CONTRABAND COFFEE:
Smuggling and Other Tricks of Trade

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In January 1773, Captain John Ash wrote to his financial backers, the Jamaican firm of Brown and Birch, of his safe arrival in the Caribbean. He also informed them of a change in plans. Contracted to secure a cargo of wood and mules, Ash tried first in Tortola and then in St. Thomas without success. He sailed next to the Spanish colony of Puerto Rico where he reported: "We loaded what of the wood we could get there and sent express to the out bays near us, who returned for answer, that there was very little and so situated that we could not get at it either with ship or boats… we proceeded then to another plan for we found neither wood nor mules, but a good deal of coffee."[1] Jamaicans would not likely buy Ash's coffee when he returned to Kingston as they produced more than enough of their own locally, but he decided to purchase between 2,240 and 2,688 lbs. reasoning it could be resold to North America to offset the expense of his endeavor.

Ash saw advantages in this alternative, but he also advised Brown and Birch of some potential downsides. While "their [Puerto Rico's] principal trade is coffee," Ash faced significant competition. He described a "coast … full of vessels that can supply them on better terms than we" and suggested carrying at least one-third to one-fourth the purchase price in cash as well as an "assortment of very fine goods." Samples, such as Ash was used to offering, had not been considered acceptable terms by Puerto Rican sellers.[2]

This paper is based on Chapter 6 of my dissertation in progress, "From Cultivation to Consumption: A History of Coffee in the Atlantic World, 1765-1807." I would like to thank David Hancock and Roderick McDonald for their suggestions and comments, and Amanda Lentner for bringing the case of Captain Ash to my attention and copying the relevant correspondence at the PRO.

[1] PRO T1/504, "Letter from Captain Ash to Messrs. Brown and Birch" (January 24, 1773).

[2] If a ship's captain arrived to trade without sufficient goods or credit on-hand to pay in full for what he wanted, as often happened especially in unplanned voyages such as Captain Ash's trip to Puerto Rico, it was common practice to provide "samples" – examples of the wares or produce to be delivered, usually after the next harvest -- as payment for trade with a promissory note for the balance. If demand was sufficiently high, however, sellers might demand immediate payment or at least a higher percentage of the total price rather than rely on the promise of future compensation. For a discussion of the use of promissory notes in eighteenth West Indian commerce see Thomas

Ash also noted some logistical difficulties. His vessel, the ship *Mary,* drew too much draft for Puerto Rican harbors so he recommended using smaller crafts such as shallops or flat-bottomed boats to transfer goods from the bays to larger ships anchored off-shore. Acknowledging that increased labor would result in additional expense he strongly advised the investment in local manpower over stretching the resources of his existing crew. The shuttle transfer needed to ferry coffee from coast to ship had required thirteen of his "best men" leaving the ship and the remainder of the crew unguarded, "waiting the lucky or unlucky chance of a moment."[3] The unlucky chance he feared most was discovery by cruisers from the Spanish Main that regularly patrolled the waters surrounding Spain's island colonies in search of illicit foreign trade. Captain Ash's actions definitely fell into that category; for while Ash might have been willing to incur the salaries of a few more workers, he was not willing to pay the appropriate export duties on the coffee he brought out of Puerto Rico.

Ash's brand of smuggling, an outright evasion of regulations, was one of the most dramatic means of getting coffee to North America but after 1783 it became financially less attractive. At the close of the eighteenth century, the British, French, and Spanish Caribbean all operated coffee export economies and, through port openings and trade concessions, vied with one another for American investment. Because of these multiple sources of supply, coffee is one of the best case studies to test how ably and quickly U.S. merchants could navigate the Atlantic world's changeable commercial and legal networks where, to succeed, traders needed to be able to reallocate resources quickly, often shifting between producers in a matter of months. The

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Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, 1986), pp. 97-126. Few coffee plantation estate papers survive and while these are admittedly later in the nineteenth century, examples of planters using future crops as leverage for current buying power can be found in the letter books of *Marlborough Plantation, Manchester Parish, Jamaica*, especially "Correspondence of Mrs. B. Boucher regarding Mr. R. Boucher's Coffee Estate, Marlborough Plantation, Manchester, 1827-37 (MS 337)," and *Hermitage Estate, St. Elizabeth Parish, Jamaica,* "Letter book of John Wemyss, Jamaica, 1819-24 (MS 250)," both in the collection of the National Archive, Kingston, Jamaica.

[3] PRO T 1/504, p. 2.

potential profits, however, certainly made the effort worthwhile. Demand for coffee in the United States grew exponentially in the first decades after the war, both as an article of home consumption and, more significantly, as one of the new nation's most important re-export commodities. Before the American Revolution, the British Caribbean supplied most of North America's coffee but their participation declined appreciably after 1783 in large part because of Parliament's decision to enforce the Navigation Acts, "regulations by which the exportation of sugar and coffee, from those [West Indian] colonies, in American vessels is generally prohibited."[4] On the other hand, the U.S. coffee business as a whole, on the other hand, was booming. While the value of British West Indian coffee into the U.S. amounted to no more than $1,480,000 between 1802 and 1804, the amount from all other parts of the world, chiefly the French Caribbean, totaled $8,373,000. Roughly one-quarter of these imports wound up in the cups of U.S. consumers while merchants re-shipped the balance, principally to European markets.[5] Put in comparative perspective, by the turn of the century, U.S. coffee re-export revenues exceeded not only those of tea, but sugar and molasses. In fact, coffee surpassed all Caribbean imports but rum in profitability, and was second only to dry goods in global U.S. re-exports:[6]

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[4] *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States,* volume V, Commerce and Navigation (Washington, DC, 1832), p. 640; hereafter *ASPCN*. The *American State Papers* consist of thirty-eight volumes published between 1831 and 1861 containing the legislative and executive documents of Congress between 1789 and 1838; they fill an important chronological gap between the induction of Congress in 1789 and the printing of the first volume of the *U.S. Serial Set* in 1817, thereafter serving as the official congressional record. Hereafter, the American State Papers will be noted as *ASP*, *CN* (Commerce and Navigation) or *FR* (Foreign Relations), the volume and page numbers. The volumes of greatest importance for this paper are: "Commerce and Navigation," volume V (1789 to 1815) and "Foreign Relations," volumes 1 (1789-1797) and 2 (1797-1807).

[5] Percentage derived by comparing total coffee re-export revenue of $7,302,000 to total re-export revenue of $28,533,000 for the years 1802 through 1804 as they appear in the *ASPCN*, vol. V, p. 642.

[6] Figures taken from an 1806 Congressional report, "*Commerce with Great Britain and her Dependencies, and all Parts of the World*" intended to compare the volume U.S. trade to Britain and the British colonies over the preceding several years with those to other parts of Eastern and Western Europe, the rest of the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and the South Seas. *ASPCN*, vol. V, pp. 640-642.

TABLE 1: Comparison of United States Re-Exported Commodities, 1802-1804

Re-exported Commodity	Value of Re-Exported Article
Merchandize paying ad valorem duties	$9,772,000
Coffee	7,302,000
Sugar	5,775,000
Cotton, cocoa, indigo, pimento, and pepper	2,490,000
Teas	1,304,000
Wines	1,108,000
Spirits of every description	642,000
All other articles	140,000
TOTAL	**$28,533,000**

Source: *American State Papers,* "Commerce and Navigation" (hereafter *ASPCN*), vol. V, p. 642.

Just as before the Revolutionary war, Philadelphia dominated the North American coffee industry (for a comparison of coffee imports between U.S. states, see Appendix A). A few merchants resorted to smuggling of the Captain Ash variety as one way to meet rising post-Revolutionary demand, but many more learned to evade the spirit of law while tenuously conforming to its strictures. This paper examines the methods they used to do so between 1783 and 1805, focusing specifically on Philadelphia and its relationship to the West Indies. Although the city brought in some coffee from other sources, most continued to arrive from the Caribbean islands. The records of the city's port wardens for the 1780s and *American State Papers* for the 1790s and 1800s show this less romantic side of trade adaptation. Instead of privateers and illicit bounties, Philadelphia's merchants relied on international competition and legal loopholes to manage the growth of an emerging global success story as U.S. coffee imports rose from just under 4.5 million lbs. in 1791 to over 50 million lbs. per annum less ten years later.[7] Merchants had, of course, used some of these methods before the war but not with the same rapidity and scale that would produce such remarkable annual shifts after independence. Spiraling import levels, however, did not result in a corresponding rise in illegal activity. Because of the number of competing suppliers available, coffee turns out to be less a tale of contraband commerce than a story about when and why smuggling would have been neither necessary nor profitable.

