Introduction

This book tells the story of the birth, growth, and decline of the early American community in the Mediterranean world. Despite recent interest in American history outside of US borders, this is a subject that has received very little attention. The only monograph to address it, James A. Field's *America and the Mediterranean World, 1776–1882,* was written nearly sixty years ago and focused primarily on issues of diplomacy. While some recent work has dealt with specific topics in the Mediterranean world such as naval activity, trading networks, missionaries, and above all the Barbary Wars and the interaction with Islam, these authors have not conceptualized their topics as particularly Mediterranean. In fact, the most authoritative recent study of the Barbary Wars is subtitled "American Independence *in the Atlantic World*"![1]

[1] James A. Field, *America and the Mediterranean World, 1776–1882* (Princeton University Press, 1969); Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005). A number of essays and essay collections have touched on the topic without evaluating it as a whole. See Silvia Marzagalli, James R. Sofka, and John J. McCusker, *Rough Waters: American Involvement with the Mediterranean in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2010). For work discussing aspects of the American experience in the Mediterranean, see Luca Codignola, *Blurred Nationalities Across the Atlantic: Traders, Priests, and Their Kin Travelling between North America and the Italian Peninsula, 1763–1846* (University of Toronto Press, 2019); Axel Korner, *America in Italy: The United States in the Political Thought and Imagination of the Risorgimento, 1763–1865* (Princeton University Press, 2017); Brett Goodin, *From Captives to Consuls: Three Sailors in Barbary and Their Self-Making across the Early American Republic, 1770–1840* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020); Priscilla H. and Richard S. Roberts, *Thomas Barclay (1728–1793): Consul in France, Diplomat in Barbary* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press,

Yet surely since Fernand Braudel, at least, historians can agree that the Mediterranean littoral has a coherent and distinctive culture that is easily differentiated from that of the Atlantic world. These features include its unique geography, agriculture, and human culture. For the purposes of this study some of the important aspects of Mediterranean-ness include a diverse non-Protestant population, relative lack of British domination, and, perhaps most importantly, well-defined trading networks consisting largely of fish, flour, wine, and West Indian exports. As this book demonstrates, a distinct network of Americans developed in the Mediterranean, or actually in what Braudel defines as the western section of the Mediterranean, forming a ring from Gibraltar through Morocco, Algiers, western Italy, eastern Spain, and back to Gibraltar. Americans in this region formed a social and business community. They became tightly linked through trade, correspondence, and family and social connections.

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Perhaps the most important thing about the Mediterranean world for Americans was that it was not the Atlantic, which had been defined by restrictive British mercantilism and continued to be controlled by a British government that was hostile to the United States. After the American Revolution, the path to creating a new polity had been relatively straightforward, beginning with the Declaration of Independence and concluding with the ratification of the new Constitution roughly thirteen years later. But the path toward an independent national economy was less clear. The colonies had long been prosperous, so much so that Benjamin Franklin famously joked (probably with a straight face) that the colonial economy would eventually surpass that of the mother country and the relationship of dependency would be reversed.[2] Nevertheless, at the time of the

2008); Lawrence Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen: Barbary Slavery and the American Public, 1785–1816* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Christine Leigh Heyrman, *American Apostles: When Evangelicals Entered the World of Islam* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015); Iván Jaksić, *The Hispanic World and American Intellectual Life, 1820–1880* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2007); Richard Kagan, ed., *Spain in the United States: The Origins of Hispanism in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Richard L. Kagan, *The Spanish Craze: America's Fascination with the Hispanic World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019); James G. Lydon, *Fish and Flour for Gold, 1600–1800: Southern Europe in the Colonial Balance of Payments* (Philadelphia: Library Company of Philadelphia e-publication, 2008).

[2] Leonard W. Labaree, ed., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960) II: 182.

