

**“The Friendly Disposition”:
American Relations with Toussaint Louverture and
Revolutionary Saint-Domingue, 1798-1801**

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For my parents

I had an interview with him directly and explained at full length, the friendly disposition of the American Government towards this Colony...

---Edward Stevens to Timothy Pickering, May 1799.

Toussaint, the most unhappy man of men

--William Wordsworth, "To Toussaint L'Ouverture," 1802.

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I've dedicated this thesis to my parents, because of their endless love and support, and I thank them for everything. For their encouragement (and for tolerating an often stressed writer), I thank my family and friends.

On Friday, Julius encouraged me to "get this chicken cooked." I've done my best, and all mistakes in the cooking are my own.

--David Cassleman
Ann Arbor
April 1, 2012

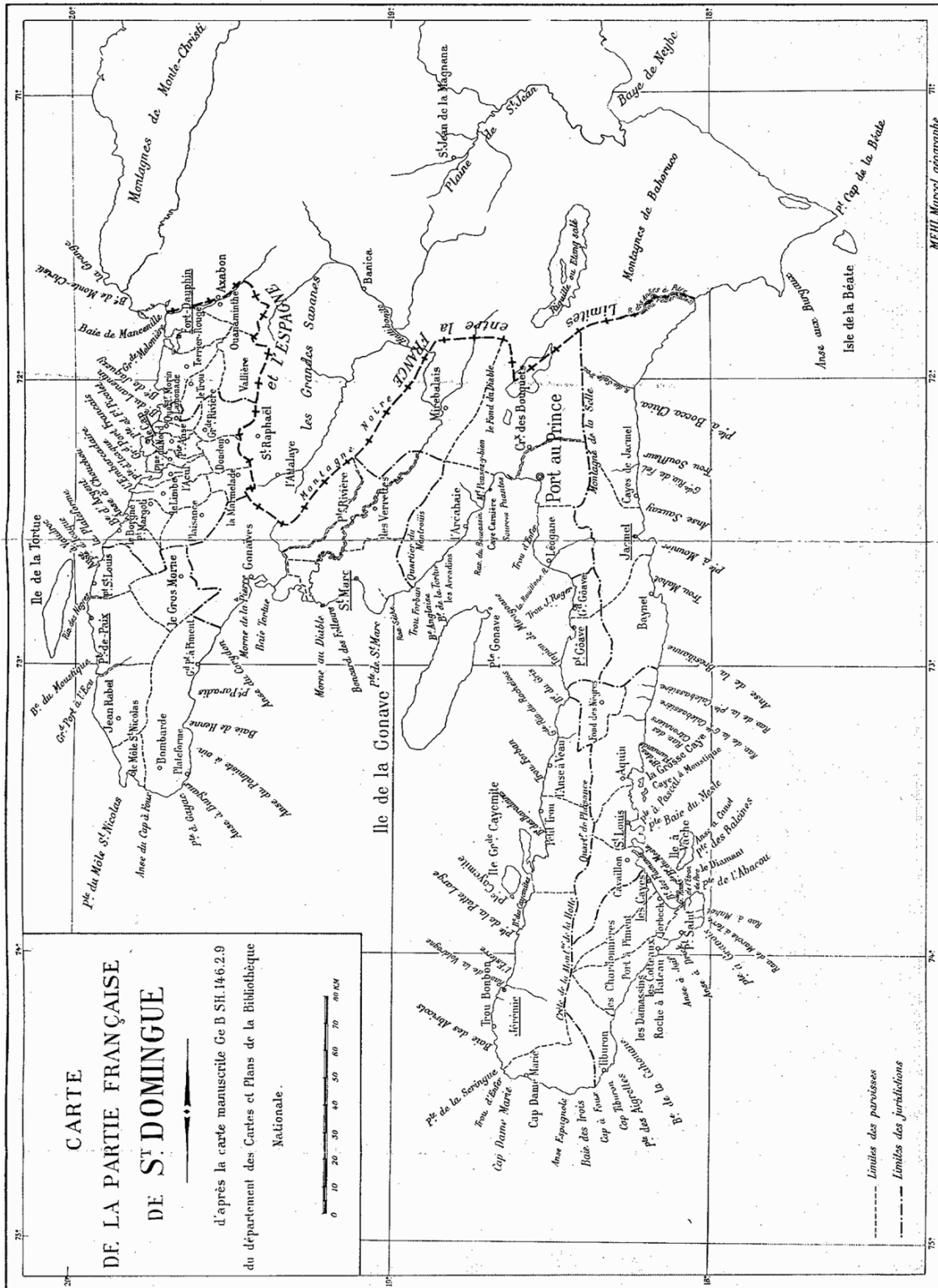


Fig. 1. Map of Saint-Domingue by Marcel Mehl. "Carte de la partie française de St. Domingue d'après la carte manuscrite Ge B Sh. 146.2.9 du département des Cartes et Plans de la Bibliothèque Nationale." Courtesy of theouvertureproject.org.

Introduction

On April 18, 1799, Dr. Edward Stevens, the newly appointed United States consul general to Saint-Domingue, stood on board the ship *Kingston*, looking out towards the Dominguan northern coastal city of Cap Français. A native of the West Indies, Stevens had not returned to the Caribbean of his boyhood. Instead, he entered a Caribbean world alive with revolutionary politics, intrigue and fervor—and whose symbolic revolutionary capital was Cap Français.¹

During his month-long voyage, Stevens, a Philadelphia physician, must have continually ruminated over his delicate mission. Foremost among his tasks would be important trade negotiations with Toussaint Louverture, the formerly enslaved revolutionary governor general of the French colony of Saint-Domingue. After eight years of revolution, beginning with a slave revolt in 1791, Saint-Domingue had transformed from an immensely profitable French slave colony to a radicalized one led by ex-slaves, which maintained only a tenuous relationship with its metropole.² Besides the fact that Louverture held the monopoly on useful power within the colony, the United States would not negotiate with any continental French officials because the Americans

1 Edward Stevens to Timothy Pickering, May 3, 1799, “Letters of Toussaint Louverture and of Edward Stevens, 1798-1800,” *American Historical Review* 16 (October 1910), 67-72; “Letters of Toussaint Louverture and of Edward Stevens, 1798-1800,” *American Historical Review* 16 (October 1910), 65; Michael A. Palmer, *Stoddert’s war: Naval Operations during the Quasi-War with France, 1798-1801* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 155; Benjamin Stoddert to Thomas Tingey, March 18, 1799, U.S. Department of Navy, *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1934-37), 2:483.

2 For a recent and important account of the Haitian Revolution, see Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

themselves were in a state of unofficial warfare with France—the so-called “Quasi-War.”³ After a warming of American relations with Great Britain—among other factors—French warships had made a war upon American commerce, disrupting shipping lanes and leading the United States into a period of non-cooperation and naval warfare with France. Because of this situation, the Americans wished only to re-open trade with Louverture's Saint-Domingue—and not other French colonies.

The British were to be part of this potential arrangement, too—mere months after the end of their five year occupation of Saint-Domingue. The British had invaded the French colony in the hope of making a fortune, but their attempt was a prolonged disaster. British general Thomas Maitland and Louverture reached a formal peace treaty in 1798, which provided for the removal of remaining British forces, along with flimsy trade provisions. This weak commercial agreement prepared the way for Stevens's more substantial efforts.

If legal trade was to exist between the United States and Saint-Domingue, Stevens needed both to satisfy Louverture's wishes and to meet the demands of the United States. Stevens understood this and surely predicted that the United States could only get what it wanted if Saint-Domingue got some of what it wanted as well. What Stevens could not have predicted was the effect that this commercial arrangement would have upon Saint-Domingue and a select group of Americans.

During the era of the Quasi-War, from 1798 to 1801, the thirst for profit of Federalist Americans and select British officials led each power into a material and diplomatic dialogue with the revolutionary world of Saint-Domingue. Not only did

³ Alexander DeConde, *The Quasi-War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France 1797-1801* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 133.

government and military officials come into contact with the revolutionary actors of Saint-Domingue, but so too did American and British merchants. The driving force behind the joint cooperation of the United States, Great Britain and Saint-Domingue was primarily—though not exclusively—economic. Seemingly inevitable divides arose between each power in this shaky arrangement. Yet this fundamental economic drive led American and British policymakers, navies and merchants into an unstable, potentially dangerous and revolutionary world, where they played a dramatic role in helping to determine the movement of the Haitian Revolution within Saint-Domingue.

As a symbol and a reality, the slave revolution of Saint-Domingue threatened the stability of other slave societies in the greater Atlantic, most notably British Jamaica and the southern United States.⁴ However, the colony also presented great economic opportunities for American and British merchants in the area. The United States and Great Britain recognized their common interests and goals concerning the French colony, and they sought the potential rewards of diplomatic cooperation between their governments. Official American and British foreign policy toward Saint-Domingue balanced concern for limiting the influence and spread of the Haitian Revolution with support for trade.

This thesis examines the role of American and British actors in Saint-Domingue from 1798 to 1801, while considering the story of diplomacy among the political and military leaders of the United States, Great Britain and Saint-Domingue. An historical narrative and analysis of the individuals who created and sustained this new, Atlantic commercial relationship also requires an understanding of those political, military and

⁴ David Geggus, “The Great Powers and the Haitian Revolution”, in *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, ed. David Geggus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 172; David Geggus, “Jamaica and the Saint Domingue Slave Revolt, 1791-1792”, *The Americas* 38 (October 1981).

commercial minds involved in the implementation of official and unofficial policy. As these officials shaped and implemented governmental policy, so too did merchants affect the situation by their seeking of profit in Saint-Domingue.

The focus of this thesis is on Saint-Domingue and not on Philadelphia, London, Jamaica or elsewhere in the Atlantic world. While these areas played a significant role in determining the development of relations between the United States and Great Britain with Saint-Domingue, this analysis attempts to add to the historical scholarship on the Haitian Revolution by exploring the way the Revolution affected and was affected by a select group of American and British actors from 1798 to 1801. Still, it is necessary to look outside of Saint-Domingue to gain perspective on the actions and thoughts of all the parties involved.

The second half of the 1790s was a particularly open period for trade between Atlantic powers and Saint-Domingue because of the renegotiated colonial relationship between Saint-Domingue and France. Trade was freer than ever before in Saint-Domingue; in general, this was the result of Louverture's commercial agreements. Toussaint Louverture's struggle for independence required his courting of American and British commercial interests, especially during his civil war with a rival Saint-Domingue general, a conflict called the "War of the South" or "War of Knives."⁵ The practical interests of the United States and Great Britain paralleled those of Louverture, which led to the possibility, then probability, then actuality of a trading relationship.

President John Adams's Secretary of State, Timothy Pickering, had sent Stevens to Cap Français to negotiate with General Louverture in order to secure a favorable trade

5 Philippe R. Girard, "Black Talleyrand: Toussaint Louverture's Diplomacy, 1798-1802," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 66 (January 2009), 91.

agreement between the United States and Saint-Domingue, which remained nominally a French colony.⁶ Acknowledging the real power of Louverture within the revolutionary colony, the United States sought to negotiate with him alone. While the French Directory's colonial agent Philippe-Rose Roume held the official power granted by France to conduct formal diplomacy with other nations, in almost every practical way Louverture controlled Saint-Domingue.⁷

After legislation passed that suspended commercial relations with France and her colonies—part of the formal legislative maneuvering of the Quasi-War—American merchants and their friends in government successfully pressured President Adams into considering the possibility of re-opening trade with Saint-Domingue. In the spring of 1799, Maitland, authorized and acting in Saint-Domingue to negotiate security and commercial arrangements with Toussaint Louverture, delivered a letter from U.S. Secretary of State Timothy Pickering to Stevens.⁸ This letter explained the agreements reached in Philadelphia between the United States and Great Britain regarding trade with Saint-Domingue. The two nations understood that their interests were aligned: each had considerable slave populations, which could be influenced by what Pickering called “mischievous intriguers & revolutionists” from Saint-Domingue.⁹ Thus, there would be restrictions on the ports of entry for British and American ships. British ships from Jamaica would predominantly enter Port-Republicain, formerly Port-au-Prince, from the west; American ships would enter Cap Français from the north. It was thought that restricting the transfer of goods, information and persons might limit the possibility of

6 DeConde, 136-139.

7 Ibid., 134.

8 Timothy Pickering to Edward Stevens, April 20, 1799, U.S. Department of Navy, *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1934-37), 3:70-72.

9 Ibid., 3:72.

inciting slave revolt in Jamaica or the American South.¹⁰ In late June 1799, weeks after Stevens's arrival, Adams issued an executive order ending the embargo on American trade with Saint-Domingue.¹¹ Without the efforts of Stevens, Louverture and the British general Thomas Maitland, the resumption of trade between these Atlantic powers would not have happened.¹²

While the United States and Great Britain both traded with Saint-Domingue during this period, and both indirectly assisted the revolutionary movement led by Louverture by encouraging commerce, one nation in particular formed a bond of greater relative importance and intimacy. The United States, itself an infant nation, and acting in its own interest in protecting and promoting American commerce, answered Louverture's request for military help in his efforts to consolidate colonial power. The American government supplied Louverture with emergency war aid and provided him with the assistance of the United States Navy.¹³ Relations between the United States and Saint-Domingue with Great Britain grew strained.

The story of the diplomatic relationship between the United States and Great Britain during the 1790s holds its own special historical importance and has been studied with great care and deliberateness by other historians.¹⁴ Central to the story of the Quasi-

10 Ibid., 3:70-72.

11 DeConde, 208.

12 DeConde, 136-139.

13 Ibid., 109-110.

14 For a thorough analysis of Jay's Treaty and the repairing of relations between the United States and Great Britain, see: Bradford Perkins, *The First Rapprochement: England and the United States 1795-1805* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1955), 73-74, 78, 106, 135. Bradford Perkins's *The First Rapprochement* contextualizes the relative peace between these two nations in an era of imperial warfare. The re-opening of American trade in Saint-Domingue and the greater Caribbean during the Quasi-War is an important part of this contextualization. Indeed, American merchants brought food and other goods to British Caribbean islands during the revolutionary wars between Britain and France, which had disrupted British trade to its islands. Perkins contends that this wartime boom "stimulated" American trade in the Atlantic world. Without the requisite growth in the size and power of the U.S. Merchant marine, might American merchants have stayed away from revolutionary Saint-Domingue entirely? While focused primarily on the formal diplomacy between the United States and Great Britain, *The First Rapprochement* acknowledges the influence of Toussaint Louverture in the formation of

War is the history of Anglo-American relations in the 1790s. The relationship between the United States and Britain warmed and cooled during the two decades before the War of 1812.

While ostensibly allied with the United States during this period, Great Britain committed various acts of hostility against Americans on the sea. British warships, in great want of sailors, impressed captured sailors, many of whom were American.¹⁵ Besides impressment, British privateers captured American commercial ships and their cargoes as lawful prizes. As hostility against French attacks on American commerce rose, so too did British crimes rankle Americans.¹⁶ This dynamic makes the context of American and British trade cooperation with Saint-Domingue all the more complicated.

As the *Kingston* sailed with Stevens on board, it passed through dangerous waters filled with French privateers looking to do damage upon American commerce. It is important to remember that during the whole span of time that this thesis covers the United States was unofficially at war with France. Alexander DeConde's *The Quasi-War* still represents the pinnacle of historical literature on the Quasi-War and the particulars of the Franco-American relationship during the 1790s.¹⁷ *The Quasi-War* considers the entire length of the conflict: from its origins in French anger towards Jay's Treaty, to the end of the conflict with the Convention of Môtrefontaine in 1801. DeConde explains that when Edward Stevens arrived in Cap Français, he “reflected an American policy which sought

official American and British policy. Louverture's strength and his relative independence from French control changed American views on the possibility and importance of assisting the British in capturing Saint-Domingue. If France had held a stronger grip on the colony and if Louverture was weaker, the United States may have invaded Saint-Domingue, too. Perkins considers Anglo-American policy toward Saint-Domingue to be “the most significant and important example of cooperation [between the United States and Britain] during this period”. American merchants—who made international cooperation economically agreeable and possible—fade into the background of Perkins's book.

15 DeConde, 201-206.

16 Palmer, 215.

17 DeConde.

to separate France and Louverture, to suppress privateering, to extend trade...and to encourage, or aid, Louverture in achieving independence”.¹⁸ In the face of almost universal Southern anger, Federalist officials would decide to actively support the independence of ex-slaves—if only for a short while. DeConde writes of the motivation of American merchants to trade with Saint-Domingue before the revolution: “profit from trade, primarily in sugar, had first attracted Americans to Saint-Domingue...[and] the desire of Americans to gain entry into what was potentially still an important source of cheap sugar”.¹⁹

More modern historical studies of the Atlantic powers have increasingly stressed the importance of understanding the many connections and interdependencies of the Atlantic world. It is in the work of these historians that this thesis finds significant inspiration.²⁰

Because of the constraints of available sources, this thesis relies primarily—although not entirely—on American sources, which still reveal much about Americans, the British and Saint-Dominguans, and the world within which they operated. The seven

18 18 DeConde, 136-137.