The Letter of the Law

The importance of British trade to the United States' post-Revolutionary economy has been the subject of several debates. Some historians argue that, with barely a lull, Britain re-emerged as the foremost trading partner and continued to dominate the new nation's financial landscape. "Only very slowly did the U.S. advance out of its colonial economy," suggest John McCusker and Russell Mernard in *The Economy of British America.* "The decade immediately following the end of the war looked economically much the same as the decade preceding it, in basic structure, if not in detail."[8] But it is in the details that differences are most apparent and changes in Caribbean commerce provide some of the best illustrations. Table 2, for example, compiled from an 1806 Congressional report conducted to track trade patterns since American independence, compares U.S. shipments of domestic and re-exported goods to different geographic regions. At first glance, it appears that Britain did indeed emerge as the strongest commercial contender; certainly it was the United States' largest European consumer and this

[7] *ASPCN*, vol. V, pp. 203, 478 and 512.
[8] John McCusker and Russell Mernard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill, 1985), p. 367. See also David Hancock, "Transatlantic Trade in the Era of the American Revolution," in Fred M. Leventhal and Roland Quinault (eds.), *Anglo-American Attitudes: From Revolution to Partnership* (Burlington, 2002).

sector continued to account for two-thirds of all domestic U.S. exports and nearly three-fourths of its re-exports.

Table 2: Comparison of U.S. Domestic Export and Re-Export Trades, 1802-1804

U.S. Domestic Exports[9]	Value	Percentage of Total Domestic Export Trade
To Europe	$22,957,000	33.0%
To Caribbean and other American Colonies	15,607,000	23.0%
To Asia, Africa, and South Seas	1,364,000	2.0%
DOMESTIC EXPORT TOTAL	**$39,928,000**	**58.0%**
U.S. Re-Exports	**Value**	**Percentage of Total Re-Export Trade**
To Europe	$20,618,000	30.3%
To Caribbean and other American Colonies	6,688,000	9.9%
To Asia, Africa, and South Seas	1,227,000	1.8%
RE-EXPORT TOTAL	**$28,533.000**	**42.0%**
COMBINED EXPORT TOTAL	**$67,821,000**	**100.0%**

Source: *ASPCN,* "Commerce with Great Britain and her Dependencies, and All Parts of the World," vol. V, p. 640-643

Two additional factors, however, are just as important; first, re-exported commodities represented 42% of all goods shipped to Europe, with Caribbean commodities comprising 54.3%

[9] Domestic exports included, in order of revenue (*ASPCN*, vol. V, p. 642):

Flour, wheat, corn, etc.:	$13,040,000
Dried and pickled fish:	$2,848,000
Beef, pork, butter, cheese, etc.	$3,728,000
Cotton	$6,940,000
Tobacco	$6,143,000
Lumber, naval stores, and pot ashes	$4,387,000
All other articles	$2,842,000
TOTAL	$39,928,000

For a list of re-exported commodities and relative revenues generated, see Table 1.

of all re-exported goods.[10] In other words, 22.8% of what the United States shipped to Europe came from West Indies ports. The second change concerns which islands these cities served since this reflects the changed patterns of U.S. trade after independence. The British islands suffered most; decisions to enforce trade restrictions, especially in the face of France's resolve to increase the number of their Caribbean free ports after 1784, produced a dramatic shift in the lines of U.S. commerce generally, and Philadelphia specifically. This not only affected from whom the United States bought but to whom they sold their goods; the Caribbean remained the U.S. second-largest consumer, accounting for 32.9% of combined U.S. exports, and the paths of Caribbean exports usually followed those of imports as American merchants sent wood, wheat, pork and other staples to pay for the exotic luxuries that became the mainstay of their re-export trade. What follows is a brief description of the legislative changes that shaped who won and who lost in the post-war bid for U.S. business as it pertained to West Indian trade and commodities.

British West Indies:

Before the American Revolution, the British West Indies held an important position in the economies of most North American port cities. While specific commodities varied -- Boston and New York imported more rum and sugar, for example, while Philadelphia specialized in coffee -- the British islands consistently accounted for 20 and 35% of all inbound and outbound vessels for Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Charleston between 1768 and 1772.[11] Political theorist Edmund Burke even insisted before Parliament that Britain's economic well-being relied in large measure on continued North American and British West Indian relations, arguing that

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[10] This figure calculated by comparing the combined values of coffee ($7,302,000), sugar ($5,775,000), cotton, cocoa, indigo, pimento, and pepper ($2,400,000) to the total re-export balance of $28,533,000. The result is 54.3%.

[11] Figures based on *Customs 16:1-- America, 1768-1772*, reports of the Naval Officer submitted annually to Parliament and permitting a comparison of basic import and export data for all North American ports, the Floridas, and the Bahamas. For a more specific break-down by port city see Appendix B.

they were "so interwoven that the attempt to separate them would tear to pieces the contexture of the whole and, if not entirely destroy, would much depreciate the value of all the parts."[12] The commercial disruptions caused by war seemed to substantiate Burke's predictions. Although Britain tried to supplant American trade after 1776, its efforts fell woefully short; ships to the West Indies arrived from the metropole sporadically and often with cargoes that residents deemed entirely insufficient.[13] Food shortages repeatedly ravaged the Leeward Islands because "of their close proximity to islands held by foreign nations…sugar monoculture…and their dependence on external food supplies."[14] In Montserrat, whites and slaves alike suffered from malnutrition as "for three successive days, hundreds of people came to town in search of…a morsel of bread and returned empty."[15] And while Governor Hay of Barbados wrote Parliament that his supplies were more than adequate, members of the British navy disagreed. General William Howe, in charge of military operations in North America during the revolution found almost no provisions on the island: "They have not…a single cask of salt provisions on the Island…and are in the greatest want."[16]

When the war ended, many in North America and the British Caribbean hoped business would return to normal but two stumbling blocks stood in their way: the first was the restriction

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[12] Burke cited in Herbert C. Bell, "British Commercial Policy in the West Indies, 1783-93," *The English Historical Review* 31:123 (July 1916), p. 429.
[13] PRO T 64/72. "Lists of imports in British bottoms at Kingston, Jamaica, during the war." The years of greatest privation were 1776-1778, but scarcities continued throughout the war and years that followed. For discussions of the Jamaica House of Assembly's concerns about staple imports see *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica,* vol. 7 (Spanishtown, 1804), pp. 313, 314, 467, and 577. For the impact on British West Indian production, see PRO T 38/ 269 "Imports into England from the West Indies, 1774- 83." Between 1775 and 1781, sugar production declined by over 50 percent. During the same time period, coffee fell as well. Jamaican coffee exports to England alone, for example, dropped 41% between 1772 and 1776, although almost all of the loss resulted from the loss of the North American market. Figures based on annual reports by the island Naval Officer to the Jamaica House of Assembly re-printed in the *Votes of the Honourable Assembly of Jamaica* (Jamaica Archives, Spanishtown, #1B/5/2) for each year.
[14] Richard Sheridan, *Doctors and Slaves: A Medical and Demographic History of Slavery in the British West Indies, 1680-1834* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 156.
[15] Andrew O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia, 2000), p. 160.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

of U.S.-British West Indian trade to British vessels, and the second, the stipulation that shipments to the U.S. be taxed as foreign exports. The second issue was more easily resolved. The royal decree of July 2, 1783 permitted both the importation of American lumber, flour, bread, grain, vegetables and livestock and exportation to the United States of rum, sugar, molasses, coffee, coca nuts, ginger and pimento under the same tariff regulations as to British colonies, but while these commodities could now move to and from the U.S., they could still do so only on British vessels.[17]

Several of the islands protested. The Assembly of Barbados sent petitions to the Society of West Indian Merchants and Planters in London decrying the ban on commerce with the U.S. as "untenable" and "ruinous."[18] Jamaica's planters also warned their Governor that failure to allow American shipping would result, not only in food shortages, but in an inability of Jamaicans to ship their own local produce abroad. When he refused their requests, they too turned to the Society of West India Merchants which rallied behind their cause, recognizing pre-existing patterns of trade and specifically requesting permission for "free intercourse" on American vessels; but their appeals to Parliament were similarly unsuccessful.[19] Jamaica's House of Assembly tried again in November 1783, petitioning their Governor to permit U.S. shipping for at least a transition period of nine months.[20] Representing the royal position,

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[17] See Alice B. Keith, "Relaxations in the British Restrictions on the American Trade with the British West Indies, 1783-1802," *The Journal of Modern History* 20:1 (March 1948), pp. 1-2 and Selwyn H.H. Carrington, "The United States and the British West Indian Trade, 1783-1807," in Roderick A. McDonald (ed.), *West Indies Accounts: Essays on the History of the British Caribbean and the Atlantic Economy* (Kingston, 1996), pp. 149-151.
[18] *Resolutions of the Society of West Indian Merchants and Planters in* London (February 7, 1775). Available on microfilm, original minutes for 1760 through 1780 are in the collections of the Royal Commonwealth Society, London.
[19] Vincent Harlow and Frederick Madden (eds.), "Resolutions of the Committee of West India Planters and Merchants, Feb. 6, 1784," *British Colonial Documents, 1774-1834* (Oxford, 1853), p. 256 and Andrew J. O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia, 2000), p. 240.
[20] *Journals,* vol. VIII (November 19, 1783): "…we most humbly request that you will be pleased to permit the importation from the United States of America in American bottoms, of the articles enumerated in the proclamation of 2nd July last and also to permit the produce of this Island to be exported in return for the space of nine months."