Revolution the colonial economy was far from independent of the mother country. Years of colonial dependency resulted in a stunted manufacturing sector, so that Americans imported a large proportion of necessary finished goods from Britain. Americans celebrated their nation's agricultural fecundity, but settlement did not extend much to the west of the Atlantic plain, and despite the victory in the Revolution, western expansion faced stiff opposition from Native Americans and potentially from European powers as well. American merchants had sailed around the globe with little difficulty under the protection of the British flag, but that was no longer possible after the Revolution, and, in fact, Britain consciously sought to limit American navigation.

The question Americans faced in 1776 was one with which they would grapple for many decades: What would be the structure of the new national economy? Two basic possibilities would emerge. One was the development of a continental territorial nation that would seek so far as possible to provide for itself through exploitation of abundant agricultural lands and the development of a viable manufacturing sector and which might be considered a precursor of industrial capitalism. The second possibility was a cosmopolitan trading nation modeled on the Dutch or British that would seek so far as possible to expand into overseas markets, to trade for profit and subsistence and which might be considered merchant capitalism. In theory these models were not mutually exclusive, and both models assumed state support for what might today be considered private ventures. In supporting merchant capitalism, the new nation, despite having revolted against mercantilistic measures such as customs duties and admiralty courts, would replicate many of the structures of the British Empire, including the consular service.

Although Americans, as part of the British Empire, had long been active in overseas trade (unlike domestic manufacturing), after the Revolution the United States needed to do a great deal in order to restructure its commercial sector. The new nation could boast a large number of active merchant trading houses, both within the United States and in overseas ports. American ships and captains had long sailed routes connecting these places. But this trade had always depended on British capital and, more importantly, protection offered by the British Navy and mercantile restrictions. After the Revolution, the apparatus of the British system no longer supported American commerce and, in fact, at times appeared to be set on destroying it. In addition to countering any active interference from Great Britain, the new nation now needed to provide the basic support to commerce that was customary among nations. This infrastructure

included at a minimum a system of flags, customs houses, official documents, and officials such as consuls and ministers that could protect American ships and sailors from ordinary problems such as disease, captivity, lost cargo, and commercial disputes that mariners and traders from all nations constantly faced. Additionally, it usually included a navy to protect the nation's ships from hostile navies or pirates. It was also clear that with the postrevolutionary hindrances to the old trading routes that went through Great Britain and its colonial possessions, the United States needed to develop new trading networks that would provide access to commodities and capital. Considering the new alliance with France, the proximity of the Iberian Peninsula and nearby points, and the general prosperity of southern European trade, development of Mediterranean networks was the obvious course to pursue.

This book traces the development of these networks within the framework of a developing American identity, economy, and state. These networks were multinucleated structures centering on American consuls in the various Mediterranean ports and ultimately encompassing hundreds if not thousands of Americans ranging from common sailors through captains, merchants, travelers, consuls, and ministers (ambassadors). Historians of the early republic have generally taken two approaches toward American identity in this era. On the one hand, they have viewed it through the lens of Benedict Anderson's work, which basically sees shared stories and beliefs as crucial in creating national identity. This is a view that works particularly well for the United States, which from the start emphasized the narrative of the American Revolution and its founding documents. Recently, other historians have viewed experiences overseas as being crucial to identity formation, including definitions of territorial citizenship that were necessary to differentiate American sailors and merchants from other nationalities, especially the British.[3] It does not appear to me that, in the Mediterranean at least, either approach is entirely sufficient, although it is certainly true that shared political ideology and notions of national citizenship both played a part in determining American identity there. What proved most important,

[3] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983); Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, *Citizen Sailors: Becoming American in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); Matthew Taylor Raffety, *The Republic Afloat: Law, Honor, and Citizenship in Maritime America* (University of Chicago Press, 2013); Brian Rouleau. *With Sails Whitening Every Sea: Mariners and the Making of an American Maritime Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

however, was the creation of the very networks described in this book. Individuals who were tied to the American community through commercial or social bonds often shared a republican political ideology and were often official citizens of the United States, but not all of them necessarily shared these traits. What they all did share was a strong connection to the new nation and to each other due to their role within the American Mediterranean community; and, in developing this community, they also developed a new sense of American identity within the region. In short, the Mediterranean networks discussed here were not only defined by identity with America, but they also determined American identity in the region.