19 19 DeConde, 130-131.

20 20 In Atlantic perspective, David Geggus outlines the various responses of the major European powers and the United States to the developing Revolution in his compilation of his own scholarship, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*: David Geggus, “The Great Powers and the Haitian Revolution”, in *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, ed. David Geggus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 171-177. Initial reactions varied. Spanish Santo Domingo officially asserted its neutrality in the situation. While providing sporadic assistance for white refugees from Saint-Domingue, Spain began to look more favorably on the resisting slaves. White planters and merchants in British Jamaica took steps to secure their own system of slavery by increasing troop levels. Separated from old European frictions, the United States first responded to the slave revolt by supplying money to the needy Saint-Domingue colonists, in part to repay its Revolutionary War-debt to France. Geggus builds upon these early responses to explain how developments in Saint-Domingue in the following decade affected these nations' official policies. He describes the situation in the years of Military Intervention (1793-98), early Haitian power (1798-1801) and the War of Independence (1802-1804). As the author acknowledges, the piece merely “sketches the reactions of the major powers”. Geggus's method for understanding nations' responses to the Haitian Revolution is clear: focus on the importance of economic and political relationships between European nations. His methodology—which views the Atlantic world as incredibly interconnected—has set a standard for analyzing the Haitian Revolution and its world.

volume *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, edited under the direction of US naval captain Dudley W. Knox, incorporates a vast array of American sources in the form of governmental and naval correspondence, along with other documents.²¹ In addition to printed sources, this thesis relies on manuscript sources of the correspondence of business and military people, as well as their ledgers, inventories and the other ephemera common to Atlantic navies and commercial vessels.

This story of diplomacy, commerce and warfare is arranged chronologically. The first chapter begins in late 1797, and examines the position of Saint-Domingue during the British occupation, ending with General Maitland's peace with Louverture and the evacuation of British forces. It also explains the importance of French privateering and the Quasi-War to the distinctly Federalist-American policy towards Saint-Domingue. Chapter two treats the diplomacy of Stevens, Maitland and Louverture, among others, and describes other trends and patterns affecting this negotiation within and without Saint-Domingue. Opening after the end of the formal negotiations of spring 1799, the final chapter explores the importance of American military and commercial aid to Louverture during the War of the South, and explains the growing rift between the Dominguan policies of the United States and Britain.

The title, “The Friendly Disposition,” refers to the general tone of relations between the Adams administration and Louverture's Saint-Domingue—relations shaped by an age of war and revolution.²²

21 U.S. Department of Navy, *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1934-37).

22 Edward Stevens to Timothy Pickering, May 3, 1799, “Letters of Toussaint Louverture and of Edward Stevens, 1798-1800,” *American Historical Review* 16 (October 1910), 67.

Chapter 1: Commerce, Imperial Warfare and Revolution

Introduction

On February 13, 1797, the French privateering vessel *Foundling*, cruising in the Caribbean in search of American and British commercial prey, chased the American merchant ship *Louisa*. Carrying a cargo of food and lumber to the West Indies on behalf of the merchant John Clark of Massachusetts, *Louisa*, captained by one Holder Fullman, was captured somewhere between Savannah and Saint-Domingue.

The French privateer Captain Bras, master of the *Foundling*, carried his prize first to the Saint-Dominguan port cities of Jean-Rabel and Port-de-Paix, and finally to Cap Français, where local courts inevitably granted money to Captain Bras and his crew according to the worth of the prize. The ship's total worth—between the price of the ship and its cargo—exceeded \$18,000.²³ Privateering was a lucrative, and legal, business.

During the 1790s, Saint-Domingue became a hotbed for French privateering efforts and piracy in the Caribbean. American ships going and coming from various ports in Saint-Domingue were targeted by privateers, and privateers from all over the West Indies and Caribbean carried their prizes into Saint-Domingue. Before the formal

²³ Timothy Pickering to Samuel Sewall, December 27, 1797, U.S. Department of Navy, *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1934-37), 1:32. Because of their frequency, references to *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France* will be abbreviated. For example: “*QWD* 1:2,” denoting the citation came from page 2 of volume 1.

negotiations began with Louverture in 1799 to determine trading policy with Saint-Domingue, President Adams's administration struggled over ways to reduce the harm caused by French ships-of-war and privateers to American commercial vessels and Atlantic commerce.

By 1797, French privateers were regularly attacking American commercial ships in the Caribbean and greater Atlantic.²⁴ Between October 1796 and June 1797, there were at least 316 individual cases of “depredations” on American ships in the Atlantic.²⁵ These “depredations” were captures of American merchant ships by ostensibly lawfully licensed privateers under the imperial governments of Spain, Great Britain and France. However, French privateers committed the great majority of these attacks, which proved incredibly costly.²⁶

At the formal behest of American merchants and other business people, which included a written petition from “sundry citizens of the United States” from Philadelphia, and two weeks after the capture of the *Louisa*, Secretary of State Timothy Pickering delivered an address on these depredations to the Fourth Congress of the United States during their second session on February 28, 1797.²⁷ This report outlined the nature of the attacks on American shipping, which went beyond privateering and the legal capturing of ships. Privateering had a legal component to it that distinguished it from other coercive

24 Timothy Pickering to John Adams, June 21, 1797, *QWD* 1:6.

25 Report of Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, June 21, 1797, United States Congress, *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States...Selected and Edited under the Authority of Congress*. 38 vols. Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1832-61. American State Papers: Foreign Affairs. 2:28-63.

26 *Ibid.*, 2: 28.

27 Timothy Pickering's report to the Fourth Congress, February 28, 1797, *QWD* 1:1.

and violent acts against seaborne commerce; only through a court system, such as British vice admiralty courts, could these captured ships be made lawful prizes. Besides the activity of privateers, American business people complained of an embargo on American ships in Bordeaux, France during 1793 and 1794, of violations of their contracts made with the French Republic, of the appropriation and coerced sales of their ships' cargoes by the French, and of the non-payment of bills and other debts compiled by the French in the West Indies.²⁸ Generally, Americans charged that the French harassed their commerce without regard to law, treaty or convention.

American commerce in the Caribbean was too important for merchants and the United States government to leave unguarded. But what could be done to end or severely limit the harm caused by the French Republic? Moreover, since the attacks predominantly occurred in and around Saint-Domingue, what response was available to protect and promote American trade with Saint-Domingue?

As American government officials and business people struggled over what to do about their French problem, British soldiers continued to battle on the plains and in the mountains of Saint-Domingue against Louverture, André Rigaud and the black armies of former Dominguan slaves. While generally a defensive battle for the British, at times the fighting was fierce.²⁹ Casualties piled up extremely high during the British occupation of Saint-Domingue. Besides combat, another significant cause of death for British soldiers

²⁸ Ibid., 1.

²⁹ David Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue 1793-1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 364.

was disease.³⁰

Years of revolutionary and imperial violence had demolished the slave economy of Saint-Domingue that the British had hopes of re-establishing. Indeed, Great Britain lost money on their investment. The decimated plantation economy of Saint-Domingue yielded one-twentieth of the quantity of produce exported from the British West Indies and was a weak market for British produce.³¹ Still, the British were interested in Saint-Domingue even after the financial and military disaster of their years of occupation. Revolutionary Saint-Domingue symbolized a corruption of the social, political and economic order that flourished in nearby British Jamaica, and was thought to be a threat to the British.

As Louverture gained military and political strength, he inevitably realized Saint-Domingue was in a severe economic quandary. The question of economic production became a question of survival: without the foreign weapons and provisions that could only be purchased with money from foreign trade, this land of ex-slaves could be forced back into chains by the barrels of British, French or even American muskets. Trading coffee, indigo and most especially sugar on an international market might guarantee freedom and independence. Revolutionary Saint-Domingue faced multiple problems. First, as a nominally French colony led by ex-slaves, who would trade with them? And second, how might the economic order be rebuilt in this age of imperial warfare and discontent?

30 Ibid., 364-365.

31 Ibid., 382.

In 1797 and 1798, select elite groups within the United States, Great Britain and Saint-Domingue recognized and responded to a series of problems that reflected the primacy of economic matters to them in the Atlantic world. From the merchant offices and government halls of Philadelphia and elsewhere in the United States, privateering in the Caribbean represented a major hurdle to be cleared in the pursuit of a healthy, expanding American economy. An infant nation, surrounded by potentially hostile European actors in the Atlantic world, the United States stared down the flags of French privateers and sought an end to the economic terror inflicted on their commerce. Merchant people were the focal point for all the energy of the United States government to curb French privateering.

Great Britain focused its attention on protecting the slave order of Jamaica, while maintaining some kind of relationship with Saint-Domingue, which after five years of disastrous military occupation still represented some kind of treasure for British commercial interests.

Saint-Domingue undoubtedly faced the greatest set of problems. Political, social and economic order had become reconfigured during the Haitian Revolution, and instability prevailed throughout the French colony. The possibility of re-imposing political and social order necessitated a powerful economic order. What would order look like? For the military elites, a plantation economy seemed to be the most profitable solution. But could Louverture and other military leaders in Saint-Domingue promote a plantation economy that would so closely resemble the brutal slave economy that had

reigned for almost a century? Foreign intervention, perhaps of a kind more successful than the British occupation, and further colonial subjugation were realistic possibilities if the economy did not recover. In the colony, the stakes were very high.

I. The Most Profitable Colony in the World

Before the revolution, which began in August 1791, Saint-Domingue functioned as an immensely profitable French colony, which produced enormous quantities of sugarcane on its plains and coffee in its mountains. In its time, it was the most profitable colony in the world.³² Of course, the world's most profitable colony's economic production relied entirely on an enslaved population of African and Caribbean-born peoples. Slaves vastly outnumbered the free population of Saint-Domingue by the mid-eighteenth century, when there were only 14,000 whites and over 150,000 black slaves.³³

In Europe, sugar had exploded as a consumer good in the 1700s, and Saint-Domingue and Jamaica became its primary exporters in the New World. As historian Laurent Dubois writes, “sugarcane production required good land, irrigation, a large labor force, and expensive equipment.”³⁴ The plains of Saint-Domingue—like Jamaica—provided very good land for growing sugarcane, although it would take much more than just rich soil to produce a healthy crop. Much of the complex irrigation system was built in government sponsored projects in the 1700s; the French colonial government paid for

32 Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 13.

33 *Ibid.*, 19.

34 *Ibid.*, 19.

the projects, but only through slave labor were the systems built.³⁵ Sugarcane production also meant large expenses for the individual plantations. Most of the costly physical capital could only be purchased by those looking to start plantations with outside help. Loans from merchant houses in France had helped numerous plantation owners in Saint-Domingue and elsewhere get started.³⁶

Once a plantation had acquired its capital stock, it could begin to pay off this initial loan through the production of its primary cash crop. However, many plantation owners defaulted on their loans, with French merchant houses retaining ownership and control over sugar plantations in the Caribbean colonies.³⁷ Those colonists with less money to begin with, who could not pay the expenses unique to a sugar plantation, often decided to begin coffee plantations. These smaller organizations operated in the mountains—mountains that covered 60 percent of the colony—and required less initial capital and fewer slaves.³⁸ For ambitious Frenchmen, coffee plantations looked like a much more affordable alternative to the gigantic and costly sugar plantation.

Almost all of the sugar and coffee produced in Saint-Domingue went to France, where 75 percent of this produce was reexported to other European countries.³⁹ This arrangement was the product of the *Exclusif*, which limited commercial intercourse with colonial French ports to French ships.⁴⁰ The monopoly could not be enforced completely.

35 *Ibid.*, 26.

36 *Ibid.*, 20.

37 *Ibid.*, 20.

38 *Ibid.*, 21.

39 *Ibid.*, 21.

40 *Ibid.*, 32.

Contraband flowed between Saint-Domingue and the other Atlantic colonies in the area. In exchange for sugar and coffee, slaves from British Jamaica arrived in the ports of the southern province of Saint-Domingue.⁴¹ The United States represented a major illegal trading partner as well, with New England merchants providing food and other provisions that filled a crucial part of the market in Saint-Domingue—a market that was too often bare.⁴²

The entire society of Saint-Domingue hinged upon the inhumanly cruel institution of slavery. With slaves, this configuration of economic production produced huge revenues for individual planters and France. Still, colonial slavery was unstable, and without it the social and political institutions that functioned in Saint-Domingue would undoubtedly collapse.

II. Revolution in Saint-Domingue

In August of 1791, a group of slaves on the northern plain of Saint-Domingue conspired against their masters and started a fire in the sugarcane fields of their plantations. This conflagration spread throughout the colony, effectively triggering the only successful slave revolt in history—the Haitian Revolution. For more than a decade, Saint-Domingue witnessed violence in many forms: from the seemingly unending civil conflict between ex-slaves, whites and free coloreds, to varying episodes of imperial warfare. This period transformed Saint-Domingue into a black-run state of emancipated

41 Ibid., 32.

42 Ibid., 33.

ex-slaves.

During the revolution, political, social and economic power shifted hands from French colonial officials and businesspeople to a select number of revolutionary Dominguan military leaders. In the north and west of the colony, Toussaint Louverture gained effective rule, while André Rigaud held power in the south. Between these two leading officials were numbers of both free-colored and slave-born officers. Their power derived from their military might, and from the support of the masses of ex-slaves who remained in Saint-Domingue.⁴³

As economist Mats Lundahl argues, the necessity for Louverture to maintain, train and equip a large army in Saint-Domingue meant that he needed both public revenue and foreign exchange.⁴⁴ The threat of invasion from France was present from the start of the revolution in 1791 until the creation of the Haitian state in 1804. This, along with the invasions of Great Britain and Spain in the mid-1790s, helped establish a state of perpetual imperial warfare in Saint-Domingue that promoted continual military buildup. In order to protect emancipation and promote a post-slavery order, the Dominguans had to remain armed. Louverture recognized this.

In order to raise substantial tax revenue and promote foreign trade, there needed to be agricultural production. The economy of Saint-Domingue had all but shut down completely following the first years of the revolution: the labor system based on chattel

43 C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 151.

44 Mats Lundahl, "Toussaint Louverture and the War Economy of Saint-Domingue, 1796-1802," in *Caribbean Freedom: Society and Economy From Emancipation to the Present* ed. Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1993), 3.

slavery had collapsed; many of these former slaves—a group who would have to become free laborers if production was to restart—had died during constant revolutionary warfare; the expensive irrigation system had been destroyed.⁴⁵ Moreover, a subsistence-based agricultural system had replaced the former plantation and import one. This replacement was due almost entirely to the fact that food imports had disappeared following the beginning of the slave revolt. Previously, imports of food and other necessary provisions had come from other Atlantic powers.⁴⁶

Louverture faced a decision: he could invigorate the Saint-Domingue domestic and foreign economy by promoting the subsistence-based, small landholder system that currently flourished, or reinstate a plantation economic order without slavery.⁴⁷ Either way, Louverture wanted produce to trade for guns, ammunition, food and the other provisions that would strengthen the position of Saint-Domingue as an all-but-independent colony.

As Lundahl further interprets, Louverture recognized the potential problems inherent to both plans. The small landholder system would cost more for the government to run: collection and transport costs would be very high because the small plots would be scattered throughout the colony. Collection and transportation also meant that a new, large bureaucracy would need to be established from scratch.⁴⁸ The plantation system was a better alternative for Louverture because it was less costly and better suited to the

45 Ibid., 3.

46 Ibid., 4.

47 Ibid., 4.

48 Ibid., 5.

nature of sugar production, which was to be the primary agricultural product.⁴⁹ Collecting sugar and other produce and moving it from plantations to centers of trade would cost much less because the plantations would be fewer in number than the small plots. Still, the free labor-based plantation system was a contorted, mirror image of the slave labor plantation system, and Louverture must have realized this and worried over the potential for revolt and further economic disorder.

Louverture chose to reestablish the large plantation system. Those supportive generals and other military leaders who surrounded Louverture were rewarded for their military leadership with control over many of the abandoned large plantations present in the colony. Supportive whites were guaranteed control over their property as well.⁵⁰ The implementation of the large plantation system took several years, although there were immediate benefits for Louverture, who along with many of his generals grew rich.⁵¹ The process led Louverture to rule over the economic system in the same way he did the military one. A police force was created to track down run-away laborers, who were treated like deserters; military commanders who governed the districts of Saint-Domingue were also responsible for the plantations operating in their district; generals and colonels managed the majority of the plantations.⁵² Like his military, Louverture's economy was highly regulated, with uniform currency, export and import duties and taxes, which included a national property tax.⁵³

49 Ibid., 5.

50 Ibid., 6.

51 Ibid., 6.

52 Ibid., 7.

53 Ibid., 7.

Besides the harsh discipline doled out on the plantation, Louverture tried to win over the laborers in this system by appealing to their sense of civic duty. For example, in a pronouncement on October 12, 1800, Louverture revealed a public ideology that supported his economic and social model for Saint-Domingue:

Citizens, you all know that agriculture is the most important support of governments, because it foments commerce, wealth and abundance, makes crafts and industry be born, because it gives occupation to all hands, thus being the mechanism of all states.⁵⁴

Even if Louverture's wartime economic system had run smoothly within Saint-Domingue—which it did not—it would have been for nothing without trade with other Atlantic powers, namely the United States and Great Britain. Louverture and Saint-Domingue needed trading partners.