Governor Campbell downplayed their fears, replying: "I flatter myself however that from the early and repeated applications I have made to the Governors of Nova Scotia and Canada, for an immediate supply of such articles as we most want in this country, and from the encouragement given to British merchants, the articles enumerated in your address will soon be lowered in their price, and the apprehensions of a scarcity happily removed."[21] Planters were hardly impressed and formed a committee to study the effects of declining North American trade on local productivity. Although the report does not specify the source for their figures, the committee argued that over 15,000 slaves had died in Jamaica as the result of starvation and insufficient nutrition, resulting both from recent hurricanes and "the exclusion of American vessels."[22] Particularly galling to the more established British islands of Jamaica and Barbados, Parliament decided to give limited free port status to the islands recently required from France in compensation for occupation during the war.[23] Planters bitterly complained that, rather than bolster the islands' own economies free port status instead facilitated the clandestine importation of French coffee and sugar, especially from Saint Domingue: "….above 20 times the quantity of produce …has been exported from these islands since their conquest than ever grew upon them."[24]

Nor did the U.S. remain passive. In retaliation for British restrictions, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island all banned British vessels from carrying U.S. products under

[21] *Ibid,* (November 20, 1783).
[22] Report cited in Bell, "British Commercial Policy," p. 440, note 67. In his study, Richard Sheridan argues that the impact of British trade embargoes on slave subsistence is, if anything, underestimated. Long periods of non-importation, limited European and British North American supplies, and wave after wave of devastating hurricanes resulted in extraordinary damage, not only in Jamaica but though the British Caribbean. See, Richard Sheridan, "The Crisis of Slave Subsistence in the British West Indies during and after the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 33:4 (Oct. 1976), especially pp. 621-622 and 631-632.
[23] In February 1783, Parliament voted to "permit the produce of such British islands as have been captured by the enemy during the present war to import in neutral bottoms …for a limited time." *Journals*, vol. VIII (February 12, 1783).
[24] *Ibid.* (February 12, 1783).

penalty of condemnation. Maryland, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania imposed taxes for the docking of British vessels in their ports, and most New England states added taxes to goods arriving by British carriers. Almost all states applied higher duties to British sugar, coffee and rum than on their French counterparts.[25] In 1789, Congress standardized the arrangement, voting to impose "an increased duty of tonnage…on all foreign ships and other vessels that shall load in the United States" arriving from places where "the United States are not permitted to carry their own produce."[26]

Despite the best efforts of U.S. merchants and West Indian planters the July 2, 1783 decision remained officially unchanged for almost a decade.[27] The islands could legally import and export certain products – coffee among them. But over three-quarters of pre-Revolutionary trade between the two regions had been carried in American vessels. Parliament provided the opportunity but not the means and the resultant cost of British shipping increased the price of coffee and other goods enough to encourage U.S. buyers to look for alternatives. They did not have to look far.

French West Indies:

The French government imposed the fewest restrictions on United States trade after independence and consequently most American importers shifted from British to French sources for Caribbean commodities within five years. France facilitated this changeover in 1784 and 1785 by opening five West Indian ports -- including Saint Domingue -- to U.S. shipping and abolishing bans on the importation of flour and other food staples.[28] Historians have credited

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[25] Vernon G. Sester, *The Commercial Reciprocity Policy of the United States, 174-1829* (Philadelphia, 1937), pp. 62-65 and Carrington, "The United States and the British West Indian Trade," p. 150-152.
[26] *ASPCN*, vol. V, p. 6.
[27] The stipulations of July 2, 1783 were twice reinforced later that year on September 5 and December 26. Lowell Ragatz, *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean, 1763-1833* (New York, 1938), p. 180.
[28] Sester, *The Commercial Reciprocity Policy*, pp. 16-19, 39-40, and 88-91.

these relaxations for the extraordinary rise in U.S. exports to the French Caribbean by the mid-1780s but just as important for the emerging U.S. re-export trade; American traders turned increasing to French colonies for imports as well.[29] For those dealing in coffee, the decision is easy to understand. French coffee already had a sound reputation for quality and taste – many preferring it to British coffee even before the war.[30] Moreover, in the 1780s and early 1790s, the French island of Saint Domingue ranked as the world's leading producer of sugar and coffee, resulting in a price economy of scale unrivaled by any other coffee producer.[31] Had the application of Britain's tariff on foreign produce not artificially inflated the price of French coffee to almost double that of British manufacture, more French coffee would likely have made its way to American markets before 1776.[32] But Parliament's decision to restrict U.S. participation in the British Empire removed this barrier and even before the war officially ended, Philadelphia's merchants began courting Saint Domingue. Few records allow historians to track trade during the war years, but the registers of Philadelphia's Comptroller General, which begin

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[29] For discussions about increasing U.S. exports to the French Caribbean after independence see, Coatsworth, "American Trade with European Colonies," pp. 243-246; Douglas C. North, "The United States Balance of Payments, 1790-1860," in *Trends in the American Economy of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, 1960); and Sester, *The Commercial Reciprocity Policy.*

[30] See, as examples, Benjamin Smith Barton, *Subject Files, 1789-1815,* "Coffee." In the collection of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia and James and Drinker, *Letter books,* letter dated October 29, 1756. In the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter HSP).

[31]For recent studies of French Caribbean coffee production capacity just before the revolution in Saint Domingue, see Michel Rolph-Troillot, "Coffee Planters and Coffee Slaves in the Antilles: The Impact of a Secondary Crop" in Ira Berlin and Philip Morgan (eds.), *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas* (1993); Troillot's, "Motion in the System: Coffee, Color and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Saint Domingue," *Review, A Journal of the Fernand Braudel Centre* 5:3, (Winter 1982), pp. 331-388; David Geggus, "Jamaica and the Saint Domingue Slave Revolt, 1791-1793," *The Americas: A Quarterly Review of Inter-American Cultural History*, 38:2 (October 1981), pp. 219-234 and "International Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution," Elsa Goveia Memorial Lecture, University of the West Indies, Mona (April 1999); and Patrick Bryan, "Emigres: Conflict and Reconciliation. The French Emigres in Nineteenth-Century Jamaica," *Jamaica Journal* 7 (1973), pp. 13-19.

[32] Parliament passed the first British tax on foreign coffee in 1732 as part of *An Act for Encouraging the Growth of Coffee in his Majesty's Plantations in America* (Printed by John Baskett, London, 1732). In bound volume of legislation entitled *Acts 1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8 of George the Second* (In the collections of the Library Company of Philadelphia, hereafter LCP). It was subsequently upheld each time the act came up for consideration (R.C. Simmonds and P.D.G. Thomas (eds.), *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, 1754-1783*, vol. I-VII (Millwood, New York, 1982-87). The act's principle feature was a preferential tariff, reducing import duties on British West Indian coffee from 24 d. to 18 d. per lb, while retaining the higher rate of 24 d. for foreign and East Indian imports. This not only undermined competition by the French and Dutch, but limited the viability of Britain's own experiments in the East Indies.

in February 1781, include all imported goods taxed by the Continental Congress and clearly demonstrate the increasing preference for French sources:[33]

Table 3: Coffee Imports listed in the Registers of Duties Paid on Imported Goods, 1781

Port City	Number of Vessels Carrying Coffee	Lbs. of Coffee Carried	% of Total (calculated by lbs.)
Cape Francois	15	1,779,150	86.3%
Port an Prince	10	131,830	6.4%
Hispaniola	5	122,930	6.0%
Martinique	1	12,350	.6%
Dominica	1	6,650	.3%
Grenada	1	170	less than .1%
Boston (coastal re-export)	1	7,320	.4%

Source: *Records of the Office of the Comptroller General, Port of Philadelphia Records, Registers of Duties Paid on Imported Goods (1781-1788);* 6 volumes, (Record Group 4, Pennsylvania State Archive, Harrisburg, PA).

