear Sisters but the limner asks such an extravagant price that I could not think of giving it. you must be satisfied with this untill I can get 2 more later.

day and night I pray that I could see my friends. I should not mind a few hundred dollars to see them but what signifiyes all this. it is but building castelds in the ere. how is it possible. I a man with a family of 5 small children, and the youngest not more than 7 months of whom you have never herd before I call her Sarah after you my dear Sister. I will here state to you the buisness which I follow and then you will see how little it is in my power to think of lieving home.

I import good from inglant to halland and also send good there, to a buisness of that kind it requires the strictest attention. I have to give as well as take a great deal of areded. and my time is devoted entirely towards it. it requires a great deal in hallant to keep up ones credit to carry on such buisness in as extencive a way in which I doo. I doo buisness with the "first houses in amsterdam and thank god my credit has never bin doubted. my reason for writing you so particular is that I doo

OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

not wether or not the same is done in america. now think wether I could lieve home to come and see you all my dear sisters. I recieved our brothers letter with the bill of exchange as a preasent for which he thanks you kindly. by his letter you will see how much he needed it and how exceptable it came to him. I hope to god all his misfortunes may be at an end. he hopes that by our and others assistance to be able to make out very well. now my dear sisters and family I would wish to make my letter much longer but if I ware to write to let you no all the news it would fill 6 quires and then I would have but just begun. therefore I must lieve off with this. My dear sister Sarah to your dear children I am indeted a few letters. Theres gave me great pleaseur. I must once more say let me wish you every earthly blessing. prey write often and let your letters be lengthy. I have to request of you to doo an act of charty.

I have herd thru the medium of a friend that there was hason wanting in CS. I now can recommend to you a man who is a portague. His name is, moses goim Morporgo. he is a friend of mine, he requested me particular if it is possible through your means to get him a place there. he can bring good recommendation with him from the from the portogues rabb and pernosum. Now my dear Sister it would give me great satisfaction if you will take it uppon your

self to do me the favour write to our family in CS and let it be mentioned to the congregation that there is such a person to be had and as they are strangers to him I will stand his security. he is poor thou an honest and industryous man. he is an excellent hebrew schallar. I hope that you will doo all in your power for him and also hope that you may succed. it is a long time since I have recieved letters from any of you. you must excuse me that I doo not write to you in inglish as I can write better in hebrew than I can in inglish – because I am out of the use of writing it – as all of my letters are wrote by my clerks in different languages – but family concerns are wrote by my self in this languages. one more request dear sister I have to make to you which is to send to me some books or news papers or gasette of South carolina that would afford me great pleaseur. dear Sisters write me word what you wish me to send to you and I will with send it with pleaseur by the first oppertunity.

Now dear Children I write this at 1 oclock in the morning, I must now lieve off to wish you all my dear family happiness and pray that the almighty god may keep you from all evel.

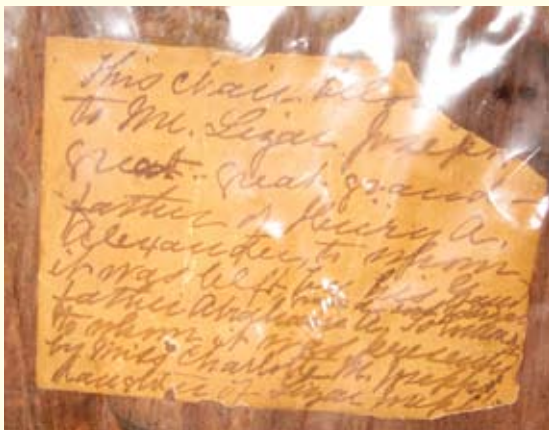
My wife and Children all join in love to you all. Excuseme for not mentioning your names my Sisters and brother in law thou unnown thou not less dear and now I must subscribe my Self your affectionate brother Rhuven Simon Krÿn

Lizar Joseph's Legacy

Charlotte's father, Lizar Joseph, was a successful businessman, who tried to provide for his family, including his daughters Eleanor and Charlotte. Charlotte Joseph, kind and devoted to family, became the responsible "heir," in financially providing for the family after his death.

She was so devoted to her parents, Lizar and Judith Judah Joseph, that she had their miniatures buried with her. Eccentric today, perhaps, this act is in keeping with Charlotte's care for multiple generations of family during her lifetime. Charlotte Joseph also preserved and handed down a number of her father's possessions, including a book containing records of his salt business (right, top) and his favorite chair (below). On the underside of the chair seat are some letters, probably burned on (middle right). Pasted on the chair just below the letters was a note in Harry Alexander's handwriting

stating, "This chair belonged to Lizar Joseph, great, great grandfather of Henry A. Alexander, to whom it was left by his grandfather Abraham A. Solomons, to whom it was bequested by Miss Charlotte M. Joseph daughter of Lizar Joseph. [Additional text illegible.]"