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Almost without debate, Americans moved toward an increased state and commercial presence in the Mediterranean world after 1776. Protecting and building American trade in the region was an important objective of Washington's first administration. In his second annual address, the president directed Congress's attention to "that particular branch of our trade which belongs to the Mediterranean." He urged Congress not to "think any deliberations misemployed, which may lead to its relief and protection." This advice led the secretary of state, and future president Thomas Jefferson to compile a "Report on American Trade in the Mediterranean." In his eighth annual address, President Washington again called for protection of "our trade in the Mediterranean." Here he alluded to protecting the emerging Mediterranean trading networks from attacks by corsairs from Algiers who could potentially shut down American shipping and had nearly done so in 1785 and 1793 when they held a number of American ships and sailors captive while threatening to catch many others if the new nation refused to pay them an annual tribute. These concerns led to the creation of the US Navy as a means to control the threat in the Mediterranean. In 1801, the United States sent its first squadron to the Mediterranean and that region would remain the center of American naval operations for some time.[4]

[4] George Washington, "Second Annual Message to Congress" (Dec. 8, 1790) and "Eighth Annual Message to Congress" (Dec. 7, 1796); "Report on American Trade in the Mediterranean, 28 Dec. 1790," Founders Online, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-18-02-0139-0004. On the debate over and early implementation of the Navy, see Marshall Smelser, *The Congress Founds the Navy, 1787–1798* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959); Craig L. Symonds, *Navalists and Antinavalists: The Naval Policy Debate in the United States, 1785–1827* (Newark: University of

Just as the Mediterranean region was the major beneficiary of the creation of the Navy, it also was the primary beneficiary of the development of the consular service. When the State Department finally began to organize in earnest in the 1790s, roughly one in three consular appointments were made for Mediterranean ports, despite the fact that in many of these places in 1790, there were no resident American merchants and in some you could go most or all of the year without seeing an American flag. Among the ports with US consuls but few or no Americans initially were Málaga and Cartagena in Spain; Naples, Genoa, and Venice in Italy; Trieste in Austria (now Italy); and all of the Barbary ports. As a result, roughly half of all consular appointments in the region before 1815 were not American citizens. Clearly many of these were aspirational appointments, made in the hope and expectation that merchant capitalism would soon follow the consular infrastructure.[5]

For a time, all these preparations and expenditures seemed to pay off spectacularly. After 1795 or so, when the threat of the Barbary corsairs was minimized and the Napoleonic Wars created new opportunities for lucrative neutral trade, US merchants began to make enormous profits in the Mediterranean and, to many, it must have looked as though that would be the future of the new national economy. In that pre-statistical era, it is hard to define the extent of US trade in the region with certainty, but all indications are that it grew enormously. Figures provided by consuls on the scene showed a rapid increase in shipping. In 1803, one of the peak years, 111 American ships landed in Gibraltar, the entrance to the Mediterranean and a spot where captains typically rested and restocked on their way into the region. Doubtless, a good many more ships entered the Mediterranean without stopping. Even the spotty national statistics pointed to real gains in Mediterranean trade. The fish trade to the Mediterranean grew during the first decade of the nineteenth century so that, at its peak in 1806, the United States was shipping roughly 291,000 quintals of dried fish to ports in Italy, Spain, and France. This was

Delaware Press, 1980); Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen*, 110–33; Kenneth J. Hagan, *This People's Navy* (New York: The Free Press, 1991) 21–90.