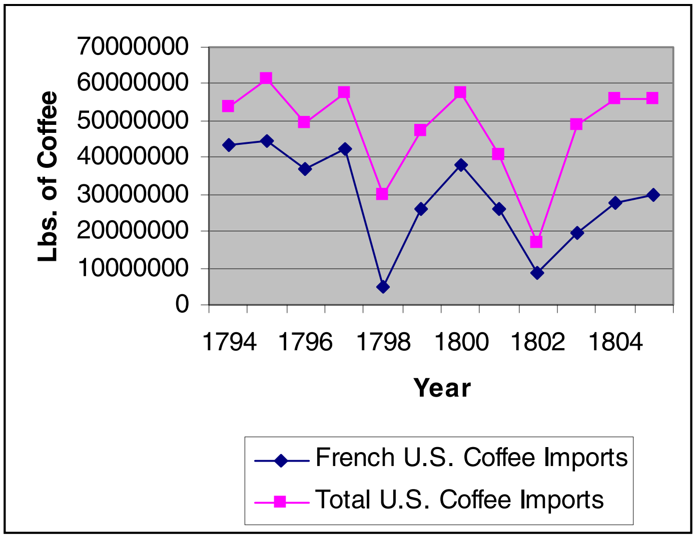
By 1793, France opened all of its West Indian ports to U.S. vessels and almost without exception provided from half to four-fifths of all U.S. coffee imports between 1785 to 1805.[34] But two aberrant periods, 1798-99 and 1803, provide good examples of how rapidly U.S. merchants

[33] To generate revenue during the war all coffee – irrespective of origin – was taxed beginning in 1779 at the rate of 1 shilling/100 lbs., later converted to 2.5 cents per 5 lbs., *ASPCN*, vol. V, p. 649. Because of Pennsylvania's special relationship to the commodity, an additional city tax was proposed in February 1787, though the motion was defeated, "Extracts from the Minutes of the Second Session of the Eleventh General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania" *Pennsylvania Gazette* (March 28, 1787), hereafter *PG*. In 1790, the Secretary of the Treasury proposed the continuation of taxes on four classes of commodities to alleviate escalating public debt: "This sum may, in the opinion of the Secretary, be obtained from the present duties on imports and tonnage, with the additions, which, without any possible disadvantage either to trade or agriculture, may be made on wines, spirits, including those distilled within the United States, teas and coffee," *PG* (January 29, 1790).

[34] *ASPFR,* vol. I., p. 147, "Decree of the National Convention, of 19th February, 1793, 2nd year of the French Republic, relative to produce exported and imported in American Vessels, to the Colonies, or in France." On February 17, 1793, the French National Convention opened, not only their West Indian ports, but those of their East Indian possessions as well, declaring: "That all the ports of the French colonies be open to vessels of the United States…That all produce exported or imported in American vessels, on going out or entering the colonies, or in France, pay the same duties as that born by French vessels" and "that the law of 20th August, 1790 be suspended; and that vessels laden with merchandise of the East Indies, may be at liberty to land."

could shift between coffee suppliers -- and how quickly they could return to pre-existing patterns of trade once crisis was averted.

Graph 1: Comparison of French Colonial with Total Coffee Imports to the U.S., 1794-1805



% Total U.S. Coffee Imports from French Colonies:

1794-95:	80.5%	1800-01:	66.1%
1795-96:	73.1%	1801-02:	63.3%
1796-97:	75.1%	1802-03:	51.4%
1797-98:	73.2%	1803-04:	40.3%
1798-99:	16.4%	1804-05:	48.9%
1799-1800:	54.9%	1805-06:	53.0%

The first drop in French coffee exports occurred during the French-U.S. Quasi-War when the U.S. temporarily closed all trade to France and her colonies in retaliation for increasing seizures of American ships by French authorities on charges of privateering. The story actually began several years earlier when Britain endeavored to force -- then court -- U.S. business away from the French coffee islands. In November 1793, Parliament instructed the British navy to detain all neutral ships, including those of the U.S., carrying provisions to French colonies or exporting goods from them. The result was a 27% decline in exports to the French islands in 1794, though trade levels re-stabilized the following year. Britain took a different tack four years later; rather than sanctions, Parliament passed "An act for carrying into execution the treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation, concluded between his Majesty and the United States of America." Not only did this act reinforce U.S. rights to trade with both the West and East Indies tax free, but it authorized the use of American ships representing the largest British trade concession since independence.[35]

French retaliation looked similar to that of Britain's a few years before; they commandeered U.S. vessels trading to British islands and harassed those returning with British Caribbean exports. France had certainly accused the U.S. of privateering before 1798. In the last few months of 1796, for example, customs agents indicted 44 American ships of illegal trading in Saint Domingue alone.[36] But in 1797, over 300 U.S. ships suffered this fate with Saint Domingue and Guadeloupe taking the most aggressive stances. Rarely were ship's crews arrested or endangered; more often port authorities condemned ships accused of illegal activity

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[35] *ASPFR*, v. 2, 103-106, "An act for carrying into execution the treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation, concluded between his Majesty and the United States of America" permitted exportation of US products to Britain and her colonies. Encouraging especially lumber, grains, beef and pork, fish, tobacco and rice, the act eliminated all import duties in both West and East Indian possessions: "…that the vessels belonging to the citizens of the United States of America shall be admitted and hospitably received in all seaports and harbours of the British territories in the East Indies." It also provided that British colonial produce could be carried in U.S. vessels without export taxes, the first time this level of open trade had been permitted since U.S. independence. This applied, however, only to U.S. ships carrying British produced commodities to America or to other British territories; those intended for other nations were still taxable. Many of these same issues were revisited and formalized six years later in the Jay Treaty. For discussions of the Jay Treaty and reactions to U.S. shipping to French and British colonies see Anna A. Clauder, *American Commerce as Affected by the Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, 1793-1812* (Philadelphia, 1932) and John Coatsworth, "American Trade with European Colonies in the Caribbean and South America, 1790-1812," *William and Mary Quarterly* 24:2 (April 1967), pp. 243-266.

[36] *ASPFR*, vol. 2, p. 55, "Abstract of American Vessels captured by privateers and gunboats belonging to the citizens of the French Republic and carried into the French ports of Saint Domingo." Only half of the vessels' cargo are included in the report; among these, only two carried coffee but in most cases ships had been stopped because French islanders wanted their cargo of wheat, wood, pork and other staples from North America, rather than for a perceived infraction in Caribbean imports back to America. French ports were open to American vessels, but exports were supposed to move only between U.S. and French or French colonial ports; any deviation of attempt to either sell French produce outside either nation, or to bring foreign produce into the French empire (i.e. combine British and French coffee) could be considered privateering. The same held for U.S.-British commerce when such lines were temporarily reopened.

or forced them to sell their cargo before being permitted to leave port.[37] After two years of U.S. embargo, however, France agreed to end hostilities and U.S.-French coffee imports once again climbed from 16 to 55% of total U.S. imports (see Graph 1). Those two years, however, not only illustrate the power the U.S. increasingly brought to bear on international politics, but also enable historians to gauge how quickly commercial alliances could shift when it became financially and politically expedient to do so.

During these two years of strained French relations, American merchants used a variety of strategies to fill the gap. They did not return to former British Caribbean suppliers; despite British legislative efforts, coffee exports from the British West Indies actually decreased by 43.4% between 1797 and 1798, and while British East Indian imports rose, they still amounted to just over one hundred thousand pounds, or .23%. Philadelphia took some advantage of the opportunity Spain offered between 1798 and 1799 and coffee imports from Havana and other ports increased by almost 4 million pounds over these two years. Both the Danish and Swedish West Indies experienced modest growth in coffee exports as well, but while both increased ten and twenty times their 1797 figures respectively, their positions relative to the U.S. coffee trade over all remained low.[38] Most American coffee merchants turned instead to the Dutch West and East Indies. Throughout this period, U.S.-Dutch trade had few restrictions; Holland limited U.S. shipments of pickled pork and beef, and banned grains and bread of any kind, but all other trade

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[37] Because of its leading position in the Caribbean trade, Pennsylvania's ships suffered the most from French incursions. Of the 44 vessels accused of privateering by French authorities in 1796, over one-third belonged to Philadelphia. In addition to Philadelphia's 14, ships brought into Saint Domingue in descending order came from: Baltimore (7); New York (6); Boston (5); Charleston (4); New London (2); St. Thomas (1); New Bedford (1); Cape Anne (1); Georgetown (1); Providence (1); Staten Island (1). *ASPFR*, vol. 2, p. 55. The following year the numbers rose even higher. A "*Schedule of Names of American Vessels captured by the French and of the Circumstances Attending them Extracted from the Philadelphia Gazette and the Gazette of the United States"* listed 316 captured U.S. vessels, 47 from Philadelphia. *ASPFR,* vol. 2, pp. 57-61