III. American Responses to Privateering

As potential trading partners for Louverture, American merchants proved willing participants, however their business in the Caribbean was in a state of disarray. Insurance rates for shippers rose greatly during the Quasi-War, and American merchants and their supporters in the Federal Government worked together to formulate strategies to protect American shipping and commerce. The French motivation for this *guerre de course*—another name for the kind of economic warfare used by the French during the Quasi-War—was the close relationship the Americans had—both political and economic in nature—with France's enemy, Great Britain. Jay's Treaty had been ratified in 1796, and from there

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

French attacks increased in intensity.

One response to the crisis of French commercial attacks involved the arming of merchant vessels. Armed American merchant ships sailed on the Atlantic before legislation in 1798 made it formally legal; however, previously armed merchant ships were more uncommon, and typically only the biggest ships, with larger cargoes, armed themselves.⁵⁵ Moreover, before 1798, sending armed merchant vessels to the West Indies was restricted. In a circular sent by the Secretary of Treasury Oliver Wolcott, Jr. to collectors of the Customs in April 1797, the secretary addressed the question of armed merchant vessels.⁵⁶ The document stipulated that armed private ships not heading to the East Indies “be restrained.”⁵⁷ This all changed following a series of congressional acts the next year. In 1798, over 400 merchant vessels sailed with cannon and other forms of arms.⁵⁸ These merchants traveled and traded throughout the Atlantic, from Saint-Domingue to Bermuda to Bordeaux, armed with protection against privateers.

A series of congressional acts in 1798 provided the legal basis for allowing merchant ships to defend themselves against French attackers, and the federal government began granting special commissions to merchant ships to allow them to go on the offensive against French armed vessels.⁵⁹ On June 25, 1798, President Adams signed legislation that authorized merchant ships to arm and defend themselves against

55 *Ibid.*, 2:147.

56 Circular from Secretary of Treasury to Collectors of the Customs, April 8, 1797, *QWD* 1:5.

57 *Ibid.*, 1:5.

58 *Ibid.*, 2:147-197

59 “American Armed Merchantmen,” 1798, *QWD* 2: 147.

any French aggressors on the sea.⁶⁰ This congressional act was intended to encourage strong defensive measures by American merchants against their enemies. If in the process of defending their ship, they happened to capture a French vessel, a legal guideline for condemning the captured ship and gaining their prize was established.⁶¹

Later in the summer of 1798, Congress passed a bill that granted armed merchant ships commissions to attack armed French vessels in the Atlantic. The congressional act of July 9, 1798 limited the conduct of any armed vessel with a commission to conform to the “laws and treaties” of the United States.⁶² The Adams administration did not want to be seen as granting licenses to encourage piracy or other illegal seaborne acts that might be committed. For instance, if an armed private ship captured an armed French vessel, they could not simply distribute any goods found on the vessel among themselves. The captain and owner of the American armed merchant ship would have to go through legal means to collect their prize, just like privateers of French, Spanish or British origins. The captured ships would have to be brought into an American port, where a district or circuit judge would proceed with a review of the circumstances of the capture. Should the capture prove legal, those on the capturing ship—along with the owner of that ship—would receive their prize, whether money or goods or both. However, if the circumstances of the capture were illegal, the court might demand restitution fees and order damages to be paid by the capturing vessel to the owner of the captured one.⁶³

60 Act authorizing defence of merchant vessels, *QWD* 1:135-137.

61 *Ibid.*, 136.

62 Congress authorizes special commissions for private armed vessels, *QWD* 1:181-183.

63 *Ibid.*, 1:182.

Receiving a commission for an armed merchant ship to attack armed French vessels was not cheap, nor available to all ships: this was not a right of merchant vessels, but a privilege. Owners had to fill out the necessary paperwork and apply for a direct commission, applying to the secretary of state, who demanded information on the ship's size, makeup of crew and owners.⁶⁴ An owner of a ship with fewer than 150 crew members paid a bond to the United States in “the penal sum of seven thousand dollars,” while the bond of a larger crewed ship cost \$14,000.⁶⁵ The Federalists in power, from Adams to Secretary of State Pickering and Wolcott, sought control over most elements in this strategic plan to reduce depredations on American commercial intercourse.

Saint-Domingue and the area surrounding it remained a hotspot for French privateering, and many armed merchant ships fought in this area against privateers with the newfound confidence that only cannons could provide. Even before the congressional acts made it strictly legal, American vessels fought off privateers, or at least did their best to escape. While en route to Jamaica in April 1798, the brig *Boston Packet*, owned by Richard Dennis of Savannah, Georgia, encountered two “brigand boats” in the Windward Passage between Saint-Domingue and Cuba.⁶⁶ After a fierce attack, *Boston Packet* managed to stave off the privateers and limp into Môle Saint-Nicholas, located on the western tip of the northern province of Saint-Domingue.⁶⁷ From there the ship proceeded under convoy to Jamaica.⁶⁸ After doing battle in the Windward Passage and returning to

64 Ibid., 1:181.

65 Ibid., 1:181-182.

66 “American Armed Merchantmen,” 1798, *QWD* 2: 154.

67 Ibid., 2:154.

68 Ibid., 2:154.

the United States, *Boston Packet* traveled to New York, where it became the first ship in that harbor to legally arm.⁶⁹

Large or small, each American merchant ship sailing in the Caribbean faced the threat of capture. Sometimes, armed or not, the less battle-tested American merchant vessels just could not match the seafaring skills of French privateers. The crew of *New Jersey*, a large 401 ton ship from Philadelphia with ten guns and 30 men, surrendered to a Saint-Dominguan privateering vessel, *La Bourdaine*. At the orders of Captain John Pellot, the French corsair brought her prize into Puerto Rico.⁷⁰ In general, French corsairs—a name for privateering vessels—were small and fast and usually could not match a larger armed ship; but sometimes they encountered smaller merchant vessels, which they could capture with ease.⁷¹ Of four guns and 40 men, and native to Nantes, France, *Furet* captured the American brig *Vulture*, out of Salem and took her into Saint-Domingue, where she was condemned in December 1798.⁷² The small American vessel had only eight men on board to man two guns.⁷³

As in the case of the American brig *Vulture*, where the advantage in size was debilitating, American armed merchant vessels often failed to fend off the attacks of privateers. But arming merchant ships was not the only strategy employed against commercial warfare by President Adams. The real test for those Federalists controlling

69 Ibid, 2:154.

70 Ibid., 2:182.

71 Michael A. Palmer, *Stoddert's War: Naval Operations during the Quasi-War with France, 1798-1801* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 36.

72 "American Armed Merchantmen," 1798, *QWD* 2: 195.

73 Ibid., 2:195.

policy in the Atlantic world would involve the genesis of a naval force which could contend with the bigger, more experienced European ones.

Foremost of all the responses by the federal government to the problem of French privateering was the creation of the United States Department of the Navy on April 30, 1798. The navy department would have to respond to the ongoing war on American commerce carried out by French privateers and warships in the Atlantic. After Congressional approval for the naval department, President Adams and his secretary of state, Timothy Pickering, searched for a suitable leader for the fledgling navy. Those considered were all Federalist merchants: men with much at stake in the waters of the Caribbean, where the navy would ostensibly do battle against French raiders. The president's first choice, Massachusetts Federalist George Cabot, rejected the position.⁷⁴ Adams and Pickering's second choice accepted: Marylander Benjamin Stoddert, a veteran of the Continental Army and a merchant, became the first Secretary of the Department of the Navy.⁷⁵

The success of the US navy in the Quasi-War primarily depended upon its ability to protect American shipping lanes and vessels, although the navy was called to defend things other than ships engaged in trade. One of the great fears stoked by the Haitian Revolution arose from Hispaniola's proximity to other slave societies. For the British, the primary fear was the spread of revolt to Jamaica. Many Americans shared the same concerns as the British; therefore, American naval ships cruised off the Atlantic coast of

74 Palmer, 9.

75 Ibid., 9-11.

the United States, essentially defending coastal ports from privateers, as well as from the nebulous fear of the spread of slave revolt from Saint-Domingue.⁷⁶ The Federalists responded to a threat they considered real, but sometimes they also used the threat of slave revolution as a political tool to maneuver around those members of congress, especially their political rivals, Democratic-Republicans, who staunchly resisted defensive and offensive warfare against the French.

Republicans generally believed the French less a threat to the United States than Great Britain during the period of the Quasi-War. In *Porcupine's Gazette*, a Federalist newspaper out of Philadelphia, one particularly fearful—or politically cunning—journalist wrote in 1798: “Take care, take care, you sleepy southern fools...Your negroes will probably be your masters this day twelve month.”⁷⁷ Certainly, many Southerners worried about the growing power of Louverture and other men of color in Saint-Domingue because of the perceived potential for the spread of revolt, and this mindset was common to persons throughout the United States. A New Englander wrote President Adams in June 1798 on the vulnerability of the American South: “The British navy is the only preventative against an invasion of those States from the West India Islands...A few Ships of war...would in a few days convoy an army of ten thousand blacks and people of colour in vessels seized from our own citizens...They might land on the defenseless parts of South Carolina or Virginia.”⁷⁸ This concern was largely overblown, but represents

76 Ibid., 18-19.

77 Alexander DeConde, *The Quasi-War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France 1797-1801* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 84, 404.

78 To The President of the United States from H. Knox, June 26, 1798, *QWD* 1:139-140.

powerful evidence of the importance of the Haitian Revolution on the mindset of American citizens.

The early role of the navy changed as the department developed a greater capacity for action in the Atlantic. Part of the job for some naval ships was to assist in the convoying of merchant ships across the Caribbean as escorts. The British navy also allowed some American merchant ships traveling in dangerous waters to join convoys with British naval escorts.⁷⁹ There was some safety in numbers it seemed, and merchants traveling between various ports on the Atlantic coast and the West Indies often relied on the protection of traveling in a group—sometimes with armed escorts, whether U.S. navy ships or privately armed ones. One major destination for American merchants and their goods was Havana, and there were at least two major convoys with American naval escorts during 1798. Sitting on the western portion of Spanish Cuba, Havana attracted Spanish as well as French privateers. In August 1798, President Adams wrote directly to Secretary Stoddert on behalf of Salem merchant William Gray, requesting a convoy and escort for “an hundred Sail of American vessels now at the Havana, watched by twenty or thirty French Privateers.”⁸⁰

Numerous American merchants took the initiative in calling on the navy for help, demonstrating the lengths they would and could go to in protecting their property and trade. Individual merchants evidently had realized their strong ability to shape American foreign policy, and often petitioned the government with their fellow local merchants,

⁷⁹ Palmer, 77.

⁸⁰ John Adams to Benjamin Stoddert, August 18, 1798, *QWD* 1:319.

who together formed influential coalitions. Captain Thomas Truxtun of the U.S. frigate *Constellation* wrote to Secretary of War James McHenry in June 1798, recounting his plans for the immediate future:

The Merchants of Norfolk having applied to me to convoy a Fleet of their Ships, which they assured me, was worth at least One Million of Dollars; I considered it proper, and within the Power given to me in my Instructions, to grant their Request, as far as the Distance mentioned in the accompanying papers, which I forward for your Information.⁸¹

Convoying was one way to keep insurance premiums down for merchants.

For all the special help merchants received from the navy, they were not ungrateful, nor did they do so without the knowledge that they owed the government something in return, besides the profitability of their commercial endeavors. Stoddert requested from the “Patriotic Merchants and Citizens of [Philadelphia]” a large ship, not smaller than 32 guns, for the navy.⁸² Less than a month later some Boston merchants, who had been called on in service of the U.S. navy, held a fundraiser for the building of a vessel. From the 33 people who attended the event, \$72,500 was raised; one William Philips gave \$10,000, pledging to double the amount if needed.⁸³ Overall, American efforts to protect their seaborne commerce were large, but the United States lacked control over other Atlantic powers. In and around Saint-Domingue, British policies during their occupation of the colony greatly affected both Saint-Dominguans and, more distantly, Americans.

⁸¹ 59 To Secretary James McHenry from Captain Thomas Truxtun, U.S. Navy, June 23, 1798, *QWD* 1:133.

⁸² Letter from Benjamin Stoddert to Tomas Fitzsimmons, Philadelphia, June 26, 1798, *QWD* 1:143.

⁸³ Regarding subscription for building vessel in Boston, July 5, 1798, *QWD* 1:168.

IV. The British Occupation and Retreat

In September 1793, British forces landed at Jérémie in the southern province of Saint-Domingue and at Môle Saint-Nicholas in the north. It was the beginning of an occupation that would last through five years of conflict, commerce and change. From Jérémie and Môle, British redcoats took over other cities, including Saint-Marc and Arcahaye in the western province.⁸⁴ With British hopes still high for the colony, and after a failed attempt at overrunning Port-au-Prince, the colonial capital remained under Dominguan control. This arrangement did not last much longer, and after reinforcements arrived in May 1794, British forces combined in a land and sea-based assault on Port-au-Prince. On June 4, the capital was under British control.⁸⁵

For many recently emancipated slaves in 1793, the British occupation meant the revival of the slave system in those areas under the yoke of the British flag. But for the many who turned a profit from the inhuman institution of slavery, the Union Jack was welcomed. British rule changed the economic dynamic in cities and areas throughout Saint-Domingue. In Port-au-Prince, merchants and other businesspeople involved in foreign trade contributed to the local economies by providing outlets for Dominguan produce. In June 1797, around 80 persons in the capital city earned livings as merchants, ship owners and contractors.⁸⁶ However, colonial ports did not do nearly as much

84 Dubois, 166-168.

85 David Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue 1793-1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 111-114.

86 *Ibid.*, 231.

business as before 1791: in 1796, Port-au-Prince sugar exports were ten percent the amount exported in pre-revolutionary times, while coffee exports were half their former amount.⁸⁷

Still, British merchants and trading people worked to revive the economy with their colonial partners at the expense of slave laborers. Sometimes local economies failed to provide for the security of their peoples. Saint-Marc's economy suffered numerous setbacks during the occupation, not least of all from the free-colored revolt of September 1794. This harmed commerce greatly and led to starvation and hunger throughout the region.⁸⁸ Other areas in Saint-Domingue did better, and some even emerged stronger than ever before during the occupation, such as Jérémie, where business boomed.⁸⁹

Prices of provisions and produce fluctuated throughout the occupied zone and beyond. Because Saint-Domingue relied on imports for a vast number of important items, most importantly food, provisions tended to be pricey even before the revolution began. As slave revolt spread in the colony, prices spiked: the cost of a barrel of flour increased 60 percent in 1793, and in 1797, lumber jumped in price 100 percent. The causes of these price increases were undoubtedly complex and numerous. But the increase in privateering and the commensurate rising of insurance rates for shippers accounted a great deal for the price increases of imported goods.⁹⁰

There was great demand for foreign goods in the colonial markets of Saint-

87 Ibid., 231.

88 Ibid., 232.

89 Ibid., 232.

90 Ibid., 234.

Domingue, just as foreign demand for colonial produce remained high. The high prices for Dominguan sugar and other products, as well as the expensive customs duties paid by foreign traders, especially Americans, provide evidence for this demand.⁹¹ The British made enormous sums of money from customs revenue: in 1796, 4,000,000 livres, or £114,000 (sterling pound) in duties were collected by the British administration.⁹²

Not all or even most merchants in British occupied zones were British. All types of businesspeople filled the complex market place. Some merchants loaned money to planters in the colony; others speculated on the plantation markets; others still moved Dominguan produce and foreign goods between the colony and the rest of the Atlantic world.⁹³ Port-au-Prince merchants François Daumas and Arnaud Roberjot Lartigue owned large amounts of land and controlled fabulous wealth in the British occupied zone.⁹⁴

In December of 1797, William Leckie—a British merchant who operated primarily out of Jamaica—found himself stuck in the Dominguan city of Port-au-Prince.⁹⁵ The boat that he had counted on taking him out of Saint-Domingue to the relative safety of Jamaica, the *Argonaut*, had been detained some miles north of Port-au-Prince at Saint-Marc.