Letter from Joe to “My Dearest ZIP”

Toward the end of the Civil War, according to family legend, Charlotte determined to visit her nephew Joe, who was then acting surgeon general for the Confederate Army. As the story goes, Charlotte set out from Savannah in a market cart, bribed her way past Union guards with cookies, and tracked Joe down in Augusta.

Upon locating her nephew, she tore a piece of fabric from her petticoat, giving the cloth to Joe so he could write a letter to his wife, Zip, back in Savannah. Charlotte then sewed the letter back onto her petticoat, returned home, and delivered it to Zip. The letter is now owned by the Georgia Historical Society, in Savannah.



Slide courtesy Georgia Historical Society

*Transcribed by Judith Shanks 11/21/00
Do not use without permission of Georgia Historical
Society and Judith Shanks*

Apr 6th/65

My Dearest Zip,

You can imagine but I cannot describe my feeling at meeting dear Aunt C from whom I could learn so much about all my dear ones at home, thank God are continued well, now my darling I must perform an unpleasant duty that is to beg of you not to leave home yet awhile, God knows how anxious I am to clasp you to my heart but remember dearest our children we must think of the separation so terrible, and at times I fell tempted to leave all things and give up my feelings for our cause to turn to my dearly loved ones, but not yet, should you leave and not be able to return, what would be our condition? At present you can by remaining secure if not for our benefit for the dear children what little is left us, no one in to them to sacrifice all our feelings for there good, I would not dearest have you act in any... , if it should be so that you cannot remain then of course we must submit and give up... thing to come out by your remaining... what you now ... , if you leave I fear for the consequences, Aunt C will tell you of a similar case and of which I need not write, I will probably leave here in a few days and may be absent three or four weeks as soon as I re-turn I will let you know by letter from Whats -ville at which point you might be able to meet me without the risk that you would now incur.

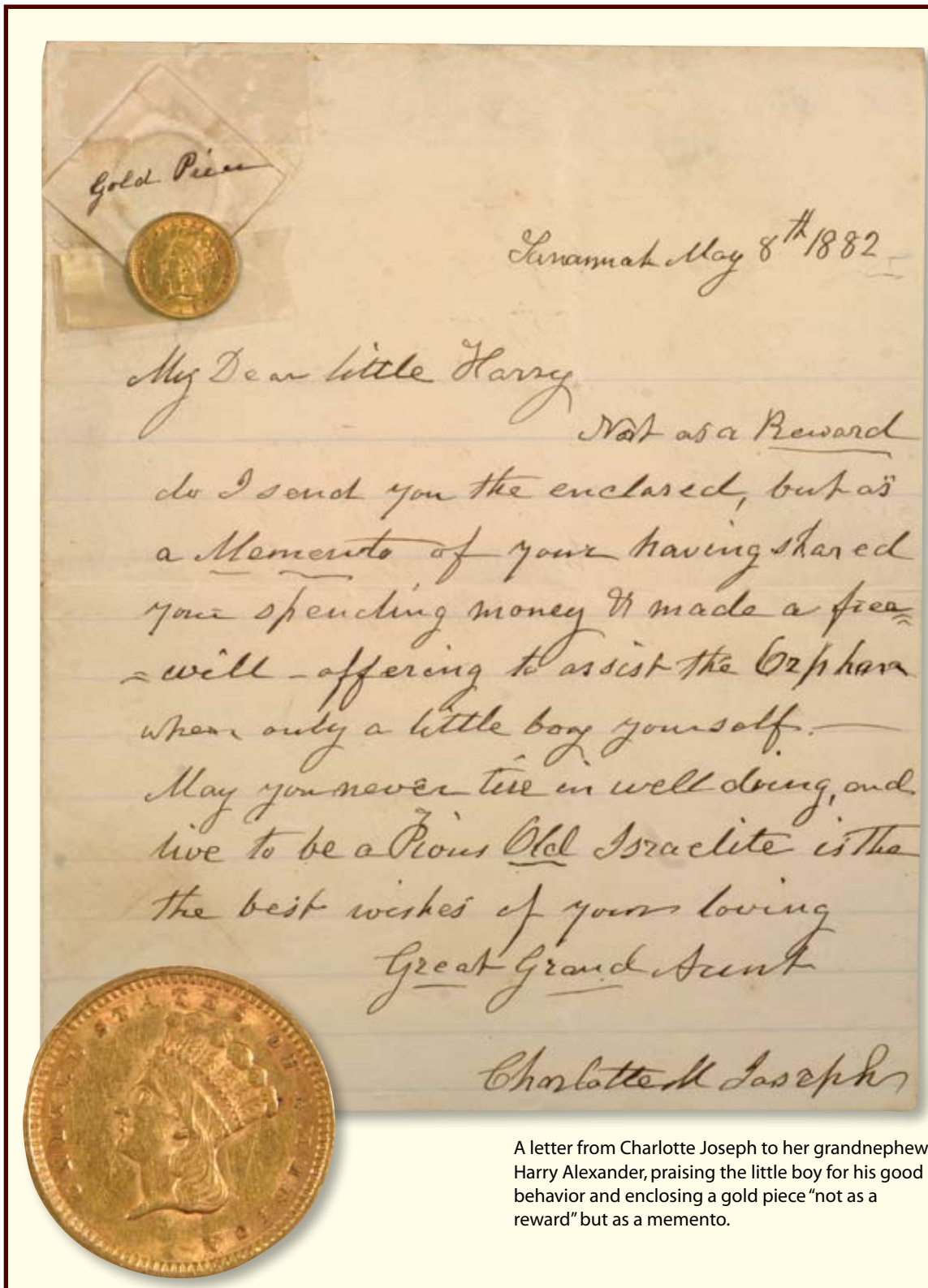
I do not think the present state of affairs can last much longer a few months must decide it, I know I cannot stand in and if matters are as now, you may see me sooner than anticipated, I am as hopeful as ever yet present appearances are far from flattering I do not despair but trust in a just and good God I feel that our sufferings are for some good and wise purpose and trust that the leson has not been lost on me, I write plainly dearest and use all arguments to persuade you to remain in S, doing so God only