[38] Coatsworth, "American Trade with European Colonies," p. 247. The Swedish West Indies accounted for 13, 783 lbs. of coffee in 1797 and 175,213 lbs. in 1798; the Danish West Indies provided 109,027 lbs. and 2,033,108 respectively.

was relatively unencumbered.[39] Whether the coffee coming from the Dutch West Indies in 1798 had originated somewhere else is difficult to say. The Dutch did produce some coffee but not in quantities sufficient to account for the leap from 3.9 million pounds in 1797 to over 10 million pounds the following year.[40] Coffee shipped from the East Indies was more likely of Dutch manufacture. From just under 2.5 million pounds in 1796-97, Dutch East Indies exports to the U.S. rose to 6.4 million in 1798 and almost 12 million by 1800.[41] Although Dutch East Indian coffee levels remained high after 1800, those in the West Indies dropped as soon as the U.S. re-established trade relations with the French. Again, within the space of one year, merchants adjusted their commercial links and imports from the Dutch Caribbean dwindled to their lowest point ever in 1802, while the French West Indies leapt from 5 million to 26 million and from there to 38 million each successive year following 1799.

The only other significant drop in French Caribbean coffee imports occurred in 1803, during the waning years of the revolution in Saint Domingue. When the conflict broke out, Saint Domingue dominated world production of sugar and coffee, as was a major supplier of indigo and cotton in the Atlantic world. Historians have focused on the revolution's impact on the sugar industry in large part because that was where most destruction occurred. But Saint Domingue's share of the global coffee market was proportionately twice that of its share in total sugar production and the coffee growing sectors of the island sustained far less damage and

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[39] *ASPFR*, vol. 1, pp. 302-303.

[40] One possibility is that Dutch merchants reshipped Saint Domingue coffee to the United States during the Quasi-War, for while the U.S. had cut off trade relations with the French colonies, the Dutch had not – and evidence supports the idea of pre-existing commercial relations between the French and Dutch. Some Philadelphia buyers even complained that Dutch competition drove the price of coffee up: "There are other things that attend this [coffee] trade, that should not pass unnoticed: The Danes, or rather Dutch, under Danish colours, are powerful and jealous competitors for a share in this commerce: Their flags being also neutral, they swarm here [St. Domingue] from St. Thomas's & c. – and …endeavor to undersell us. The usual custom among the sellers of this article, when they arrive in town, is, at fist to go into all the American stores and learn the highest price they will give, and then go and sell to a Dane for six deniers more." *PG* (April 1, 1795).

[41] Figures from *ASPCN,* vol. V.

recovered much more quickly.[42] The question then, is did the U.S. import Haiti's coffee and, if so, how did it balance commercial and diplomatic interests? Officially, the U.S. did not recognize the legitimacy of an independent Haiti until the 1862. It is clear, however, that – with short-term exceptions – both Washington and Jefferson continued to permit travel to Haiti. Ostensibly, most ships did so under guise of assisting Saint Domingue's colonists "fight against the black revolution," but it is interesting to ask whether they returned empty-handed.[43] More than once during British occupation, the need for supplies outweighed English interests in inhibiting trade between Saint Domingue and the U.S. and the English opened the island's ports themselves, permitting payment for U.S. goods in locally produced sugar, coffee, rum, and cotton.[44] But not once does Haiti appear in the records of the *American State Papers* as a port with which the U.S. conducted business; it is possible that, before 1804, exports brought back from the island were collapsed with those from the rest of the French Caribbean -- regional sectors are rarely divided by island. What is less ambiguous is that the Dutch once again temporarily replaced French Caribbean coffee exports during the 1803 disruption; Dutch West Indian shipments to the U.S. rose 7.2 million pounds while those of their Indian Ocean colonies increased almost 7 million pounds. The balance, just over 7 million pounds, came from an

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[42] Geggus, "International Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution," p. 8.

[43] *Ibid*., p. 11. See also, Timothy Matthewson's "George Washington's Policy towards the Haitian Revolution," *Diplomatic History* 3 (1979), pp. 321-336 and "Jefferson and Haiti," *Journal of Southern History* 61 (1995), pp. 209-248 and Rayford Logan, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti, 1776-1891* (Chapel Hill, 1914). In "Jefferson and Haiti," Matthewson suggests that Jefferson used an embargo against Haiti as a diplomatic ploy to encourage Bonaparte to favorably review Jefferson's interest in the Louisiana and the surrounding Floridas (pp. 246-248). For an alternate interpretation, see Michael Zuckerman, "The Power of Blackness: Thomas Jefferson and the Revolution in Saint Domingue," in *Almost Chosen People: Oblique Biographies in the American* Grain (Berkeley, Los Angles, and Oxford, 1993). Zuckerman argues Jefferson's support to France and French colonists during the revolution in Saint Domingue reflects both his personal racist ideology and vested economic interest in restoring slavery to the island (p. 185).

[44] *PG* (June 25, 1794): "WHEREAS, it is become highly expedient, in order to procure a more abundant, supply of every thing necessary for the comfort and convenience of the inhabitants of such parts of St. Domingo, as are or may be under the British government, as well as his majesty's forces serving there, that vessels importing provisions and lumber into the said island from the United States of North America, should be permitted to take and carry away, in payment for the same, sugar, rum, coffee, cotton and produce of every description."

unlikely source -- the French East Indian colonies of Bourbon and Mauritius. These were clearly re-exports, either from French, British, or Dutch East Indian colonies, as this is the only year that any appreciable coffee came through these two locations. By 1804, patterns again reverted and for the following two years the French West Indies produced almost half of all U.S. coffee imports and re-exports single-handedly. The last shift during the period under consideration came in 1806 when the Spanish Caribbean and Latin America finally supplanted the French Atlantic colonies with much longer repercussions, first as the United States' and ultimately as the world's dominant coffee supplier.

Spanish Caribbean and Latin America:

When Spain re-opened both Havana and Trinidad to U.S. shipping in 1785, American hopes were high. The new Governor, Count Galvez was considered a "confirmed friend of the United States" who "proceeded to shew every favor to the American there, by counteracting the very vigourous conduct of the former Governor of Cuba towards our countrymen trading in that island."[45] Galvez's appointment in Cuba was brief. He was transferred to Mexico and his successor proved far less receptive to U.S. interests. It had been a trade with potential. During the closing years of the American Revolution, Philadelphia established thriving commerce, especially with Havana; 44 vessels arrived from that city to Philadelphia in 1781, representing the single largest concentration of any port city, with 20 additional voyages the following year.[46] But in 1784, Spain banned all trade to Cuba and the island's Governor issued orders for U.S. ships to leave Havana immediately.

[45] *PG* (May 25, 1785).
[46] *Records of the Office of the Comptroller General, Port of Philadelphia Records, Registers of Duties Paid on Imported Goods (1781-1788);* 6 volumes, (Pennsylvania State Archive, Harrisburg, PA, hereafter RG-4). The numbers of ships arriving from Havana are: 44 (1781), 20 (1782), but drop to just a handful thereafter (none, for instance, in 1783).

Subsequent restrictions against U.S. shipping precluded any possibility of reviving a viable American trade until, along with Britain, Spain experimented by reducing limitations in 1792 in an effort to attract U.S. business away from the French.[47] When open trade policies did not produce immediate results, however, Spain lost no time in again closing Havana's harbors. The *Pennsylvania Gazette* reprinted an excerpt written by a merchant in Cuba in March of 1792, shocked at the immediacy of Spain's reversal of trade policies:

> Yesterday a most extraordinary order was issued by the Governor relative to all foreign vessels in port; the most of them are ordered away in six days, and the remainder in eight, so that no vessel can stay longer than that time in harbour. This your own judgment will tell you is the same as a prohibition to all strange vessels; and there is another circumstance that makes the order doubly hard, which is, that all foreigners who arrive must value themselves on a Spaniard, and all their business transacted by him and in his name…. at least till there is some alteration for the better that can be depended on.[48]

Trade between Spain and the United States remained negligible until 1798 when, for one year, Spain again aligned with Britain to open its Caribbean ports to U.S. ships. But Spain prohibited gold from leaving the Empire under any circumstances, and when it became clear that American vessels were consistently violating the ban, Spain rescinded the act and reclosed their ports the following year.[49] In all likelihood, the enormous imbalance of trade between French and other nations' Caribbean colonies could not have been rectified by the British and Spanish port openings of 1792 and 1798; the French Caribbean continued to account for more U.S. imports than any other nationality before 1805 and, for many years in the case of coffee, more than all other regions combined (see footnote 22). The most dramatic developments in Spain's coffee complex were yet to come; after the abolition of the slave trade and ultimately of slavery

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[47] Coatsworth, "American Trade with European Colonies," p. 247. The Spanish West Indies as a whole comprised less than 1% of all U.S. exports between 1790 and 1793.
[48] *PG* (April 4, 1792).
[49] Arthur P. Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (Baltimore, 1941), pp. 6-9.

in the French and British islands, the Spanish and Portuguese colonies of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and especially Brazil did come to dominate the global coffee market, but most of these changes remained decades away.