The British invasion and occupation of Saint-Domingue, which began in

91 Ibid., 247.

92 Ibid., 247.

93 Ibid., 255-256.

94 Ibid., 256.

95 William Leckie to George Leckie, December 6, 1797, Leckie Family Papers, Manuscript Division, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

September, 1793, had provided an opportunity for William Leckie to expand his family's business into Saint-Domingue.⁹⁶ British imperial aggression and territorial expansion were good business for Leckie. Along with his father and two brothers, Leckie ran a successful dry goods business in the Caribbean. From Kingston, Jamaica—and occasionally by traveling to Saint-Domingue and other important Atlantic colonies—Leckie organized the operation at its heart in the Atlantic world by speculating on the West Indies markets and making the important business decisions. The Leckies' business exemplified the familiar scheme of triangular trade that had existed for almost the entirety of European colonial expansion into the New World. Alexander Leckie, Sr. and his youngest son, Alexander, Jr., lived and worked in Virginia; George Leckie was located in London; and William stayed primarily in Kingston. The circulation of goods, produce and money linked these three areas.

The Leckies were British by birth, but traded within an increasingly interdependent commercial Atlantic world, interconnected by merchants of American, British, French, Spanish, and other backgrounds. These merchants experienced many of the same anxieties and faced similar problems. Privateering affected the market greatly. Insurance rates for shippers wishing to protect their traveling cargoes from privateers, the weather or other factors, fluctuated largely according to the strength and prevalence of privateers in the Atlantic.⁹⁷ These legal, licensed marauders sailed under the flags of all and any nations who granted privateering licenses.⁹⁸

96 Dubois, 166.

97 Palmer, 6.

98 DeConde, 8-11.

The Leckies, like other British merchants, had traded with Saint-Domingue throughout the term of the British occupation of the colony. However, standing on the docks of Port-au-Prince in the last month of 1797, William Leckie undoubtedly realized the British were losing and that the strength of the Saint Dominguan rebels was too much for the sick and beaten British soldiers. He must have known the British could only stay in power in the few areas they still controlled for a little longer.⁹⁹ When the British troops left Saint-Domingue, what would happen to merchants like William Leckie?

British military and government officials began plotting an escape from the colony in 1797. Louverture and Rigaud, the two foremost Dominguan generals, began an offensive on all the occupied British zones in early 1798, with varying success. In the mountains, east of Port-au-Prince, redcoats abandoned their forts quickly and retreated towards the relative safety of the coast.¹⁰⁰ In other areas the British managed to hold on to their possessions. All across Saint-Domingue, the black republican armies continued their fight, building in strength as black soldiers fighting for the British deserted their lines.

British General Thomas Maitland, who became first-in-command through a string of fortuitous events—including the sudden resignation of his superior, General John Whyte—negotiated withdrawal from Saint-Domingue with Louverture.¹⁰¹ The final diplomatic steps taken included plans for the evacuation of formerly British-controlled areas, along with secret arrangements made between Maitland and Louverture concerning

⁹⁹ Geggus, 373.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 373-375.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 376.

future trade.¹⁰² By the end of 1798, the British had completely abandoned Saint-Domingue, yet the future of commercial relations between the colony and the British still seemed very bright.

IV. Legal and Extralegal Trade in Saint-Domingue

Contraband trade between the United States and Saint-Domingue existed throughout the 1790s, and was not limited to trade with Louverture, who held power primarily in the north of the colony. Indeed, General Rigaud's well-clothed, fed and equipped army in the south was due to “uninterrupted trade he [carried] on from the south with...the continent of America, and the island of Jamaica....”¹⁰³ This trade was illegal according to American and British commercial law.

However, Americans carried out legal trade with British occupied areas in Saint-Domingue, too, and often transported persons between the United States and the colony. Flour was a principal good provided by Americans in British-controlled zones.¹⁰⁴ Any and all American intercourse with Saint-Domingue made the state department nervous because of the possibility for illegal activities of all kinds. During the summer of 1798, the issue of American ships carrying French-born people back to Saint-Domingue from the United State caused numerous headaches for Secretary of State Timothy Pickering. With the permission of the president, it was possible for an American ship to travel

¹⁰²Ibid., 381.

¹⁰³Palmer, 158.

¹⁰⁴See, “American Armed Merchantmen,” *QWD* 2: 173, 187. The *Industry* brought flour to Jeremie and *Rachel* carried flour to Môle Saint-Nicholas in 1798.

legally to the 'French' ports of Saint-Domingue—but only in the capacity of transporting French citizens.

Pickering worried about two main potential problems: first, that Americans would trade goods with ports in Saint-Domingue, and second, that Americans would sell vessels to privateers in the colony. In order to determine if vessels could rightly be considered legal in their intercourse, it was necessary for the boat not to have “few passengers embark with many 'goods and effects.’”¹⁰⁵ If there were lots of passengers on a boat designed to carry people primarily, there would seem to be little risk in allowing the boat to proceed. Between July 14 and August 13, 1798, fifteen American ships were granted permits to travel to French-controlled ports, including Cap Français and Jacmel in Saint-Domingue, as well as Guadeloupe and Bordeaux.¹⁰⁶ The possibility that vessels might be sold to privateers seemed more insidious and Pickering worked to discourage this practice. Pickering stopped *South-Packet*, a new vessel bound from Norfolk, Virginia for Jacmel and Aux Cayes, from receiving a permit in September 1798, because of the fact that a similarly built ship with a similar story had been granted a permit and then sold to privateers in Saint-Domingue.¹⁰⁷

Merchants tested the mettle of political figures and their policies towards France and her colonies by tempting the state department with the prospect of business with colonial Saint-Domingue in 1798. John Habersham of Savannah was one such

¹⁰⁵Timothy Pickering to Joshua Sands, Collector, New York, July 21, 1798, *QWD* 1:229-230.

¹⁰⁶Abstract of the permits issued by the President of the United States to the Collectors of the Customs to clear out Vessels for foreign ports, to aid the departure of French Persons with their goods and effects..., August 23, 1798, *QWD* 1:332.

¹⁰⁷Timothy Pickering to Otway Byrd, Collector, Norfolk, September 22, 1798, *QWD* 1:440.

commercially involved person that called upon the state department to ask about the prospect of bringing back coffee from the “French West Indies.”¹⁰⁸ Secretary Pickering answered in the negative and wrote that the President “can give no authority to individuals to import or export merchandize by way of trade and commerce.”¹⁰⁹ However, the secretary of state allowed that merchants could bring back produce or whatever the good might be if they were owed debts by persons in the French West Indies, presumably meaning Saint-Domingue. This allowance presaged more extensive efforts to end the embargo in the following year.

Conclusion: Towards 1799

After establishing his primacy in colonial affairs in 1798 by negotiating directly with British General Maitland, Toussaint Louverture had begun to plan for the establishment of legal trade with the outside Atlantic world. Saint-Domingue still could be a cheap source of sugar for American and British merchants, who themselves were potential sources for food and other essential provisions to Saint-Domingue. For an independent and free Saint-Domingue to exist, there needed to be commercial intercourse between the harbors of Port-au-Prince, Cap Français, Philadelphia, Kingston and elsewhere. In many ways, to gain freedom forever from France, Saint-Domingue would need to rely on guns, food and other goods from outside the colony. Economic needs were prime to the policies of Louverture, as they were for the British and the Federalist

¹⁰⁸Timothy Pickering to John Habersham, Collector, Savannah, October 23, 1798, *QWD* 1:557,
¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 1:557.

administration in power in the United States, who had developed policies promoting merchant interests in the face of a French *guerre de course*.

There would have to be continuing discourse between Louverture and the British, and it would also require some petitioning to and diplomacy with the Adams administration. 1799 was the year when almost anything was possible for Saint-Domingue: freedom or the chains of slavery, booming business or utter economic failure.

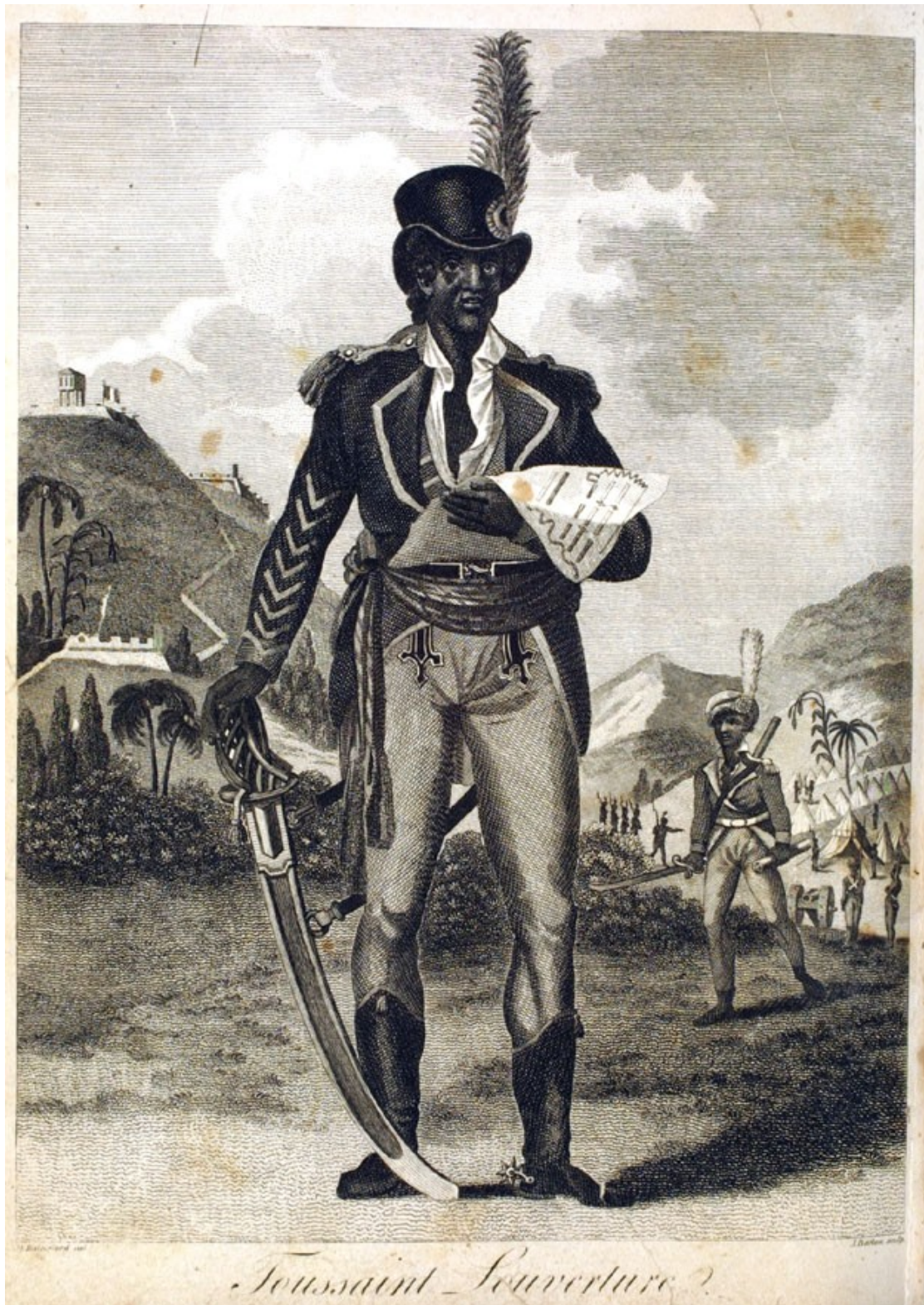


Fig. 2. Toussaint Louverture. Reprinted from Marcus Rainsford, *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti: Comprehending a View of the Principal Transactions in the Revolution of San Domingo: with its Antient and Modern State* (London: Albion Press, 1805), 241.

Chapter 2: 1799: Politics and Diplomacy

Introduction

By late 1798, a diplomatic arrangement among the United States, Great Britain and Louverture's Saint-Domingue had become an impending, delicate situation for all parties. This diplomacy was fixated on commercialism. The flow of money, goods and produce in the Caribbean and greater-Atlantic provided much of the impetus for diplomacy, and the question of how exactly this occurred is an important one. How did commercial concerns shape the interaction among Saint-Domingue, Great Britain and the United States?

Individuals on all sides played important roles in the negotiations, from Louverture and his ambassador Joseph Bunel, to British general Thomas Maitland and the Federalist Americans—Adams, Pickering and Edward Stevens. The question of who Louverture was and why the Adams administration and, to a lesser extent, select British officials trusted him proves to be another important issue. There was another Dominguan general, André Rigaud, a major rival of Louverture, whom the Americans and British treated with hostility. Why not Rigaud and why Louverture?

1799 was a crucial year in the development of international ties among these three actors in the Atlantic world. Ultimately, it seems that Saint-Domingue gained the most

from the brief trading relationships developed with Great Britain and the United States, while Louverture greatly profited as a political and military leader through an increase in his political and economic capital. The civil war battles that Louverture would fight in 1800, and later, would be won with guns, provisions, goods and confidence won through the hard-fought diplomacy of 1799.

I. Louverture's Overtures to Adams

One of the first important measures made by Louverture in his diplomatic courting of the United States involved the sending of a Dominguan emissary to Philadelphia. Joseph Bunel, a white Frenchman and a merchant with long ties to Saint-Domingue, arrived in the American capital in late 1798. Louverture's goals included the re-opening of American trade with Saint-Domingue, which had been embargoed by the Adams administration and congress earlier in 1798, and he had decided to go about this by sending Bunel to meet with American officials.¹¹⁰

Bunel met with his host, Secretary of State Pickering, and his “few select friends” for dinner, where Louverture's diplomat asked for trade and diplomatic relations from these Americans, and in return offered Saint-Domingue's protection from privateering and other concerns.¹¹¹ Invariably this offer must have been an acceptable one for Pickering, who became a staunch advocate for renewed American-Dominguan relations in 1799. During his stay, Bunel would have felt relatively welcome in

¹¹⁰Ronald Angelo Johnson, “A Revolutionary Dinner: U.S. Diplomacy toward Saint Domingue, 1798-1801,” *Early American Studies* 9 (Winter 2011), 114-116.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 115-116.

Philadelphia, a city of staunch Federalists, more so than he would in Virginia or elsewhere in the South, where Federalists were the minority. It was undoubtedly Pickering and a host of prominent Federalist politicians and merchants who dined with the emissary of Louverture. Merchants made up a solid constituent group among Federalist circles, and they were especially motivated to act on behalf of their own commercial interests in the matter of freer trade. One historian has proposed that Massachusetts representative Harrison Gray Otis and South Carolina's Robert Goodloe Harper were among the guests at this select evening of dining, compromising and diplomacy. Both of these congressmen had worked for the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts earlier in 1798, and represented some of the key Federalist power brokers on matters of national defense and security.¹¹² While the negotiations were centered around trade and commercial enterprise, a key element was the satisfying of American fears over safety and security. Privateering was not the only concern, for Federalists too retained concerns over the spread of the Haitian Revolution to the southern, slave societies of the United States.

Louverture had personally reached out to President Adams in November 1798, a little more than a month before the important dinner meeting between Bunel and Pickering. Bunel delivered this note, which made its way to the President, while on his fateful trip to Philadelphia.¹¹³ In a letter dated November 6, and with the French revolutionary mottos of “Liberté” and “Égalité” flanking the actual text of the

¹¹²Ibid., 125.

¹¹³Philippe R. Girard, “Black Talleyrand: Toussaint Louverture's Diplomacy, 1798-1802,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 66 (January 2009), 99.

correspondence, Louverture commented on the surprising “abandonment” of the ports of Saint-Domingue by the ships of the United States.¹¹⁴ The embargo on American trade with France and all her ports across the world must have been felt immediately and severely in Saint-Domingue, which had relied for some time on food and other provisions flowing from the United States.

In a time of war and famine, Saint-Domingue could not bear to lose another trading partner in the same way that the support of France had fallen away after the initial slave uprising. Louverture must have felt abandonment and anger towards the United States, an independent republic which had formed from a renegade, revolutionary colony—a history that Louverture and other colonial black leaders seemed to wish to revisit in Saint-Domingue. With gracious language and convincingly stated regard for the national interests of the United States, Louverture closed his letter by promising to protect American vessels should they decide to return to the ports of Saint-Domingue, while arguing that it would be in the interests of both “republics.”¹¹⁵ For Louverture, this was a signal to the United States that Saint-Domingue was inching towards true independence from France; for Adams and the United States, the letter posed a promising possible trade and diplomatic arrangement.

From the American end of the diplomatic triangle, merchants had the most to gain from open trade with Saint-Domingue. Louverture understood the importance of gaining the trust of both American and British merchants, and he actively sought out these

¹¹⁴Toussaint Louverture to John Adams, November 6, 1798, (French), “Letters of Toussaint Louverture and of Edward Stevens, 1798-1800,” *American Historical Review* 16 (October 1910), 66.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 66-67.

businesspeople as allies. Of course many of these merchants must have likewise communicated with Louverture on the subject of promoting freer trade between, in particular, the United States and Saint-Domingue. When Louverture sent Bunel to Philadelphia, he also sent word to a Philadelphian merchant, John Hollingsworth, asking for his support for the mission of Bunel.¹¹⁶ The relationship between Louverture and Hollingsworth was reciprocal, with Louverture asking for the political support of Hollingsworth in Philadelphia among his political countrymen, and Hollingsworth asking for a personal and presumably illegal—from the perspective of the United States—trading relationship with Saint-Domingue.¹¹⁷ Hollingsworth seems to have initiated this relationship, with overtures made to Louverture concerning the possibility of finding a merchant in Saint-Domingue to sell his “articles” and to arrange for the exchange of his American goods for raw, Dominguan produce.¹¹⁸ Besides the arrangement with Louverture, Hollingsworth also had something big to gain from the prospective end to the American embargo on the Dominguan trade. The Bunel mission probably would have gained Hollingsworth support with or without Louverture's business assistance.