knows the trial of feelings, let us continue to pray for an early and favorable meeting, ...well now do I realise the proverb "contentment is health," give me my dear wife and children and health and my dear relatives around us, I ask not for riches, much more I could write but Aunt C will tell more than I can say on this letter-- thanks my dearest for the things sent I have been assigned to get myself clothings, you know I only brought one suit one suit of decent cloths and they have long since ceased to be so, just to think of having to pay one thousand dollars to have a suit made, new how commond the material, this remember is the starting charge for making not furnishing materials, I have had the suits made one in ...and one just last week during a short trip to Macon, I have now every thing needed except a Hat, I am wearing a cap for I will not pay Five Hundred dollars for a felt hat, no one can form an idea of prices here, it is beyond any thing you even dreamed of, I am in Augusta but a few days together have to make frequent trips away consequently I have done no business ... I ... use money carefully but it ...the amount you sent me by My Nora but \$1,700 for which but ...account (Watch, \$1.27 ...(\$1,640), I... in Macon...on Thursday buty he is better but looks badly he is tryinh to get a discharge from service, ...also those looking well. Willy...his escape and is in...Macon at Mrs.... He looks well, I did not... to see sister...this time, if I have to go back to Macon which is very ...I will go down and see her, she is quite well and is also ...with him,--again dearest ... what I have said...beofre in this, I want you ... hopefully in Savannah...I may have to return sooner ...but if you still...think to come out wait... if I felt I could with honour ...how soon I would do so...me when please Tell me...I will write ... requesting me to...in safe and in good order...my own dear one, God keep and protect you and the ...dear ones prays

Joe

Upside down: I cannot describe my feelings.

OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK



A letter from Charlotte Joseph to her grandnephew Harry Alexander, praising the little boy for his good behavior and enclosing a gold piece "not as a reward" but as a memento.

Letters from Aunt Charlotte Joseph to niece Rebecca Alexander and her son Harry Alexander

Mrs. J.M. Alexander
Oct 18th 1881

Rebecca Ella my dear good Niece I can scarce make my pen obey me at all. This good chance must be noticed if only to say a word or so to you & to ask Harry to excuse my not answering his nice little letter. It is an effort to guide a pen. I send you a little token of remembrance, a Dusting Brush! A mere falderal I know but it is all I can think of so please accept and use it for the sake of your old Grand Aunt Charlotte

Kiss the dear little ones & the big one too if he will admit of it. My best love to Sarah when she is well. Adieu.

Savannah May 8th 1882
Gold Piece

My Dear little Harry,

Not as a *Reward* do I send you the enclosed but as a *Memento* of your having shared your spending money & made a free-will offering to assist the Orphans when only a little boy yourself. May you never tire in well-doing, and live to be a Pious *Old* Israelite is the best wishes of your loving,

Great Grand Aunt
Charlotte Joseph

Isle of Hope
August 21st 1882

My Dear Little Harry,

Many thanks to you My Dear little boy for your kind remembrance of me in sending me such a nice affectionate letter on my birthday, and it reached me on the very day too. I read it over and over as I value it very highly. Now, Harry, was it not too bad the top of your water melon, Master Cecil lost by his mischief too I suppose. I hope to hear that Cousin Isaac is quite well very soon. I know Grandma would be with him as she is always where she can do the most good, don't you agree with me, Harry? It is only 6o'clock a.m. and only I am up but I want Uncle to have this to forward for me as I intend sending with it one of my likenesses that I had taken last week. I think you will like one. It is all I have to offer. It is a great pleasure to us all to have Uncle with us & to see that he likes the change from the city each night. You must give Mamma a good kiss for me & tell her I cannot write to all of my thoughtful relatives separately. They will remember that I am now in my 80th year. Love & kisses are sent in this to all from Grandma to the baby & believe Dear Harry that

I am as ever your loving
Aunt Charlotte