[5] I calculated the number of appointments from Lists of US Consular Officers, 1789–1939, M587 RG59, NARA. From 1790 to 1799, of 107 appointments, 8 (7%) were to Asia, 3 (3%) to African islands, 7 (6.5%) to mainland America, 1 (1%) to Eastern Europe, 33 (31%) to the Mediterranean, 36 (34%) to Northwest Europe, and 19 (18%) to the West Indies. Even in Ireland, where there were much tighter initial connections to the United States, many early consuls were not US citizens. See Bernadette Whelan, *American Government in Ireland, 1790–1913: A History of the US Consular Service* (Manchester University Press, 2010) 1–11ff.

just over half of the total of US fish exports, and when the numerous exports to French and Spanish colonies in the West Indies are included, Mediterranean countries and their colonies received over three-quarters of American fish. The Mediterranean also played an outsized role in the lucrative reexport trade, which largely involved shipping valuable West Indian goods to Europe. For example, in 1807, 47% of brown sugar reexported by US ships went to the Mediterranean as did 38% of reexported coffee.[6]

As a result, until 1815 or so, the cosmopolitan trading nation model remained vigorous if not dominant. Merchants, and probably others as well, expected the new nation to continue to extend its trade into new Mediterranean ports and to expand its presence in those it had already entered. For them, national destiny was tied to this impressive mercantile expansion. In practice what this meant was that a vigorous community of American traders sprung up in Mediterranean ports. Consuls and other merchants were at the center of this community, which became a stable group of interconnected individuals, merchant houses, and families, many of whom remained in the same place for decades. In many ways this group was similar to earlier communities of foreigners trading in far-off lands, such as Sephardic Jews, the Portuguese "trading nation," and Genoese and Armenian colonies of the seventeenth century. However, there were differences as well. By the late eighteenth century, with the emergence of the nation-state, foreign traders expected certain protections that the non–state-affiliated traders of earlier centuries did not have. Consuls, as representatives of the nation-state, most frequently were the conduits to these protections. In this sense, the American trading nation might be seen as more similar to British traders, such as the London associates described by David Hancock, who benefitted from the protections offered by British mercantilism. However, as will become clear, the relative weakness of American military power meant that, in actuality, they did not always enjoy such benefits.[7]

Unfortunately for the American community in the Mediterranean, the bubble burst by 1815 due to a number of factors. First was the advent of

[6] Timothy Pitkin, *A Statistical View of the Commerce of the United States of America* (Hartford: Charles Hosmer, 1816) 76, 139–41. Numbers for Gibraltar are calculated from the shipping news in the *Gibraltar Chronicle* newspaper which, so far as I know, is only available at the Garrison Library in Gibraltar.

[7] Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation Upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal's Atlantic Diaspora and the Spanish Empire, 1492–1640* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and*

the Peninsular War in 1807 and the general devastation to much of the Mediterranean trade that followed in its wake. After that, the end of the Napoleonic Wars limited the profitability of neutral trade in the portions of the Mediterranean not devastated by war, as British and French ships rushed back into markets where Americans had thrived during the war years. Domestically, the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and the successful conclusion of the War of 1812 provided the new nation with the territory and confidence to undertake one of the largest and most rapid agricultural expansions in human history. This land acquisition coupled with the development of the cotton gin would transform American overseas commerce, crowning cotton as king and reorienting American ships toward Great Britain, whose emerging textile industry created an insatiable demand for cotton. As a result of all these factors, America's economic future no longer appeared to be in the Mediterranean, and the newer model of territorial growth and industrial capitalism began to replace the merchant capitalism that undergirded the trading nation.

Paradoxically, though, the relative decline of the Mediterranean trade and the trading nation model coincided with an upswing in American confidence and nationalism. Surviving the War of 1812 was interpreted as a victory over Great Britain and evidence of America's ability to join the ranks of the great powers. Americans viewed their rout of the North African Barbary States in 1815 similarly. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and the development of new modes of cotton production converged to open the door to a vast and lucrative empire of cotton in what was then the southwestern portion of the new nation, and increasing industrialization combined with new modes of transportation brought new wealth to the North and Northwest. The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 also impressed Americans at home and abroad as evidence of the new nation's arrival. Thus, after 1815, the United States as a whole had entered a period of rapid growth and growing influence, but Americans in the Mediterranean were no longer at the center of national development.