Hollingsworth needed Louverture's aid in starting up his Dominguan trade for more than one reason. It was not only the obvious issue of gaining the assistance of the all-but-declared chief executive of Saint-Domingue for purposes of a consistent and legal

¹¹⁶Toussaint Louverture to John Hollingsworth, January 6, 1799, U.S. Department of Navy, *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1934-37), 2:216-217. Because of their frequency, references to *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France* will be abbreviated. For example: “*QWD* 1:2,” denoting the citation came from page 2 of volume 1.

¹¹⁷Henry Christophe to John Hollingsworth, January 29, 1799, *QWD* 2:217-218.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*

trade with the colony. He also had very few contacts in Saint-Domingue; after all, the colony had been officially declared off-limits to Americans for a few months because of its French ties. Anyway, the trade carried out before that time during the British occupation had been through British merchants and their contacts on the island. Now, a merchant looking to start up a trade with the colony, an illegal trade, would need to find new persons to assist in the practical, day-to-day operations. Louverture represented a possible ally for merchants, and in this case, John Hollingsworth successfully lobbied for Louverture's support in networking. The general set up Hollingsworth with one Citizen Granier, "a Merchant of this place whom...will take upon himself the selling of such articles as [Hollingsworth] may please to consign unto him and he will send [Hollingsworth] in return colonial Produce."¹¹⁹

Even before the arrival of Bunel, President Adams had taken a position favorable to Louverture and Saint-Domingue, which reflected the position of his secretary of state. One of the fundamental issues concerned the threat to the stability of the southern states that Saint-Domingue's rebellion presented. Pickering, in a move that proved distasteful to some British leaders, stated that an independent Saint-Domingue might be good for the United States.¹²⁰ But Louverture's initiative in attempting to gain American support undoubtedly helped his case for renewed trade, and within a month of Bunel's dinner meeting with Pickering, one of the more ceremonial and symbolic wishes of Louverture was granted: American ships-of-war would stop in the harbor of Cap Français and show

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Alexander DeConde, *The Quasi-War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France 1797-1801* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 133-134.

themselves off to the governor general himself.¹²¹ It was a simple request, but one that demonstrated the initial friendliness of the Adams administration to Louverture.

In order to re-open trade with Saint-Domingue, which had become Adams's position, the United States needed to bypass a previous embargo on trade with all French possessions. France and the United States still were in a state of undeclared war in the Atlantic, and it was illegal for Americans to trade with France and any of her colonies, which of course included Saint-Domingue. In early February 1799, congress passed a bill that ensured the president the power to open up trade with Saint-Domingue. Adams quickly signed what political rival Thomas Jefferson would call "Toussaint's Clause."¹²² With an expanded executive power, Adams now needed to cultivate the terms of a trading relationship with Saint-Domingue by sending out emissaries of his own.

II. Negotiating in Saint-Domingue

The Federalist Adams administration favored a more open trading policy towards Saint-Domingue than the British in 1799. While they had similar goals on the surface—that is, the restricted contact of Saint-Domingue with the outside Atlantic world, and an end to French-Dominguan privateering—the British interpreted the views of the Americans on European colonial policy in the Americas as sharply different from their own.

Initially, the British solely had worked out a trading arrangement with Saint-

¹²¹Ibid., 135-136; Benjamin Stoddert to John Barry, January 16, 1799, *QWD* 2: 241-242; Benjamin Stoddert to Thomas Truxtun, January 16, 1799, *QWD* 2:243.

¹²²DeConde, 136.

Domingue through the diplomacy of General Thomas Maitland at the end of the occupation. The Secret Convention between Maitland and Louverture was envied by the Americans, who worked their way into the equation when American diplomat Rufus King pressed the issue of Saint-Domingue's questionable independence on the British. The British decided to let the Americans in on the deal.¹²³

Maitland, who would become the most important British figure in the American story of relations with Louverture's Saint-Domingue, despised much of the American point of view, which he considered to be driven entirely by a thirst for profit.¹²⁴ British policy, he wrote, aimed “to protect, theirs to destroy, the present Colonial system...Our views only go to a partial, theirs to a complete opening of the Saint Domingo Market.”¹²⁵ Even with this opinion, Maitland helped secure the arrangement among the United States, Great Britain and Saint-Domingue in April 1799 in the American capital. Part of the fear of the British was that the Americans would reach an agreement with Louverture that excluded them.¹²⁶

An accord made in late April between the United States and Britain concerning Saint-Domingue, nearly five months after Bunel's visit to Philadelphia, directed the Dominguan trade to run between a limited number of open ports with a highly regulated system of passports.¹²⁷

Edward Stevens, named American consul general to Saint-Domingue, began

123DeConde, 136-138.

124Ibid., 139.

125Ibid., 138.

126Ibid., 138.

127Ibid., 139.

working on the specific regulations of a trade agreement with Louverture as soon as he landed in April 1799. From Cap Français, Stevens carried out both a written correspondence and a series of diplomatic face-to-face meetings with Louverture and his staff. While the official agent of the French executive directory, Philippe-Rose Roume, also resided in Cap Français, it seems that Stevens immediately rejected the agent in favor of the powerful Louverture. Meetings between the American consul and Louverture were cordial, and centered around the American explaining what he called the “friendly disposition of the American Government towards [Saint-Domingue], and the Conditions on which it was desirous of renewing the commercial intercourse between the two Countries.”¹²⁸ Stevens also presented Louverture with a shipment of American provisions.

The dearth of foreign goods in Dominguan markets had long distressed the colony, so the arrival of Stevens with immediate material aid in Cap Français was especially satisfying. Stevens wrote that Louverture was ecstatic that Adams had permitted a supply of goods, probably dry goods and flour among other items, to ship along with Stevens aboard the *Kingston*.¹²⁹ These goods were probably more a symbol of the high potential for American-Dominguan relations in the future than a true relief for the starving colony and its bare markets, but either way they greatly pleased Louverture.

The future of American trade with Saint-Domingue depended on these meetings, as Stevens would only advise the president to open trade with the colony if certain conditions were reached with Louverture. Among these conditions was Louverture's

¹²⁸Edward Stevens to Timothy Pickering, May 3, 1799, “Letters of Toussaint Louverture and of Edward Stevens, 1798-1800,” *American Historical Review* 16 (October 1910), 67.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*

promise to destroy Dominguan privateering, an American demand that rose to the forefront of the early discussions with Louverture. Some of the other conditions of the agreements reached between the consul and governor general were that commissions for privateers would no longer be issued, and that those already granted would be declared illegal. In Cap Français, all French merchant vessels with arms on board for their defense were required to ditch their guns on the docks.¹³⁰

In May, Stevens remarked that only at Môle Saint-Nicholas were there any vessels taken as lawful prizes (there were four, according to Stevens), but privateering had probably been hurt as much by American and British naval activity in the Caribbean in the past few years than by any of Louverture's efforts. Still, the colonial government had called in all Dominguan privateers to end their careers by revoking their letters of marque, or commissions. Besides the stated end of Dominguan privateering, merchant vessels and armed ships of the United States sailed with the permission of Louverture to dock in any Dominguan port, such that the Adams administration felt comfortable allowing.¹³¹

It is doubtful the extent to which the American embargo on trading with France and her possessions discouraged American merchants from trading with Saint-Domingue. Of course, the American navy actively pursued those American vessels conspiring in an illegal trade, but this could only do so much. Stevens, again, wrote to Secretary Pickering about the necessity of renewing commercial relations because of this very public flouting

¹³⁰Ibid., 68-69.

¹³¹Ibid., 69-70.

of American law:

the Flag of the United States is seen as frequently in every part of [Saint-Domingue], as it was before the prohibiting Act was passed...Several Mercantile Houses in America, regardless of the interests of their country, have carried on a clandestine Trade with St. Domingo. My arrival has disconcerted them, and put a stop, to one of the most iniquitous attempts to frustrate the intentions of the American government, that perhaps was ever formed.¹³²

Perhaps of greater importance than just discouraging illegal contact between Americans and Louverture, was the potential situation of Americans trading with Louverture's rival, André Rigaud. If Americans had continued to trade with the colonial ports without much change, they probably had supplied Rigaud with foods, dry goods and weapons.

American policy had already made a decision to support Louverture, and not Rigaud; any material support for Rigaud that could be traced to Americans was anathema to Stevens, Pickering and Adams.

Louverture himself told Stevens that he did not want American ships trading with ports in the south of the colony that were under Rigaud's control.¹³³ Rigaud remained formally a subordinate of General Louverture, but he controlled and consolidated power within the south, where he directed an army of well-equipped troops. The Americans and British viewed Rigaud as a man with closer ties to France than Louverture, and thus someone more dangerous to the tranquility of the slave societies of the Caribbean and Americas. One of the most damaging rumors to the relative station of Rigaud in the mind of Stevens involved the idea that Rigaud had responded to French calls for an invasion of Jamaica. Stevens wrote to General Maitland from Gonaïves, claiming that Rigaud “has

¹³²Ibid., 71-72.

¹³³Ibid., 71.

sent down a white Emissary to excite the Negroes in Jamaica to revolt, and be ready to join him at his Arrival.”¹³⁴ Rigaud was thought to be courting the confidence of the Directory in France by actively supporting their plan, perhaps in order to gain the official approval of his rule in the face of Louverture.

The suspicion of Stevens that Rigaud was conspiring to bring revolution to Jamaica reflects the sometimes paranoid-style of diplomacy between Atlantic actors, as well as the immense influence the revolution in Saint-Domingue had in the Americas during the 1790s. The battles on the plains and in the mountains of Saint-Domingue between ex-slaves and colonial forces—battles where the lines were seldom drawn clearly—gripped much of the public's imagination, especially in Jamaica and in the American South. Slaveholders and their representatives in government feared the spread of the revolutionary spirit, and of revolutionary persons, to their slave societies. Late in 1799, the suspicion of Edward Stevens of French-directed revolutionary mischief in the Caribbean, based most likely on rumor when concerning Rigaud, seems to have been at least partially confirmed. Isaac Sasportas, a Jewish man, conspired to raise a slave rebellion in Jamaica, where he was arrested based upon the testimony of Toussaint Louverture.¹³⁵

By the spring of 1799, the Americans began preparing for renewed commercial

¹³⁴Edward Stevens to Thomas Maitland, May 23, 1799, “Letters of Toussaint Louverture and of Edward Stevens, 1798-1800,” *American Historical Review* 16 (October 1910), 73.

¹³⁵Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 225. See also, Edward Stevens to Timothy Pickering, September 30, 1799, “Letters of Toussaint Louverture and of Edward Stevens, 1798-1800,” *American Historical Review* 16 (October 1910), 82-85.

relations with the colony. The U.S. navy was to play a major role in securing the type of trading relationship the United States wanted. Part of this preparation included arranging for the necessary U.S. bureaucratic structure to support a highly regulated trade. For instance, Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Stoddert appointed Nathan Levy in late March to be a naval agent at Cap Français, with responsibilities of resupplying American war ships with food, provisions and weapons when necessary.¹³⁶ Another element of preparation involved making sure the U.S. navy was receptive to Dominguan merchant vessels, which would have American-protected freedom to conduct trade within their own colonial ports. But only those merchant vessels with the correct passport on board would be respected by the US navy. From the beginning, the correct passport was almost always the one with the signature of Edward Stevens. Sailing with a Stevens-issued passport in May, the schooner *Boulineuse*, captained by Julien Gingen, was one of many Dominguan ships with crews hoping for an “unmolested” voyage.¹³⁷

In the meantime, diplomatic meetings among Louverture, Maitland and Stevens continued in Saint-Domingue. Maitland had arrived in the colony in May after tense negotiations with Pickering in Philadelphia. If Louverture had a favorable view of Stevens and the Americans, his view of Maitland and the British was almost the complete opposite. The British had betrayed Louverture when they published the Secret Convention he had made with Maitland before the British pull out in 1798, an action which Louverture's rivals called an illustration of his kowtowing to British interests and

¹³⁶Benjamin Stoddert to Nathan Levy, March 30, 1799, *QWD* 2: 533.

¹³⁷Letter or Passport from Edward Stevens to Commanders of U.S. Ships and Armed Vessels, May 12, 1799, *QWD* 3: 174-175.

an attack on the freedom of Dominguan former slaves. After all, a year earlier the British had evacuated Saint-Domingue after bringing years of imperial warfare and instability to the colony. Still, Louverture agreed to terms with the British and Americans, with Stevens taking the lead in these meetings.¹³⁸

A series of conventions were reached between the three parties in the spring. The first of the conventions between Louverture and the British, this time also including the United States, was concluded on May 22, 1799, and stipulated that Louverture would not violate British or American possessions in the Americas.¹³⁹ This meant that Louverture promised to restrict privateering the best he could and to respect American and British slave societies in the Atlantic world. A second convention, reached three weeks later, finalized the conditions, and included a portion that attempted to disguise any appearance of “disloyalty” towards France by Louverture.¹⁴⁰

By Presidential Proclamation on June 26, 1799, President John Adams lifted the prohibition of American trade with Saint-Domingue, while providing the terms for the protection of American merchant ships in the area.¹⁴¹ This arrangement had been a work in progress, with diplomatic correspondence and meetings on the issue of Saint-Domingue going back at least to late 1798.

The executive order had four separate sections outlining the conditions of

138DeConde, 206-208.

139Ibid., 207.

140Ibid., 207-208.

14132 “U.S. Proclamation Regarding Commerce with St. Domingo”, June 26, 1799, http://thelouvertureproject.org/index.php?title=Proclamation_Regarding_Commerce_with_Saint-Domingue (accessed January 20, 2012).

American trade and contact with Saint-Domingue. The first section permitted American ships to enter the ports of Cap Français and Port-au-Prince for the purpose of trade beginning on August 1, 1799. The following section noted that these ships could *only* enter the two ports explicitly named in the document. Next, the proclamation expressed that American merchants could only move freely from the two aforementioned ports to the rest of Saint-Domingue with the written permission of the government of the island—meaning Louverture. The proclamation ended with a warning to all captains breaking the terms of this order: that they were at the mercy of privateers.

With the signature of President John Adams and a witness, Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, the proclamation formally acknowledged the semi-independence of Toussaint Louverture, while protecting established and promoting new American commercial interests on the island. The Caribbean had become a scene of naval warfare between the United States and France, with French marauders seizing American merchant ships, and American naval ships attacking French marauders and naval ships alike. American merchant ships depended on the support of Louverture in Saint-Domingue to provide safe passage in these dangerous waters.

President Adams did not treat this Executive Proclamation as a trivial matter, nor did he believe it to be an inevitability. Instead, the Saint-Domingue arrangement represented a major outcome based upon compromise, as diplomatic and trade agreements often are, between three parties: Saint-Domingue, as led by General Louverture, the United States and Great Britain. The major historical actors in this

diplomatic triangle each retained different concerns—political, economic and social—during the negotiations. For Louverture, a trading relationship was of the utmost importance for maintaining control of Saint-Domingue and for promoting the continued freedom for the ex-slaves of the colony; the British sought another market for their goods, as well as the goal of maintaining relative harmony among their slave societies in the Caribbean. For British Jamaica, the example of revolutionary Saint-Domingue remained a dangerous one. The Adams administration had similar aspirations and goals as the British concerning Saint-Domingue, but it approached the situation with more confidence in Louverture than the British, as well as more willingness to act on behalf of the governor general.

III. War with Rigaud

A significant portion of the course of legal American-Dominguan trade during the Quasi-War came while Louverture battled André Rigaud. The growing conflict between the two was remarked upon by Edward Stevens, still in the first weeks of his appointment as consul general, when he discussed the fact that ports under Rigaud's control were unlikely to respond to Louverture's call for the release of captured American vessels. Stevens wrote Pickering that “tho' [Rigaud] is subordinate in command to the General in Chief, yet the latter will not answer for any vessels that go to *his* Ports.”¹⁴²

¹⁴²Edward Stevens to Timothy Pickering, May 3, 1799, “Letters of Toussaint Louverture and of Edward Stevens, 1798-1800,” *American Historical Review* 16 (October 1910), 71.