Under Cover of Christiansted

Philadelphia's mercantile community had to negotiate a labyrinth of complex and volatile trade laws and regulations at the close of the American Revolution and, at first, prospects for coffee merchants did not particularly bright. Denied access to their former British suppliers, limited from open trade with their French allies until 1784, and unable to utilize Spanish colonies except for one year, the city's traders needed to be creative. There was, however, one series of players not yet accounted for -- the neutral Caribbean holdings of Denmark, Sweden, and Holland. Although Dutch St. Eustatius is usually touted as the illicit entry point for British West Indian goods re-routed to North America, the Danish port of Christiansted appears to have a special significance for Philadelphia traders as the American Revolution drew to a close.[50] Not only did almost all Philadelphia-bound coffee shift from Saint Domingue to Christiansted between 1781 and 1782, but nearly everything else imported into Philadelphia followed suit. The volume and variety of goods clearing this one port obviously meant they were Danish re-exports. St. Croix did not produce the quantities of Caribbean commodities passing through its harbors, much less the Western and Southern European goods packed beside the sugar, molasses,

[50] For descriptions of St. Eustatius' role in re-routing contraband wares see, Coatsworth, "American Trade with European Colonies," pp. 247-48 and especially Andrew O'Shaughnessy, "The Other Road to Yorktown: St. Eustatius and Illicit Trade in the British Caribbean during the Revolutionary War," *Program in Early American Economy and Society (PEAES)Conference* (Philadelphia, May 2000). In 1782, 126 of 289 vessels cleared into Philadelphia, or 43.4%, came from Christiansted. The remainder was divided between 28 ports, the next highest concentrations from Hamburg (47, or 16.6%), Havana, and New Jersey (each 20, or 6.9%).

coffee, and rum headed to Philadelphia. To understand the strategic importance of this St. Croix port, however, it is first necessary to place it within the larger context of Caribbean commerce.

Although the French West India Company purchased St. Croix from the Knights of Malta in 1665, little successful development initially took place. Frustrated by attempts to settle the island, France sold St. Croix to the Danish West India and Guinea Company in 1733. The Danish West India Company stockholders had already lost money on the purchase of neighboring St. Thomas and to secure the sale of St. Croix, Company executives greatly exaggerated St. Croix's development status:

> ….the island, when surveyed would be found to contain not fewer than 800 large plantations besides many smaller ones; that it would yield cacao, indigo, and coffee, as well as sugar and cotton; and that the land was of such high quality that the plantations would be worth from 500 to 1,000 rdl. from the beginning.[51]

If true, this would have been quite an accomplishment for an island of only 84 square miles. Instead, what the first arrivals found were a series of abandoned buildings and slave quarters, and an island that "still lies uninhabited."[52]

The Company appointed Captain Frederick Moth, then their governor at St. Thomas, to also serve as governor of St. Croix but cultivating their new acquisition would not be as easy as shareholders had been led to believe. Settlement posed the first problem; when recruitment efforts proved unsuccessful in Denmark, the island's administration offered to sell plantation land to outside bidders and by the mid-eighteenth century a significant number of English buyers had re-settled from neighboring islands. This resulted in an interesting bifurcation, for while Danes continued to control of the island government, non-Danish residents managed most of the

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[51] Waldemar Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies Under Company Rule, 1671-1754 (With a Supplementary Chapter, 1755-1917)* (New York, 1917), pp. 202-205. Before the real facts were known, the Danish crown had high hopes and passed legislation on July 4, 1733 requiring all private Danish refineries to buy their raw sugar from St. Croix as long as supply sources held out.
[52] Letter from Frederick Moth to the Danish West India Company (July 7, 1725) cited in *Ibid,*p. 209.

local economy and English even superceded Danish as the dominant language of the two port cities, Christiansted and Frederiksted.

It also took St. Croix some time to find its economic niche. Under Moth's administration limited farming did take hold, but rather than the anticipated diverse agricultural base lauded by Company executives, small plantations were only successful at growing modest amounts of sugar and tobacco. To ensure as wide a market as possible, the Company attempted a risky venture; rather that restricting trade to Company or even Danish ships, they opted to open the island's ports to privately-owned vessels regardless of nationality. The tactic worked and St. Croix enjoyed a booming free trade economy until 1747 when rising island profits enticed the Danish West India Company to try to regain a shipping monopoly. They faced significant resistance, however, for "when the inhabitants learned that the king had forbidden that trade by private ship-owners which had been permitted by the edict of April 25, 1735 and subsequent mandates, they became well-nigh desperate."[53] Through several petitions and ultimately a delegation to Copenhagen, the island's planters secured their right to trade privately with the British colonies of North America, although "all other trade with foreign lands must be carried on through Copenhagen alone."[54] In 1754, St. Croix passed from private to royal hands and the Danish crown abolished the last monopolistic trade policies. Only once, in 1781, did the king attempt to reclaim any control over colonial shipping privileges but all such efforts finally ended in 1782. It is at this point that Philadelphia rejoins the story of St. Croix's open door policy.

Although trade between France and the United States was not as unrestricted as some American merchants might have hoped, their position improved significantly with the opening of

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[53] *Ibid.*, p. 231.
[54] *Ibid.,* p. 233. The most liberal policies concerned North American imports; like the rest of the Caribbean, St. Croix relied on food staples for their livelihood and wood products both for local building and to create the containers for island exports.

five major French ports in 1784 and 1785: Saint Domingue's Port au Prince and Cape Francois, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Grenada. But this did not help those seeking to develop the coffee trade a few years earlier. U.S. interests in St. Croix were admittedly fleeting, but for that brief time between British pre-war supplies and French free ports of the mid-1780s, Christiansted played a critical role. The Danish crown's bid for shipping hurt American commercial interests in 1781, but the reassertion of St. Croix's neutral status in 1782 and 1783 made it the ideal clearing house, not only for coffee bound for Philadelphia but for almost everything else as well. Table 4 compares the number of ships from Christiansted with those from other ports:

Table 4: Numbers of Ships Clearing into Philadelphia from Principal Ports, 1781-1783

Port	1781	1782	1783
Bordentown	--	--	22
Boston	6	2	15
Cadiz	11	1	0
Cape Francois	22	1	13
Christiansted	15	126	66
Hamburg, PA	--	47	1
Havana	44	20	13
New Castle	14	5	7
Lewistown	1	1	12
Lisbon	--	--	10
London	--	--	12
New Jersey	4	20	12
Orient	6	6	12
New York	--	--	50

Port au Prince	10	4	0
Rhode Island	3	1	10
St. Thomas	10	5	15
Wilmington	16	18	11
All Other Ports	29	32	244
TOTAL # OF VESSELS CLEARING INWARD	191	289	525

Note: 1781 includes only February through December; 1783 contains only the first three quarters. Only ports with ten of more vessels in a given year are specified by name. For a complete listing of all ports engaged in Philadelphia's coffee trade, see footnote 52. Source: See Table 3.