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Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the Atlantic Community, 1735–1785* (Cambridge University Press, 1997); Sebouh Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Network of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

The chapters that follow examine the American community in the Mediterranean through the careers of three long-serving American consuls: James Simpson of Gibraltar (1794–96) and Tangier (1796–1820), Robert Montgomery of Alicante (1793–1823), and Thomas Appleton of Livorno (1798–1840). While their individual stories are all quite interesting, my method has been to move beyond their personal biographies to study their family, business, and professional networks and the people within them. In doing so I am trying to get at the broader social and cultural history of the American community of which they were a part in addition to addressing the diplomatic and commercial concerns within the early American Mediterranean.

I have chosen these particular consuls because of their geographic spread and their longevity. The former helps to make the study more representative of the Mediterranean as a whole, with characters situated in Muslim North Africa, a mid-level port in what is today known as the Spanish Costa Blanca, and an Italian port receiving more American ships than virtually any other in the region. The latter aspect arguably limits the subjects' representativeness since few consuls served as long as they did (although a number did serve nearly as long, or even longer).[8] Nevertheless, the typical consul was neither as long-serving nor successful as these three. Still, following the lives of these long-term consuls serves two important purposes. First, it allows us to follow the long arc of the history of the American Mediterranean and, second, it allows for a rich documentary base including long runs of State Department documents, foreign records, a good number of private letters, and even some published accounts. Considering their relative historical obscurity, these three men left extraordinary archives that frequently allow detailed reconstructions of their lives and experiences.

As consuls, Simpson, Montgomery, and Appleton were representatives of the state generally and the State Department specifically. Consuls were arguably the largest and most visible segment of the early national State Department. By 1800 there were perhaps seventy consuls in American consulates around the world, and they in turn employed many translators, secretaries, vice-consuls, and others, so that more than likely 200 or 300

[8] John Gavino served in Gibraltar eighteen years (1797–1815); William Kirkpatrick, in Málaga seventeen years (1800–1817); Stephen Cathalan, in Marseille twenty-nine years (1790–1819); Sylvanus Bourn, in Amsterdam for twenty-one years (1794–1817); Thomas Aspinwall, in London thirty-eight years (1815–53); Alexander Hammit, in Naples fifty-two years (1809–61).

individuals worked within the consular service alone at that time. Yet, American consuls and the consular service have received astonishingly little attention from historians. The few classic institutional histories of the State Department hardly mention them, and diplomatic historians have only recently begun making use of the voluminous State Department records documenting their stories. Although not an institutional history, one contribution that this study attempts to make is to give some outline of the consular service and its importance to the early republic.

Consuls and the consular service were intertwined with the new nation's first efforts to project an image abroad and to develop a foreign policy mechanism. This was at best a haphazard, underfunded undertaking, much to the frustration of consuls who hoped to build trade throughout the Mediterranean. The disorganization of the consular service reflected the relative weakness of the new nation compared to most Mediterranean powers. Consuls did not and could not realistically have much interest in the territorial expansion associated with late nineteenth-century imperialism. They did, however, uniformly push for a stronger navy, not so much as an expansionist measure but as a means to protect American ships from continual interference from European and North African captors. Personally, they were frequently able to benefit from the disorganization within the State Department that allowed them essentially to volunteer for positions that they wanted and to carve out powerful roles within the port cities and the developing American trading nation.

While the evolution of the consular service is an important element, it is only one aspect of the story of the Mediterranean community and of the experience of Americans abroad during an era of rapid globalization. The consuls' job was to facilitate networks of trade and communication that would link Americans within the Mediterranean to their compatriots within the borders of the United States. Despite the rapid increase in American traffic to the Mediterranean and fast-growing profits, the new trade network faced serious threats, most notably from Barbary corsairs and the warring European powers, which frequently interdicted American ships, captured crews, and held them captive whether in North African *bagnos* or European prize courts. To a lesser extent, these networks were also threatened by epidemic disease which disrupted lives and often led to quarantines that, by design, cut off communications and trade.

From 1793 to 1807, the period covered by Part I of this book, the consuls' efforts to deal with these disruptions helped to solidify the developing American community. They played an important role in