By June 24, 1799, Stevens was again writing Pickering on the subject of Rigaud, this time recounting that his “Apprehensions of an immediate Rupture between the rival Chiefs of this Colony have been realised.”¹⁴³ A civil war had begun when the “well fed, well clothed, and well paid” army of Rigaud attacked and took over two districts formerly under the control of Louverture. Stevens realized there were several implications of the war for the course of American policy. First, trade would inevitably be influenced, as warfare meant the continued interruption of colonial agricultural production. Sugar plantations needed manpower to succeed, and continued war meant a drain on the labor force. Second, Stevens notified Pickering of his opinion that American warships might be needed to cut off Rigaud's sources of guns and food. Lastly, there was a great worry that Louverture could actually lose the war against Rigaud; if this happened, Stevens predicted “all the Arrangements [the Americans] have made respecting Commerce must fall to the ground. The most solemn Treaty would have little Weight with a Man of Rigaud's capricious and tyrannical Temper.” All of these considerations meant an even greater role for the United States in Saint-Domingue.

The explosion of war came at a time when the United States readied itself for a commercial burst of activity in the colony. Disrupting French privateering around Saint-Domingue was a priority for the U.S. Navy, even with Louverture's promise to demolish Dominguan privateering. Navy secretary Stoddert worried about the “flocking” numbers of merchant vessels to the colony on and after August 1, and cautioned his naval officers

¹⁴³Edward Stevens to Timothy Pickering, June 24, 1799, “Letters of Toussaint Louverture and of Edward Stevens, 1798-1800.” *American Historical Review* 16 (October 1910), 76.

to “protect them, by all the means in [their] power.”¹⁴⁴ This job of protecting American commerce to Saint-Domingue was made easier by the establishment of American relations with the colony: American captains had safe harbors to replenish their water, food and ammunition supplies, and strong links to American diplomats with connections to those at the top of the Dominguan power structure.

Conclusion

One important question for historians is whether or not Toussaint Louverture was intentionally pushing Saint-Domingue toward independence. Was independence a goal of his, or did he—as he said he did—want Saint-Domingue to remain a French colony? This question was also very important for many of the American and British politicians and diplomats involved with the subject of Dominguan relations.

There were many signs that Louverture wished to declare independence. He negotiated and treated with foreign nations, including Great Britain and the United States, without the permission of France, and he developed an entire diplomatic sensibility that promoted international trade. Of course, Americans involved in this triangle of relations believed Louverture was moving Saint-Domingue toward independence. That Louverture even had his own set of international policies, separate from the rules and conditions developed by the French, stands as convincing evidence for most historians that Louverture meant to establish formal independence in the coming days in Saint-Domingue. But there is no formal “Declaration of Independence” for Louverture. While

¹⁴⁴Benjamin Stoddert to Captain George Little, July 2, 1799, *QWD* 3: 452.

historians are not exactly sure the extent to which Louverture's efforts to build a navy during 1799 and 1800 are representative of an overall goal of independence, this example illustrates the direction that Louverture's rule took after the initial trade agreements with the United States and Great Britain.

Louverture had much to gain from trade with other Atlantic powers. His colony had become isolated in the Caribbean, without trading partners to exchange Dominguan produce for important goods, including guns and ammunition. Whether Louverture imagined Saint-Domingue remaining a colony or becoming an independent republic, his actions reveal many of his goals: he wanted a reinvigorated plantation-based economy in order to spur foreign trade; he needed foreign guns to fight domestic battles; he wanted personal power at the expense of his main rival, André Rigaud.

The war between Louverture and Rigaud marked another instance of bloody, colonial infighting, and the civil war changed the dynamic of American policy toward Louverture. For the Americans involved, the formal diplomacy of 1799 was the easy part; deciding policy in action was more difficult



Fig. 3. Toussaint Louverture and General Thomas Maitland. Reprinted from Stephen Alexis, *Black Liberator: The Life of Toussaint Louverture* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 96.

Chapter 3: American Policy during the War of the South

Introduction

During the civil war lasting from mid-1799 to October 1800, called the War of Knives or War of the South, Toussaint Louverture greatly needed weapons, ammunition, provisions and other dry goods to defeat André Rigaud. His army was ragged compared to the army of Rigaud—who himself relied upon the uninterrupted and illegal trade to his ports from merchants of British Jamaica and the United States.¹⁴⁵ During the diplomatic negotiations of 1798 and early 1799, Louverture had successfully courted two potential trading partners, but both of them had retained definite concerns over their mingling with the revolutionary elements of Saint-Domingue. The British, fresh off their defeat in the colony at the hands of the same person they now met as a potential ally, and concerned with their own slave colonies in the Caribbean, were reluctant to supply and support Louverture. However, the Adams administration proved to be true allies in this wartime. But even they still held certain reservations.

On September 12, 1799, US naval agent and Boston merchant Stephen Higginson received word from secretary of state Timothy Pickering, who asked him for assistance in supplying Louverture with desperately needed weapons.¹⁴⁶ Pickering had been moved to

¹⁴⁵Edward Stevens to Timothy Pickering, June 24, 1799, “Letters of Toussaint Louverture and of Edward Stevens, 1798-1800.” *American Historical Review* 16 (October 1910), 76.

¹⁴⁶Stephen Higginson to Timothy Pickering, September 20, 1799, “Letters of Stephen Higginson,” *Annual*

act based on correspondence with the very worried US consul general to Saint-Domingue, Edward Stevens: Stevens wrote Pickering that at the outset of the civil war it seemed that Rigaud might rout Louverture and that the only hope for the general was the material support of the Americans and British.¹⁴⁷ The prominent Boston Federalist, Higginson, who was held in esteem by the highest leaders in the party, just happened to have a load of European muskets available. He wrote his friend Pickering back: "I think that, with the aid of the *Herald*, and the permission of the Secretary of the navy, I can arrange to furnish Touissaint with some arms, lead and flints."¹⁴⁸ However, Stoddert, the secretary of the navy, never consented to the deal and it is unclear whether Louverture ever received these guns.¹⁴⁹ But this deal suggests other instances of arms dealing between these two parties.

Notwithstanding the Higginson incident, American guns found their way to Louverture, whose military also gained the formal support of the US navy. Captain Christopher R. Perry of the U.S.S. *General Greene* went beyond the simple orders that had sent him to the city of Jacmel, where he distinguished himself in aiding Louverture. These and many other events in the brief course of American involvement in Saint-Domingue during the Quasi-War stand in stark relief to the position of the British, who seemed to take a position hostile to both Louverture and Rigaud. Differences in opinion

Report of the American Historical Association, 1896, 825-827.

147Michael A. Palmer, *Stoddert's War: Naval Operations during the Quasi-War with France, 1798-1801* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 158-159.

148Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Life and Times of Stephen Higginson* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1907), 187-188; Palmer, 158; Stephen Higginson to Timothy Pickering, September 20, 1799, "Letters of Stephen Higginson," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, 1896, 825.

149Palmer, 159, 272-273.

on colonial policy with the Adams administration, which Maitland had commented on during his earlier negotiations, fermented a discernible rift in policy and action between the British and Americans involved in Saint-Domingue. British obstructionism in Saint-Domingue became a frustrating reality for Louverture and the Americans, who found ways to work around their ostensible partner in trade and diplomacy.

I. Louverture's Navy

When Louverture made his request to Edward Stevens for guns and ammunition, he inevitably realized that this could only form one part of his plan to defeat Rigaud. With fully-equipped soldiers, the army of Louverture—some 55,000 men in October 1799—would still face an equally well-armed and possibly better trained and more experienced force.¹⁵⁰ As an experienced military tactician and leader, Louverture probably especially dreaded the coming battles with Rigaud, as the War of Knives meant battling a rival dug deep into his stronghold in the south, where he had access to fresh supplies from the sea.

Therefore, the other portion of Louverture's plan to eliminate the rebellious army of Rigaud involved cutting off Rigaud's seaborne supplies. Both the British and American navies performed in Louverture's service, with the US navy playing a more sizable and dedicated role. While Louverture enlisted the aid of these two foreign navies, he could never have the amount of control over strategy, tactics and force that he desired. This

¹⁵⁰Edward Stevens to Timothy Pickering, October 26, 1799, "Letters of Toussaint Louverture and of Edward Stevens, 1798-1800." *American Historical Review* 16 (October 1910), 85.

meant that Louverture wanted and needed his own navy, and he would go about trying to create one—which sometimes meant going behind the back of the British and Americans.

Even before Adams's executive proclamation in June 1799, those American naval forces stationed near Saint-Domingue faced the tricky issue of encountering the many different kinds of Dominguan vessels and discerning which ones were threats and which ones were harmless. In principle, US warships had come to Saint-Domingue and the greater Caribbean to deter French privateers and ships-of-war from preying on American commercial vessels. However, at sea it was often difficult to distinguish between French marauders and harmless French merchants. As consul general, one of the primary duties of Stevens was to run the passport system for ships coming and going from the ports of Saint-Domingue. In one Dominguan vessel's passport of May 12, 1799, Stevens wrote: "having evinced a sincere desire to protect American vessels...it appears to me an Act of Strict Justice, that the United States should pay an equal Degree of Respect and Attention to the Merchant Vessels of this Colony." With this salutation, the Dominguan schooner *Boulineuse* could sail out of Cap Français with a kind of protection against potentially troublesome US naval ships.¹⁵¹ But the passport system did not always function smoothly.

During the diplomacy of 1799, Louverture and Maitland had determined that it was necessary for Louverture to operate a selected number of armed vessels for the

¹⁵¹Edward Stevens to Commanders of U.S. Ships of War and Armed Vessels, May 12, 1799, U.S. Department of Navy, *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1934-37), 3: 174-175. Because of their frequency, references to *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France* will be abbreviated. For example: "QWD 1:2," denoting the citation came from page 2 of volume 1.

protection of the Dominguan coastal trade and to eliminate Rigaud's naval force, especially his so-called “barges.” Stevens wrote to Philadelphia and received the consent of Pickering and Adams to this plan: Louverture's naval vessels needed a passport with the signature of Louverture, Stevens and a British agent. Moreover, these licensed ships could only travel “5 leagues” from the shore of Saint-Domingue. However, those initial ships-of-war proved to be a weak force against the barges of Rigaud, which had “increased both in size and number.”¹⁵²

As a response, all parties involved agreed that larger vessels were needed, but these converted merchant ships received passports with shorter expiration dates. Rigaud's ships waxed and waned in power and influence throughout 1799, and by October the combined forces of Louverture and the British and American navies had reduced the threat to something more manageable. The larger ships of Louverture's navy were dismissed and lost their passports to operate as armed vessels, where many returned to port to operate as merchant vessels once again. Edward Stevens realized that careful diplomacy was necessary when dealing with Louverture's ships, and often reminded US naval ships of the service Louverture's navy had rendered American commerce. In one case he advised a naval officer that “it might be politick to let them pass unmolested, particularly as they cannot cruise any longer...This however must be left to your own descission.”¹⁵³

Louverture often relied upon the power of Stevens in his struggle to gain power

¹⁵²Edward Stevens to Christopher R. Perry, October 11, 1799, *QWD* 4: 279-280.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, 279-280.

and autonomy in Saint-Domingue and the Caribbean. Without Stevens's passports, Louverture's ships had no chance against the larger navies surrounding the colony that often cruised with the intent of intercepting and capturing French vessels as prizes, and vessels out of Saint-Domingue still counted as French ships. Sometimes even when holding the necessary paperwork, Dominguan ships were captured by American and British naval vessels. Captain George Little of the frigate U.S.S. *Boston* seized one such Dominguan schooner one league off the coast of Jérémie in November 1799, when his officers "[were] not satisfied that it is really your [Stevens's] protection." Besides doubting the passport's authenticity, Little also feared British ships near Jérémie would invariably catch the schooner and send her all the way to Jamaica. Under the protection of Little, the schooner would only be sent to Cap Français, where Stevens could determine for himself whether the ship was a lawful prize. The alternative of British capture seemed far worse—and both Stevens and Louverture would have agreed.¹⁵⁴

While Stevens promoted more open policies, other Americans worried over the vessels under Louverture's control, many of which formerly operated as privateering boats. Secretary Benjamin Stoddert even deemed it unnecessary "for Touissant to continue to employ such Vessels especially as we shall have enough in that quarter to protect our commerce, & as it is understood to be contrary to our Arrangements with him that he should employ, or even give Asylum to French Privateers."¹⁵⁵ Still, Stoddert put forward the distinctly American position in Saint-Domingue by reminding his naval

¹⁵⁴George Little to Edward Stevens, November 12, 1799, *QWD* 4: 382.

¹⁵⁵Benjamin Stoddert to Silas Talbot, November 14, 1799, *QWD* 4: 391-392.

captain of the need to balance respect for Louverture for his diligence in promoting American commerce with fear for French armed vessels.

The long paper trail of passports created much confusion for American ships-of-war cruising off Saint-Domingue. Again, Captain Little and the *Boston* encountered problems with colonial vessels. On December 1 they met *Flying Fish*, a merchant vessel from Jérémie, which had been attacked by Rigaud's barges on its way to the colony from St. Thomas. The ship, which was loaded with flour, beef and other dry goods, along with a crew of Frenchmen, Americans and Portuguese, showed Danish colors. Little wrote to Stevens asking him to advise him of whether or not the ship would be condemned and turned into a prize if sent into Cap Français. In an even more perplexing moment, the *Boston* met the French national ship *La Diligente*, which carried Stevens's passport. Little let the ship pass, but again wrote Stevens on the issue. What must have made little sense to Captain Little was that this French corvette was not Dominguan but from the French homeland, and had probably previously served as an enemy of American shipping and commerce.¹⁵⁶

As compiled by Captain Christopher R. Perry, Louverture's navy included some thirteen vessels, including *La Diligente* or *Diligent*, captained by one Dubois, and mounting eighteen six pound guns. *Diligent*, along with the *Élan*, with a crew of 120 men and the *Spartiate* or *Egyptian* of 135 men, made up the largest ships of a fleet composed mainly of small, quick vessels. Louverture's modest sea forces included the gun boat *Dragon*, with 14 men and one eight pound gun, and the *Unique* of 50 men, one eighteen

¹⁵⁶George Little to Edward Stevens, December 3, 1799, *QWD* 4: 467.

pound gun and two three pounders—overall a ship more representative of Louverture's navy.¹⁵⁷

Edward Stevens felt the strain of working within a revolutionary colony and dealing with a governor general in Louverture ruling in a continuous state of war. His decision to grant *La Diligente* a passport came because he believed he had no other choice in the matter at that given time. As a band of insurgents led by the “Traitor Gallard” attacked Jean Rabel, Stevens worried that Môle Saint-Nicholas and other important parts of the colony were at stake as well during the civil war; while he denied a request from, of all people, the French Agent of the Executive Directory to use American ships to convoy Dominguan troops to fight Gallard, Stevens decided upon something that seemed to resemble the lesser of two evils. He allowed *La Diligent* to pass with his passport. Later, Stevens wrote the questioning Captain George Little in response:

In a revolutionary Country like the present, Circumstances are continually rising, which require to be acted upon without loss of Time, & I have it not always in my power to do what I wish. Until some more solid and permanent system System of Administration is established, I shall often be forced to do what I do not approve, and which, for want of knowing all the Circumstances that have actuated me, may appear to others highly improper.¹⁵⁸

While Stevens responded to Little specifically regarding the *La Diligente* issue, others may have seen allowing Louverture any autonomy in the colony at all as something “highly improper.” For Stevens, however, Louverture was someone he trusted and with him he created three rules for Louverture's navy: first, only those vessels needed to protect the coastal trade and fight against Rigaud in the south were needed; second,

¹⁵⁷List of General Toussaint's force by sea, December 1, 1799, *QWD* 4: 468-469.

¹⁵⁸Edward Stevens to George Little, December 4, 1799, *QWD* 4: 487-489.

Louverture was the solely responsible party for the actions of the ships ostensibly in his name; third, Louverture's merchant ships could pass unmolested as long as they carried “necessary passports.”¹⁵⁹ These rules were created to promote Louverture's and American interests during this civil war, but they could only bring an end to the war with Rigaud and protect American and Dominguan commerce if the British played their part, too.

II. British Obstructions

Stevens and the US navy were generally friendly and cooperative with Louverture, but the British acted in the opposite way. In May of 1799, Maitland maintained a correspondence with Stevens concerning the details of the deal jointly worked out with Louverture. The British worried continually over the issue of Louverture's naval vessels, and Maitland, when going over the specifics of how Louverture would supply his troops, advised Stevens that Louverture should have no armed vessels assist in the battle against Rigaud, and no caboteurs or coastal ships either—only the official “Bateaux D'Etat.”¹⁶⁰ Stevens seemed to have disregarded Maitland's objections to an armed naval force under Louverture's command and offered these ships passports anyway, but Maitland and the British never diminished in their hostility to these vessels.

In addition to prohibiting the use of armed vessels, the British also worked to restrict Louverture from receiving arms directly from the United States. At times, these

¹⁵⁹Edward Stevens to Silas Talbot, December 17, 1799, *QWD* 4: 547-548.