These figures show that, while almost three-quarters of ships carrying coffee to Philadelphia in 1781 arrived from Saint Domingue, more than 60% had switched to Christiansted the following year. Most continued to come from St. Croix during the first quarter of 1783, though by June Cape Francois and Port au Prince both reemerged as principal coffee shippers and these three dominant ports were joined by a myriad of lesser coffee purveyors.[55]

Governors' "Special Concessions"

Indirect shipping was not the only alternative means of legitimate trade, in the case of the British colonies, island governors themselves sometimes skirted restrictions. Official policy excluded American ships from trading in British West Indian harbors, however, "in instances where such action seemed contrary to the interest of the Empire" individual governors could

[55] The variety of ports shipping coffee to Philadelphia by the end of 1783 is remarkable; most only appear once in the lists and likely represent an effort to expend a small coffee surplus rather than any kind of established coffee trade, but a handful appear regularly, though the quantities carried amount to much less than their Danish or French West Indian counterparts. 1783 coffee shipments arrived from, in alphabetical order: Amsterdam, Antigua, Aux Cayes, Barbados, Bermuda, Cape Francois, Charleston, Christiansted, Connecticut, Demarara, Dominica, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Hamburg, Havana, Hispaniola, Jamaica, Lewistown, Marseilles, Martinique, New Jersey, New York, Newbury Port, Newport, North Carolina, Port au Prince, Providence, Rhode Island, St. Christopher's, St. Lucia, St. Mark's, St. Pierre, St. Thomas, Salem, South Carolina, Surinam, Tobago, Trenton, and Virginia. *Records of the Office of the Comptroller General, Port of Philadelphia Records, Registers of Duties Paid on Imported Goods (1781-1788)*; figures drawn from volumes 1-3, (Record Group 4, Pennsylvania State Archive, Harrisburg, PA).

grant "special concessions," or the right to temporarily suspend certain parts of the Navigation Acts when doing so was deemed essential to the colony's well-being. As might be expected, the metropole and the colonies often held different definitions for both "essential" and "well-being" however the practice was sufficiently accepted that in 1786 Parliament passed an act of indemnification to annually exempt governors from prosecution for Navigation Act violations.[56]

Governors suspended the Navigation Acts for various reasons. In a few cases, such as Barbados, successive Governors simply extended "special concessions" indefinitely by assenting to a continuation of the original document each time it was due to expire.[57] Others governors responded to genuine need. While Governor Campbell was unwilling to even temporarily suspend the ban on U.S. shipping in 1783, a series of earthquakes and hurricanes over the next three years forced John Dalling, his successor, to reconsider this position. On July 7, 1784, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* reported on the first of these hurricanes, describing the devastation of the island's southern port cities:

> The harbour of Kingston and Port-Royal, on the morning after the hurricane, exhibited the most striking picture of desolation: His Majesty's ships Janus and Iphegenia, the Vernon armed store-ship, Nelly (Dawson) and some small craft, being the only vessels that rode out the storm. Every other in these harbours were either sunk or driven ashore, and all of them dismasted. To give perfect account of the loss is a task at present, impossible; many vessels being absolutely sunk, of which no vestige remains, but the heads of masts that appear above water.[58]

Even under true duress, however, the Governor qualified his concession by lifting only the ban on U.S. imports of food and lumber; the ban in British West Indian exports to the U.S. in American ships remained in effect.[59]

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[56] *The Annual Register or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature for the Year 1806,* vol. XLVIII (London, 1808), pp. 81-89. Includes a comprehensive overview of British reactions to reductions in restrictions on U.S. trade.

[57] Carrington, "The United States and the British West Indian Trade," p. 158.

[58] *Pennsylvania Gazette* (July 7, 1784).

[59] "Extract from a Letter from Jamaica" dated August 1, 1784, reprinted *PG* (October 6, 1784): "On account of the apprehensions of the inhabitants, from the late dreadful hurricane, the Governor and Council have given permission, for the space of four months from the date hereof, to vessels of all nations, and all sizes, to bring in lumber and

While Jamaica may have been conservative in its stance, other British islands were not. Between 1793 and 1802, continental conflicts between France and Britain resulted in severe shortages and depressed economic conditions in most of the British islands – less so the French which retained access to U.S. supplies. When ebbs in British shipments to the Caribbean grew especially severe, British West Indian legislatures, merchants, and planters routinely petitioned for a reinstatement of all levels of U.S. commerce, including use of American ships. When the edict of 1783 was not ameliorated, individual islands relied again and again on "special concessions" to see them through. Available U.S. shipping statistics for the late 1780s and early 1790s reveal the results of these repeated trade opportunities. While British West Indian consumption of U.S. exports initially declined after the Revolutionary war, by 1790 they consistently accounted for 20 to 30% of all U.S. exports to the region (for a comparison of British, French, and Spanish consumption of U.S. exports to the Caribbean, see Appendix D). Nor can it be assumed that these goods always traveled in the requisite British vessels since American customs papers record inbound shipments of British West Indian coffee and other produce on American vessels despite the ban. The American State Papers began distinguishing between American and foreign vessels half-way through 1792, but only for the combined Caribbean. Demarcations between nationalities began in 1794. The following table compares these figures for 1794 to1800:

provisions --- but not permitted to carry the smallest quantity of produce from the island." Additional accounts of the 1785 hurricane appeared in the *PG* on October 12 and October 18, 1785. The 1786 hurricane was described in the *PG* on June 21, 1786. The article includes a letter written from Elizabeth Town, Jamaica which articulates some of the island residents' frustrations before the ban on U.S. imports was again lifted: "Our crops will be but indifferent this year, principally owing to the last hurricane; we are also visited with a great drought --- the hand of Providence is heavy upon us. That imp Flowerdew, of the customs, continues the implacable enemy of the United States, and makes sad havock among your vessels."

Table 5: Comparison of Coffee Imports from the British West Indies in American and British Vessels (recorded in lbs. of coffee)

Year	American Vessels	% of Total	British Vessels	% of Total
1794-95	5,001,930	100.0%	--	--
1795-96	4,480,463	100.0%	--	--
1796-97	1,634,682	96.4%	60,983	3.6%
1797-98	1,223,189	89.1%	149,414	10.9%
1798-99	778,571	100.0%	--	--
1799-1800	536,791	66.8%	268,250	33.2%

Source: *ASPCN*, vol. V, pp. 350, 366, 394, 402, 434, 441, 464, 471, 478, 512, 519, 556, 576, 580, 629, 634, 676, 682, 706, 712, 757.

The figures for the U.S.-British West Indian coffee trade are consistent with those of other nationalities. Without exception, the amount of coffee imported from every sector of the Caribbean overwhelmingly arrived in American ships before 1805. When the French and British attempted to re-establish control over U.S. shipping in 1806, the percentage of coffee borne in foreign vessels did rise appreciably – accounting for between 50 to 90% of French and British coffee exports to the U.S. Simultaneously, however, demand for both British and French coffee dropped –in the French case by over 400% and for the first time the Spanish West Indies, which reopened their ports to U.S. trade after 1806, emerged as North America's dominant supplier, retaining this position until after the war of 1812. Like the U.S. pattern to the French and British West Indies before them, the Spanish islands allowed the bulk of coffee shipments to travel in U.S.-owned vessels.[60]

[60] For comparison, the following figures represent U.S. and Spanish Caribbean and South America vessels carrying coffee to the U.S. between 1806 and 1812 (*ASPCN*, vol. V):

Year	% American Shipping	% Spanish West Indian Shipping
1806-07	93.9%	6.1%
1807-08	88.8%	11.2%
1808-09	79.0%	21%
1809-10	84.2%	15.8%
1810-11	90.4%	9.6%

The Path to Privateering

Given the legal and mostly legal methods of importing coffee, what role did the Captain Ashs of the world have to play after American independence? Philadelphia's newspapers include almost weekly accounts of American ships stopped for suspected smuggling. For that matter, French, British, and even Danish ships also appear in connection with contraband coffee, though only a handful compared to the numbers of vessels legally entering the U.S. each year. None, however, provide as much detail about the actual act of coffee smuggling as did the ill-fated Captain Ash so, before concluding with post-1783, let us briefly return to ten years prior and follow Puerto Rico's coffee in Kingston harbor.

After docking, Captain Ash no longer narrates the story. His Jamaica factors, Brown and Birch wrote the last series of letters to their Liverpool counterparts, confirming rumors that the ship *Mary* had been condemned by Jamaican authorities for illegally importing non-British coffee. It seems Ash made a bad miscalculation; rather than sell his Spanish coffee in North America, he off-loaded his cargo in Kingston. To undercut local producers, "Capt. Ash was imprudent enough to offer coffee for sale in a publick company, under the current prices considerably, which was taken notice of by a coffee planter there present."[61] Jamaican planters did not appreciate Ash's entrepreneurship and reported the arrival of unlicensed foreign produce to local port authorities who condemned the ship that same evening. When customs officials boarded the vessel they initially found only four casks of coffee; after more thorough examination, however, not only were "the people's beds found full of beans," but also notations on this concealment of cargo turned up in both the captain's log and first mate's journal, casting more than a shadow of doubt on Ash's protestations of innocence. Brown and Birch opted to

1811-12	85.4%	14.6%

[61] PRO T 1/504, "Letter from Brown and Walsh to Brown and Birch, Liverpool" (March 13, 1773), p. 1.

pay the penalty for importing foreign coffee rather than forfeit their ship; doing so also kept Ash out of prison, though they seemed less concerned about his welfare than that of their vessel.[62]