¹⁶⁰Thomas Maitland to Edward Stevens, May 23, 1799, *QWD* 3: 236-237.

efforts succeeded. Part of the falling through of the Higginson-Louverture arms deal resulted from Secretary Stoddert's recognition that the British strongly opposed arming Louverture. "It is impossible," he wrote, "for the Government to have directly or indirectly any Agency in the Shipment of Arms for the supply of Toussant...Our Arrangements with the British on the subject of the trade of that island, if there were not more powerful reasons absolutely forbid it."¹⁶¹ What exactly those other "more powerful reasons" were is ambiguous; however, that the British found the subject of directly or indirectly supplying Louverture reprehensible and dangerous seems to be clear.

British naval commanders operated with orders and demands from their superiors that conflicted with those followed by American vessels off the Saint-Domingue station. Even the orders from British officials of the navy and government conflicted with one another. By November 1799, British cruisers, "with orders from admiral Parker to take all vessels that wear a french Flag," sailed around the colony with intentions of fighting and capturing those French ships "even should they have yours and Gen. Maitlands passport on board."¹⁶² Maitland, Stevens and Louverture had worked out a deal, but already the British felt threatened by the possible consequences of that deal. The commercial arrangement meant more autonomy for Louverture, but many British leaders quivered at this prospect: it seems the British wanted all the rewards for themselves that came from a freer trade with the colony but no benefits for Louverture and Saint-Domingue.

In the autumn of 1799, the Dominguan caboteurs, coastal or "coasting" vessels,

¹⁶¹Stoddert to Stephen Higginson & Company, September 27, 1799, *QWD* 4: 235.

¹⁶²George Little to Edward Stevens, November 20, 1799, *QWD* 4: 430-431.

paid a heavy price at the hands of only a few British cruisers, which “made great depredations” on these defenseless ships. US Captain George Little wrote to Stevens that these ships had “taken a number and plundered every one they have met.” Again, Little wished to know exactly what the particulars of the diplomatic arrangements were concerning the many different types of French vessels in Dominguan waters.¹⁶³ Even without the actions of the British, the American captain puzzled over the troubling ambiguity of the maritime situation in Saint-Domingue.

The muddled British antagonism towards Louverture and Dominguan in 1799 does not seem to have been totally unprovoked. Nor can it be understated that England had been at war with France since 1793. Stoddert wrote to President John Adams on the state of trade in Saint-Domingue in August 1799:

The object of Our arrangement with Toussant was to come in for a share with the British, of the Trade of St. Domingo – The British seem intirely excluded – & indeed our own Vessels from British Islands are denied admittance – Ships belonging to the French, which were not to be suffered to enter the Ports, now sail under the protection of our Consul. I wish it may not turn out that we are no match for the French in the kind of game that seems now playing at St. Domingo.¹⁶⁴

Louverture had disapproved strongly of the decision of the British to publish the supposedly secret treaty made with Maitland, which negotiated the complete British withdrawal from the island.¹⁶⁵

The published treaty meant renewed pressure on Louverture from both the French

¹⁶³Ibid.

¹⁶⁴Benjamin Stoddert to John Adams, August 23, 1799, *QWD* 4: 114-115.

¹⁶⁵Alexander DeConde, *The Quasi-War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France 1797-1801* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 207; Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 225-226.

government and those forces in the colony vying against him. While nominally a French colony, Saint-Domingue had been pulling away from the mother country in many ways since the 1791 revolution began. The fires on the northern plain seemed to spell the inevitable end of French dominance over Saint-Domingue, yet colonial influence from Paris ebbed and flowed throughout the 1790s. The news that Louverture had negotiated with Britain independently served as a clarion call to France of Louverture's colonial ambitions. A London newspaper which carried the story of the secret treaty put the message bluntly: "With this treaty, the independence of this important island has, in fact, been recognized and guaranteed against any efforts the French might make to recover it."¹⁶⁶

The secret treaty with Maitland, along with all of Louverture's negotiations with the British, served as kindling for Rigaud and other colonial rivals. Eager to gain the support of the great numbers of cultivators—those former slaves now working for the state, nominally under Louverture—Rigaud deemed Louverture a man who would sell the Domingians to the British as slaves.¹⁶⁷ Rigaud had brought up the forever terrifying and therefore motivating issue of the possible return of slavery. The deliberations with the British during 1799 further discredited Louverture in Rigaud's eyes, as Maitland and his flagship the *Camilla* arrived in Saint-Domingue and British officers stepped on land to negotiate.¹⁶⁸ Stevens had written to Pickering on the issue, concerned with the effect of

¹⁶⁶Dubois, 225.

¹⁶⁷Edward Stevens to Timothy Pickering, June 24, 1799, "Letters of Toussaint Louverture and of Edward Stevens, 1798-1800." *American Historical Review* 16 (October 1910), 79.

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

Rigaud's publishing of a declaration against Louverture, and noting that “Mutiny, Desertion and Treachery were the immediate Effects of Rigaud's Intrigues and Toussaint's unsuspecting Conduct.”¹⁶⁹

Louverture responded immediately and distanced himself from the British in order to remain credible to concerned Dominguans. Stevens had to negotiate much of the trade treaty without the help of Maitland, whom Louverture did not wish to treat. When the time came Louverture denied the admittance of a British agent to Saint-Domingue. Along with American ones, Stevens would also have to work on behalf of British interests—a tough diplomatic situation. “My efforts,” Stevens remarked, “in favour of the british Interests will become more difficult, and my Situation be rendered more unpleasant.”¹⁷⁰

British obstructionism reached its zenith during an incident in November 1799, when six of Louverture's armed vessels, loaded with ammunition and other military equipment, were captured by the British frigate *Solebay*.¹⁷¹ These ships left Port-au-Prince with passports from a British agent, along with the understanding sent by letter from Louverture to British naval high command and a British Jamaican official that the destination of these ships was Jacmel—and not Jamaica. Whether relevant fears over the spread of revolt to Jamaica or simply the lust for prizes or something else inspired *Solebay*, the supplies and the support of the ships never reached Jacmel in the south,

169Ibid.

170DeConde, 207; Edward Stevens to Timothy Pickering, June 24, 1799, “Letters of Toussaint Louverture and of Edward Stevens, 1798-1800.” *American Historical Review* 16 (October 1910), 79.

171Edward Stevens to Timothy Pickering, January 16, 1800, “Letters of Toussaint Louverture and of Edward Stevens, 1798-1800.” *American Historical Review* 16 (October 1910), 91.

where battle with Rigaud continued. *Solebay* guided the ships to port in Jamaica.

Louverture, of course, was “chagrened,” and Stevens commented about the incredible damage done to Louverture's campaign against Rigaud, along with his fears that the incident might “destroy all commercial Intercourse between Jamaica and this Colony.”¹⁷² The British attitude toward Louverture's navy, and their actions, forced Stevens to reconsider the aims and goals of the British in general with regard to the entire state of affairs in Saint-Domingue. Received on March 18, 1800, two months after it was sent, Stevens's letter to Pickering included a questioning of British actions: “I am loth to impute the Capture of this Squadron to the cruel Policy, on the Part of the English, of continueing the Contest between Genl. Toussaint and Rigaud, and of preventing *either* from gaining the Ascendency, that, by this means, both may be ultimately weakened.”¹⁷³

Did the British want Louverture to triumph against Rigaud? Did they want endless civil war? Both of these questions demonstrate Stevens's own goals, and thus the representative goals of the United States, which were to aid Louverture against Rigaud in order to promote American foreign commerce.

III. US Navy at Jacmel

A young Oliver Hazard Perry, then aged 14, served alongside his father Christopher on board the U.S.S. *General Greene*. Clearly excited, Oliver Perry, who would go on to distinguish himself during the War of 1812, wrote to his mother in

¹⁷²Ibid., 92.

¹⁷³Ibid., 92.

December 1799 after having assisted the U.S.S. *Boston* in capturing the *Flying Fish*: “I write this by the Brig *Flying Fish*...Prize to the *General Greene* and *Boston*...We have ordered her for Boston, she is worth about \$80,000.”¹⁷⁴ The young, future captain, undoubtedly bolstered by the enthusiasm of a crew who stood a chance at receiving some of that \$80,000 in prize money, closed the hopeful letter by remarking that “we are all in perfect health on board, not having a single man sick.”¹⁷⁵ This streak of good luck for the *General Greene* was not over. And as Captain Perry received orders to sail to Jacmel in the south, he could not have presaged the quality of aid he would give to Louverture—nor the spoils he would receive in return from the governor general.

While British ships harassed and attempted to suffocate the war effort of Louverture, the US Navy directly supported him in one of the first outright foreign interventions by the young American republic. The *General Greene* sailed with 220 men and four 12-pound and eight 9-pound guns, a frigate built for speed, agility and the other benefits that come with smaller and lighter vessels.¹⁷⁶ But it was the power of the ship's guns that contributed the most to Louverture's cause in the War of the South.

A month after young Oliver Perry had written to his mother, the *General Greene* received orders from Captain Silas Talbot to commence a cruise around the whole island of Hispaniola.¹⁷⁷ This diverse set of commands included orders of “paying more particular attention to the South side of the Island,” “Convoying the American trade, too,”

174Oliver Hazard Perry to Mrs. Christopher R. Perry, December 15, 1799, Oliver Hazard Perry Papers, Manuscript Division, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

175Ibid.

176Palmer, 118.

177Silas Talbot to Christopher Perry, January 18, 1800, *QWD* 5: 94.

and intercepting American ships trading with Rigaud's ports, located primarily in the south. In general, the orders received by Perry were simply to promote American commercial interests in the colony. However, exactly how those interests were to be promoted were questions that Perry would have to figure out himself.

By February 1800 it became evident that privateering's harm to American shipping had increased on the southern end of Saint-Domingue.¹⁷⁸ Privateering, along with “a considerable clandestine Trade...carried on between St. Thomas, & Jackmel,” were believed to be prolonging the civil war.¹⁷⁹ Louverture needed assistance from the US navy if his soldiers were to capture the important port of Jacmel—a capture that was key to winning the war against Rigaud.

When the *General Greene* reached the southern end of the colony, near Jacmel, Louverture immediately wrote to Perry with a request “to come so near the Bay of Jackmel that no kind of vessel whatsoever can come in without falling into your hands.”¹⁸⁰ Besides a blockade to prevent Rigaud's supply lines, Louverture's troops themselves needed provisions and ammunition, and Louverture asked Perry to let ships serving Louverture to pass “unmolested.” Louverture added that he could repay Perry for his support with “Fresh Provisions...or anything of that kind.” Perry responded by thanking Louverture for “refreshment” provided to the *General Greene* and promising to remain on the station at Jacmel and to assist Louverture in whatever he might need.¹⁸¹

178Edward Stevens to Silas Talbot, March 9, 1800, *QWD* 5:284-285.

179Ibid.

180Toussaint Louverture to Christopher Perry, March 3, 1800, Oliver Hazard Perry Papers, Manuscript Division, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

181Christopher Perry to Toussaint Louverture, March 7, 1800, Oliver Hazard Perry Papers, Manuscript

During the week of March 7, the *General Greene* bombarded three of Rigaud's forts in or near Jacmel for less than an hour, and combined with the coordinated attack by Louverture, the city fell.¹⁸² With the assistance of a single US naval frigate, Louverture had overrun the army of Rigaud at Jacmel. The tide of the civil war had turned significantly.

The correspondence and relationship between Louverture and Perry lasted about a month, during which time the orders and rules set by Stevens and other American officials—some inside and some outside the US Navy—provided at times conflicting sets of commands for Perry. The president and congress had never afforded an American captain the right to directly aid Louverture in battle.¹⁸³ But the message from the top brass on down was that American commerce depended upon Louverture's victory. Perry balanced the restrictions on his movements in Saint-Domingue with the overall goal of securing American commercial interests there.

Before congratulating Louverture on his victory at Jacmel, Perry explained in a letter to the general that he had captured a Dominguan armed schooner lacking the necessary passports.¹⁸⁴ While Perry wished to help Louverture with “every service in [his] power,” he would not let the ship pass: “Arguably to my instructions she is a lawfull prize and I shall therefore send her to Commodore Talbot [Silas Talbot] off Cape Francois who will proceed with her as he may think proper and to whom I beg leave to refer you.” This

Division, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

182Palmer, 162.

183Ibid.

184Christopher Perry to Toussaint Louverture, March 11, 1800, Oliver Hazard Perry Papers, Manuscript Division, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

captured ship was the *Gen. Toussaint*, a prospective prize that Louverture realized was legitimate because of the lack of papers on board. Louverture even offered to ransom the ship at her full cost, “upwards of Eleven Thousand Dollars.”¹⁸⁵ In the end, Silas Talbot decided, along with Perry, that the *Gen. Toussaint* should be let go in order that it might aid Louverture in the continuing battle with Rigaud.

Relations between Louverture's own generals and Perry were strained at times, particularly due to communication problems. Dominguan general Jean-Jacques Dessalines wrote to Perry on March 13, accusing him of keeping a Commander Pierret as prisoner on board the *General Greene*.¹⁸⁶ Pierret had come to the *General Greene* when his undocumented French armed vessel was captured. “The favorable reception that the Americans receive in the Ports of Hispaniola must convince you sir that you have made a Treaty with an open and frank Nation,” Dessalines wrote, hoping to convince Perry to “send [Dessalines] Captain Pierret with the Schooner and its Crew.”¹⁸⁷

Dessalines accusation turned out to be false. Pierret had remained on board the *General Greene* in order to protect him from capture and imprisonment by a British warship, a fate much more serious than the temporary detention on board the American frigate.¹⁸⁸

Perry reacted immediately to Dessalines's accusation with strong words, writing to

185Christopher Perry to Benajmin Stoddert, April 12, 1800, Oliver Hazard Perry Papers, Manuscript Division, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

186Joseph Bunel on behalf of Jean-Jacques Dessalines to Christopher Perry, March 13, 1800, Oliver Hazard Perry Papers, Manuscript Division, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

187Ibid.

188Christopher Perry to Toussaint Louverture, March 13, 1800, Oliver Hazard Perry Papers, Manuscript Division, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Louverture that “it may also be inferred from this letter that Gen. Dessalines has a jealousy—and a total want of confidence in the Government of the United States.”¹⁸⁹

Louverture was embarrassed over this misunderstanding—but called the whole affair just that, a misunderstanding, an “involuntary fault.”¹⁹⁰ Moreover, consistent with the mark of deference and respect found in all correspondence between Louverture and Perry, Louverture extended a promise to all the citizens of the United States “to afford...the most extensive protection and will strictly [cause] both their persons & their property to be respected.”¹⁹¹ Even after a brief row caused by confusion, Louverture responded to Perry like he did to Stevens and every single American diplomat and representative: by promising to respect American property and commerce.

Louverture warmly rewarded Perry for his extra-legal aid during the siege of Jacmel. Perry and the crew of the *General Greene* received 10,000 pounds of coffee—over fifty pounds per man.¹⁹² Beyond the coffee and the “refreshments” given, Louverture presented the *General Greene* with a new anchor, along with “15 tons of Cannon.”¹⁹³ When Perry sailed from Saint-Domingue to Newport, Rhode Island, he did so with spoils rewarded to him on behalf of a grateful Louverture.

The governor general seemed to be the only one entirely pleased with Perry's overall performance in the Caribbean. After leaving Jacmel, Perry had found multiple

189Christopher Perry to Toussaint Louverture, March 13, 1800, Oliver Hazard Perry Papers, Manuscript Division, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

190Toussaint Louverture to Christopher Perry, March 24, 1800, Oliver Hazard Perry Papers, Manuscript Division, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

191Ibid.

192Palmer, 163.

193Christopher Perry to Benjamin Stoddert, April 12, 1800, Oliver Hazard Perry Papers, Manuscript Division, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

ways to infuriate his naval superiors: by wasting gun powder during the firing of a “federal salute” to Toussaint Louverture at Cap Français; by dallying in Cap Français's port against the orders of Talbot; by staying too long in Havana on the way to the United States; and finally, among other smaller infractions, by ordering a sailor to “piss” in the mouth of a drunk midshipman.¹⁹⁴ Despite Perry's success at Jacmel, this would be Perry's final cruise as captain of the U.S.S. *General Greene*.

US naval support for Louverture produced concrete results, especially Perry's actions at Jacmel. Louverture was convinced that Perry “contributed not a little to the success [at Jacmel] by this cruise, every effort being made by him to aid me in taking Jacmel, as also, in seeing order restored in this colony.”¹⁹⁵ Order in Saint-Domingue promoted what seemed to be the best interests of American commerce: Louverture and the US Navy deterred privateering by attacking Rigaud. American leaders in Philadelphia recognized the changing situation in Saint-Domingue and the southern colonial ports of the colony were opened to American merchants with a presidential proclamation by Adams on May 9, 1800.¹⁹⁶ Perry had played his role well.

IV. Against Rigaud

Early in the morning of November 21, 1799, the American merchant schooner *Jane*, en route to Philadelphia from Port-au-Prince, sailed close along the shore of Saint-

¹⁹⁴Palmer, 171-172.

¹⁹⁵Tim Matthewson, *A Proslavery Foreign Policy: Haitian-American Relations during the Early Republic* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003), 86.

¹⁹⁶Ibid.

Domingue. At 6 am, Captain Simeon Toby learned that two barges had been spotted along the shoreline—following the schooner. *Jane* had left the colonial capital with an armed convoy of three, including the brig *James Stewart* and schooner *Polly*, but lost these ships sometime earlier in the night because of high winds. The barges chased the schooner, and when the wind died, around 9, the barges rowed in towards the ship. Crew members came on board and “plundered [the *Jane*] of money to the amount of six hundred dollars and took from us all our provisions and cloths.”¹⁹⁷ In the fray, one crew member was stabbed, while Captain Toby narrowly escaped with his life after being tied up, threatened with being tossed overboard and hung up “in the main shrouds until [he] was almost dead.” After sufficiently torturing the crew, and with the sight of the *Polly* and her guns closing in, the crew of the barges left the *Jane* and rowed away. Critical to the story that Captain Toby told was the origin of these vessels: they were Rigaud's.

The US navy's chief concern was the promotion of American commerce, and the actions of Rigaud's barges became a major obstacle in this struggle. Once again the interests of the United States and Louverture matched one another as both wanted Rigaud powerless in Saint-Domingue. The *General Greene*'s actions at Jacmel were only one part of a lengthy US campaign on behalf of Louverture in 1799 and 1800 during the War of the South. Rigaud's barges, which disrupted American shipping, concerned the US Navy steadily. While these barges were propelled chiefly by oars, and therefore severely limited in their range, they managed to cause havoc in many incidents. The barges, believed to be

¹⁹⁷Captain Simeon Toby brings news of his encounter with Rigaud's barges, November 21, 1799, *QWD* 4: 437.

concentrated chiefly in the Bight of Léogane, near Saint-Marc, and just north of Port-au-Prince, moved “along the shores of which...those piratical boats are closely concealed in the creeks and among the bushes, that no one on board a vessel going along the channel can discover them.”¹⁹⁸ Using a lookout, these so-called “piratical boats” had an advantage over larger ships cruising along the coastline.

Rigaud's barges avoided direct encounters with the US navy. However, US consul Stevens found himself in the middle of one such battle between the barges and a disguised US naval vessel among a group of merchant ships. On New Year's Day, 1800, off the coast of the island of Gonâve—within the dangerous waters near Saint-Marc—the USS *Experiment* faced three separate charges from ten of these barges with an estimated total crew of four or five hundred members.¹⁹⁹ The barges, “manned with negroes and mulattoes,” and heavily outgunned, used light cannon against the heavy cannon of the *Experiment*. The third and final charge of the barges resulted in their capture of the merchant ships *Daniel & Mary* and *Washington*, as the *Experiment* found itself helpless to maneuver after the wind died. The *Experiment* lost no men during the fight, but Rigaud's barges, with heavy casualties, made off with their prize. “I have received accurate information,” Stevens later wrote, “that the number of barges which now actually infest the coast...is not less than 37, and the number of pirates they carry exceeds 1500.”

The US navy regularly convoyed merchant ships to and from Port-au-Prince

¹⁹⁸Silas Talbot to the merchants of the United States, February 12, 1800, *QWD* 5:208-209.

¹⁹⁹Edward Stevens to Silas Talbot, January 1, 1800, *QWD* 5: 1-3; Extract from journal of U.S. Schooner *Experiment*, January 1, 1800, *QWD* 5: 4.

because of the preponderance of enemy vessels to the city's north. Captain Little of the U.S.S. *Boston*, on orders from the Saint-Domingue station commander Silas Talbot, cruised in the Bight from February through March 1800. On command, the *Boston* convoyed ships and sailed along the shore, trying to coax barges into a gun-battle. During this cruise, Little encountered Rigaud's barges quite often, although in some skirmishes he wondered whether “the Powder & shot expended in firing at them...was of more value than *their* destruction.”²⁰⁰ Either way, the fight against Rigaud's navy continued.

In the context of Louverture's ongoing colonial civil war, it is unclear the extent of harm that US navy operations against Rigaud's barges accomplished. The motivation for the US navy was clearly to support American commerce—yet, Louverture's own legal vessels, which carried supplies to aid the fight against Rigaud, undoubtedly gained from the US navy's war against the barges. After all, these barges were just as likely to prey upon Louverture's navy. Still, Louverture counted on Stevens and the US navy for extra-legal help when the war effort depended upon it.

Even after the fall of Jacmel, Louverture's position in the south remained precarious. Jacmel residents faced famine conditions, and the hospitals there lacked basic supplies. A slip up at Jacmel and the city might have fallen again into the hands of Rigaud. But the city could not be easily resupplied by Louverture for fear of the British. The governor general wrote Stevens on his problems and asked for US help in carrying his supplies to the needy port city.²⁰¹ The flag of the United States, in Louverture's

200George Little to Benjamin Stoddert, March 19, 1800, *QWD* 5: 325-326.

201Toussaint Louverture to Edward Stevens, March 21, 1800, *QWD* 5: 336-337.

informed estimate, would provide greater care for the essentials needed in Jacmel than a French flag ever could. But the plan to simply convoy the vessels as though they were American ships supplying the U.S.S. *Augusta* was problematic: Stevens considered it “*impracticable*,” and Commander Silas Talbot believed the British would never accept that only the *Augusta* needed so much supplies²⁰² Instead, Talbot planned to evade the eyes of the British by disguising the supply ships as though they were prizes to the U.S.S. *Constitution*. Old Ironsides would then work its way to Jacmel with these important supplies for Louverture.

After losing Jacmel, Rigaud's armies moved westward and formed “two strong Camps” near Benet, a port city directly to the west of Jacmel.²⁰³ Meanwhile, Louverture decided to make a strong attack on Rigaud in order to bring what he thought would be a final end to the war. This decision came as an about-face to his previous plans, which were to suspend his military operations and strengthen his positions along the southern coast, along with “[establishing] some order in the civil Administration of the Colony.”²⁰⁴ Jacmel received the needed goods during the Spring, and Louverture's army moved towards Rigaud's final holdout on the western arm of Saint-Domingue. Undoubtedly much of the material support came from stores purchased from American merchants in the colony, as US exports rose from \$2.7 million in 1799 to \$5.1 million in 1800.²⁰⁵

202Edward Stevens to Silas Talbot, March 26, 1800, *QWD* 5: 349-350; Silas Talbot to Edward Stevens, March 28, 1800, *QWD* 5: 355.

203Edward Stevens to Timothy Pickering, April 4, 1800, *QWD* 5: 381-383.

204Ibid., 383.

205Philippe R. Girard, “Black Talleyrand: Toussaint Louverture's Diplomacy, 1798-1802,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 66 (January 2009), 110.

By May, Louverture had captured Benet, forcing the evacuation of Rigaud's army from Grand and Petit-Goâve.²⁰⁶ This win was a boon for confidence in business opportunity on the southern end of the colony because Rigaud's barges lost an important port. American merchants immediately flocked to Petit-Goâve, causing large fluctuations in market prices. With the opening of this new market, other markets were temporarily closed when Louverture ordered a blockade on all the ports on the western end of the department of the south, hoping to squeeze further the desperate Rigaud.²⁰⁷

The United States provided needed support to Louverture during the War of the South, as Rigaud represented an enemy to American commerce and thus an enemy of Consul Stevens and the US navy. Material aid to Louverture in the form of guns and provisions, along with the active naval support at Jacmel and against Rigaud's supply lines, formed a considerable policy of US efforts against Rigaud in 1799 and 1800. Still, it must be concluded that this civil war was primarily just that: a war between colonial rivals, fought almost entirely by Domingans on the plains and in the mountains of Saint-Domingue.²⁰⁸ All American interference was extra.

V. The End of Two Wars

By mid-1800 the situation in Saint-Domingue had changed. Commanding at the Cap Français station, US Captain Alexander Murray of the frigate *Constellation* gave the

²⁰⁶Robert Ritchie to Timothy Pickering, May 3, 1800, *QWD* 5:473.

²⁰⁷News item concerning proclamation of Toussaint Louverture blocking all the Southern Departments of St. Domingo, May 8, 1800, *QWD* 5: 490.

²⁰⁸DeConde, 209.

captain of the *Herald* new orders.²⁰⁹ “After you have landed the stores you had on board for Gen. Toussaint,” Murray wrote, “you must proceed without delay to Cruize on the North side of Porto Rico, & to Windward of St Johns, as it now appears we shall have but little to do on this station.”²¹⁰ Rigaud was nearly finished, and privateering's more pressing threats seemed to be elsewhere in the Caribbean.

An American, called Captain Buntin, reported thirty-eight American merchant vessels captured by Guadeloupe privateers between March 12 and June 1, 1800.²¹¹ The US navy reacted quickly and changed their tactics in their continuing efforts to protect American commerce in the area. These privateers targeted American ships between the American coast and Saint-Domingue and other West Indian islands, frustrating American merchants trading with both the West Indies and the Europe.²¹² Louverture's control in Saint-Domingue, along with British protection in the area, contributed to the relative safety of the waters directly off of Saint-Domingue.²¹³ However, the US naval station at St. Kitt's became more important in comparison because of this problem out of Guadeloupe.

Reflecting this change in affairs, President Adams signed another presidential proclamation concerning trade with Saint-Domingue in September 1800, which officially opened American trade with the entire island.²¹⁴ This proclamation suggests Federalist

209Palmer, 180.

210Alexander Murray to Charles C. Russell, July 31, 1800, *QWD* 6: 287-288.

211Unofficial list of 38 American Vessels captured by Privateers out of Guadeloupe, from 12 March to 1 June 1800, *QWD* 6: 1-2.

212Benjamin Stoddert to Patrick Fletcher, July 14, 1800, *QWD* 6: 148-149.

213Palmer, 214.

214Proclamation of President John Adams Lifting Ban on Commerce between the United States and Hispaniola, September 6, 1800, *QWD* 6: 321-322.

goals of establishing a permanent trade with Louverture's Saint-Domingue. Reflecting this goal, Secretary of the navy Stoddert wrote to Captain Silas Talbot congratulating him on his efforts “in laying the foundation of a permanent Trade with St. Domingo.”²¹⁵ As long as the island was safe for merchants, these Federalists had no qualms with continuing to trade with the former slaves and revolutionary leadership of Saint-Domingue.

On October 1, the US schooner *Experiment*, ten months after its battles with Rigaud's barges, captured the three-masted French schooner *Diana*. The *Diana* was full, with fifty men and about 300,000 pounds of coffee and sugar. While this cargo must have immensely pleased the crew of *Experiment*, the *Diana* had one more surprise for the Americans. “General Rigaud late commander of an army in the South part of St. Domingo,” Captain Thomas Truxtun wrote two days later, “has fallen in to my hands with all his papers.”²¹⁶ On board the *Diana* was André Rigaud, defeated on land by Louverture and at sea by Louverture and the United States. The War of the South had ended.

Relations between Paris and the United States seemed to be turning as well, but the Quasi-War limped along in the Atlantic. With rumors swirling of a treaty between American and French diplomats, the US navy's policy changed partly. Stoddert, when sending Silas Talbot back to the Saint-Domingue station, reminded him of the “uncertainty as to our situation with France,” and advised Talbot to focus on convoying

²¹⁵Benjamin Stoddert to Silas Talbot, September 3, 1800, *QWD* 6: 315.

²¹⁶Thomas Truxtun to Benjamin Stoddert, October 3, 1800, *QWD* 6: 427.

merchant ships instead of capturing French ones. Should French ships attack American ones, however, the US navy still had the positive orders to deter and capture these perils to commerce.²¹⁷ After all, the entire reason for the US navy's presence in the Atlantic was to protect and promote American commercialism.

On February 3, 1801, the US senate approved a treaty between the United States and France that ended the Quasi-War. American merchants became primary supporters of this treaty, as the Quasi-War had cut deeply into their bottom lines. However, many Federalists still resisted against settling American grievances with France. In one of his final acts as president, Adams signed the bill—although begrudgingly.²¹⁸

Conclusion

Immediately after the ratification of the treaty, the *Herald*, that same US navy vessel which had originally been part of Pickering and Higginson's plan to supply Louverture with weapons and ammunition in 1799, and that had successfully supplied him later in 1800, traveled to the West Indies on perhaps more important business. The ship carried news to the US Navy in the Caribbean that the war with France had ended. Although carrying news of peace, the *Herald's* message meant less exciting developments for American-Dominguan relations.²¹⁹

217 Benjamin Stoddert to Silas Talbot, November 18, 1800, *QWD* 6:536-537.

218 DeConde, 292-293.

219 *Ibid.*, 293.

Conclusion

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1801, Tobias Lear arrived in Cap Français—appointed by that declaration's writer, the newly elected President Thomas Jefferson, to replace Edward Stevens in Saint-Domingue.²²⁰ Unlike the conditions under which Stevens landed two years earlier, Lear's appointment reflected an evolving American position toward Louverture and the French colony.

Jefferson, a firm opponent of Federalists, had chosen to remove Stevens because of his relationship with Louverture and the British, which the president felt was too cordial.²²¹ Besides this replacement, the new administration also modified Lear's official title: he was to be “General Commercial Agent” to Cap Français, instead of “American Consul General” to Saint-Domingue. Lear, who had been George Washington's presidential secretary, did not have any diplomatic power as a commercial agent to a city.²²² The state of relations had changed fundamentally.

Louverture immediately recognized the adjustments of the Americans and responded with outrage. After being presented with Lear's commission, which lacked the

220 “Tobias Lear letter to James Madison,” July 17, 1801, http://thelouvertureproject.org/index.php?title=Tobias_Lear_letter_to_James_Madison (accessed March 22, 2012).

221 Tim Matthewson, *A Proslavery Foreign Policy: Haitian-American Relations during the Early Republic* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003), 98-99.

222 Ibid.; Alexander DeConde, *The Quasi-War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France 1797-1801* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 314-315.

signature of President Jefferson, Louverture “immediately returned [it]...without opening it,” described Lear in a letter to Secretary of State James Madison, “expressing his disappointment and disgust in strong terms, saying that his Colour was the cause of his being neglected, and not thought worthy of the Usual attentions.”²²³ Eventually, Louverture “became more cool,” and determined “he would consider the matter.”²²⁴ Chief among Louverture's considerations must have been the positive influence of American trade in Saint-Domingue. While upset with this perceived slight, he was undoubtedly pleased with the presence of thirty-two American ships in the Cap Français harbor, which carried “Flour, Fish and Dry Goods.”²²⁵ Still, his initial reaction to the new American envoy was prescient of the future of American-Dominguan and American-Haitian relations following the end of the Quasi-War.

The Convention of Môtrefontaine formally concluded the Quasi-War and resumed diplomatic and commercial relations between the United States and France, while attempting to ensure “a firm, inviolable, and universal peace...And a true and sincere Friendship between the French Republic, and the United States of America, and between their respective countries [sic] territories.”²²⁶ Part of this newfound respect led Jefferson to end American naval operations off Saint-Domingue.²²⁷

Jefferson, unlike Adams, staunchly opposed the idea of Louverture's independent

223 “Tobias Lear letter to James Madison,” July 17, 1801, http://thelouvertureproject.org/index.php?title=Tobias_Lear_letter_to_James_Madison (accessed March 22, 2012), 1.

224Ibid.

225Ibid., 2.

226DeConde, “Convention of Môtrefontaine,” 352.

227Matthewson, 97.

rule, and he worried that Saint-Domingue might become a pirate state.²²⁸ In referring to a so-called pirate state, Jefferson evoked strong fears of a black rule, confirming a position that would last until the American Civil War. In the coming years, American relations with Saint-Domingue—which became independent Haiti on New Years' day, 1804—were shaped by the racial concerns of Jefferson. The new administration ended official diplomatic relations with Haiti, and embargoed commercial relations with the nation on February 20, 1806.²²⁹ The commercial arrangement of the Adams administration was destroyed.

The story of American relations with Toussaint Louverture and Saint-Domingue during the Quasi-War is one of complex relationships among Atlantic powers. The 1799 arrangement reached by Louverture, Stevens and Maitland reflected Louverture's dire need for trade, along with the concern of the Adams administration and the British for limiting the spread of slave revolution. However, it was the drive for profit of Federalist Americans (and the British) that led to this trading relationship in the first place. In a way, this diplomacy foreshadowed American neo-colonialism during the twentieth century.

This thesis opened with Edward Stevens's arrival in Saint-Domingue, and it is fitting to close with Lear replacing the former US consul general. During his two years in Saint-Domingue, Stevens, responding to the economic and political concerns of President Adams, shaped American policies in a way that also greatly helped Louverture. In the War of the South, the US navy played an important role in attacking André Rigaud's forts

²²⁸Ibid., 100.

²²⁹Ibid., 128.

at Jacmel, and proved effective in supporting Louverture's consolidation of colonial power. What had started as a means to reduce privateering, support American trade and protect the southern United States, became a force in determining the movement of the Haitian Revolution.

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