The stories after 1783 – while no less interesting – usually follow a similar pattern. British ships stop American vessels on suspicion of trading with France or her colonies and condemn the ship or confiscate her coffee cargo. A few examples suffice to set the stage. On July 25, 1787, Captain Cannon and son arrived in Philadelphia in their schooner *Nassau*. Having left a few weeks earlier "bound on a trading voyage to the West Indies," they had joined forces with the French schooner *Deux Amis*. Only days into their return voyage, carrying sugar, coffee, molasses, hides, cotton, and cocoa, both were "suddenly boarded and taken by the armed British schooner Vigilant" and "carried to the British port of New Providence and condemned."[63] In February 1794, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* printed the letter of another merchant whose cargo, bound for Bordeaux, was diverted to London instead. English merchants agreed to pay the going rates for the ship's flour and rice but "a quantity of coffee she had on board, belonging to us, they were endeavoring to make French property of."[64] The following week, an English judge condemned both the ship's sugar and coffee as French; according to British law it was legally confiscated without remuneration.[65] The news initiated a backlash of public protest that argued British commercial incursions not only threatened the U.S. economy, but its international reputation:

> It can no longer be a doubt…that the tendency of certain measures is to shake the public credit of this country to the foundation -- to reduce the value of our exports more than one half …to deprive us of what every other nation has always considered as an advantage -- our neutrality.[66]

[62] *Ibid*., pp. 2-3.
[63] *Gentleman's Magazine,* vol. xxxv, p. 156.
[64] *PG* (February 5, 1794).
[65] *PG* (February 12, 1794).
[66] *Ibid*., (February 12, 1794).

The efficacy of British efforts, however, depends on who you read. In a letter to Congress, President Thomas Jefferson made piracy seem omnipresent: "Our coasts have been infested and our harbours watched by private armed vessels…They have captured, in the very entrance of our habours, as well as on the high seas, not only the vessels of our friends coming to trade with us, but our own also."[67] Philadelphia's merchants, however, seemed more ambivalent. They accepted piracy and privateering as inherent risks of trans-Atlantic shipping; as long as incidents remained sporadic and balance sheets ultimately fell in their favor, they were satisfied to count the increasing profits their trade to the West Indies provided:

> That many of our vessels had been condemned in the West Indies is certain; that others have been detained and ill treated, is equally certain; that some have been legally condemned for breach of revenue laws, cannot be denied; and that some have been falsely reported as condemned, when they were not, is now well know. At any rate our shipping is not all lost, as some would make us believe, for scarce a day passes, without some arrivals from the West Indies, and this day there were five reported on the coffee house books…We are happy to hear that many of our vessels from the West Indies return with full cargoes, or large sums of money.[68]

The above quotations succinctly capture how those with principally political or economic interests interpreted the same events differently. Thomas Jefferson's image of "infested harbours" says more about his concerns for United States acceptance in the international arena and its ability to influence commercial activity, as well as about the federal government's role as final arbiter of trade policies and regulations, than it does about the economic realities surrounding the complex issue of piracy in the era of the Early Republic. The more pragmatic attitudes of Philadelphia's merchant community better reflect how the economic realities of trade had been restructured after independence. After 1783, Philadelphia's merchants proved remarkably resilient and adaptable to a business climate that could change virtually overnight.

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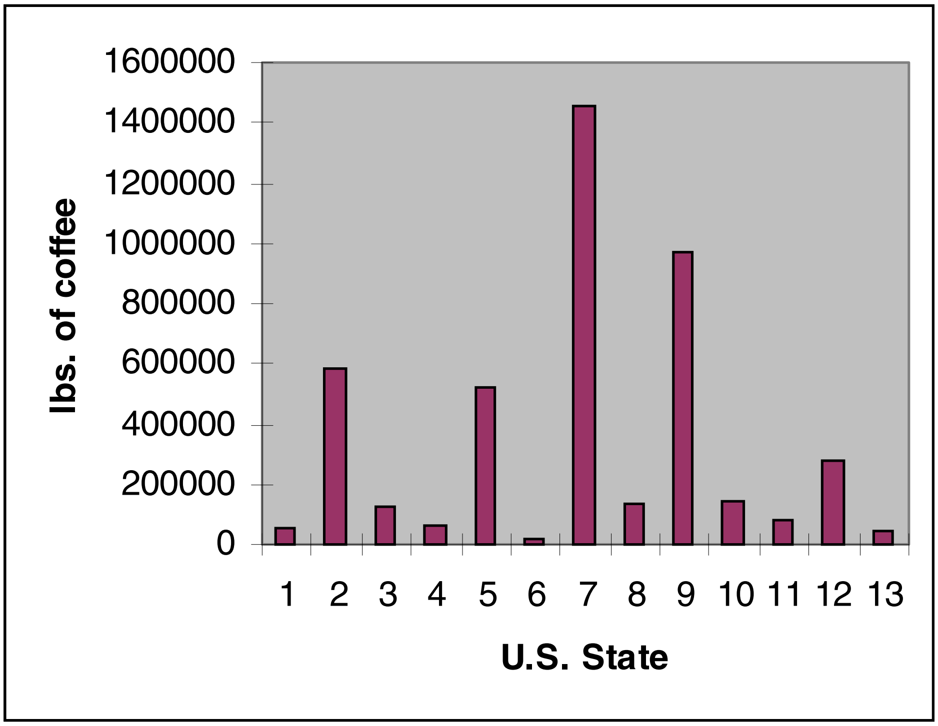
[67] *ASPFR*, p. 66 "Letter from President Jefferson to the House and Senate, Dec. 3, 1805"
[68] *PG* (May 21, 1794).

They did not assume an intractable position on such issues as piracy and illicit trade. Rather, they sought to take advantage and profit from whatever circumstances they were presented with; indeed, piracy for them did not pose economically the significant threat that Jefferson perceived politically. Occasional acts of depredation by pirates and privateers were of far less consequence than the burgeoning trade on which these piratical schemes preyed. Legislation from the three dominant European powers shaped who the legal boundaries of who the U.S. could conduct business with, but rather than limiting traders' endeavors, this became a chance to explore and compare suppliers, strike new alliances, and buy according to the best bargains. The overwhelming success of the U.S. coffee trade between 1789 and 1805 exemplifies these opportunities and merchants' abilities to make the most of them.

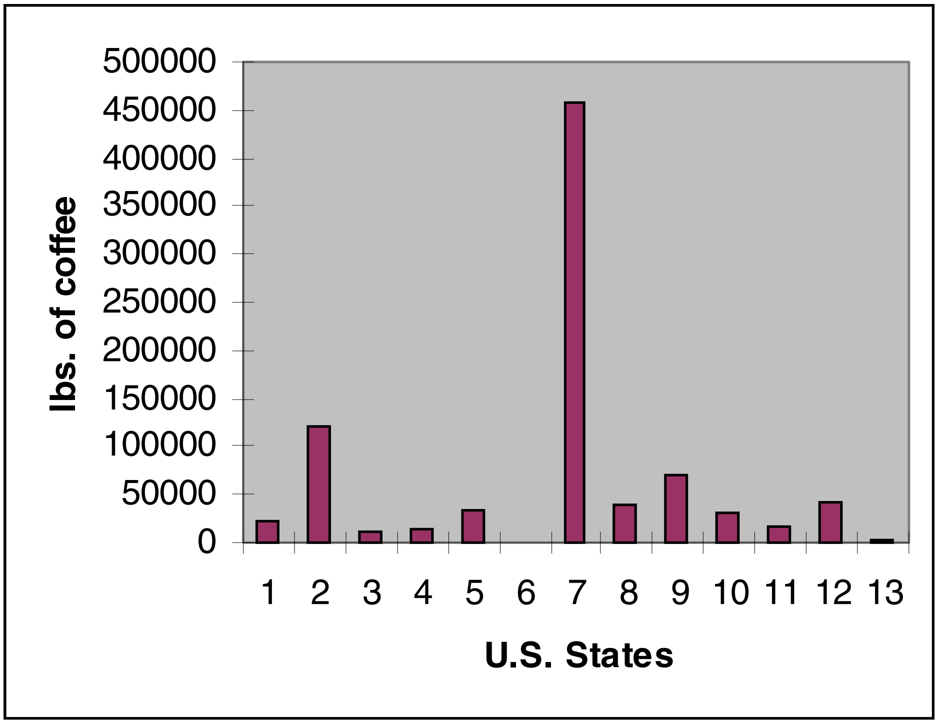
Appendix A1: State by State Breakdown of Coffee Imported into the United States, Oct. 1790 to Dec. 1791



State	Lbs. of Coffee	% of Total U.S. Trade
1 = New Hampshire	57,321	1.3%
2 = Massachusetts	585,882	13.1%
3 = Rhode Island	123,589	2.8%
4 = Connecticut	60,914	1.7%
5 = New York	521,363	11.6%
6 = New Jersey	17,785	.4%
7 = Pennsylvania	1,457,128	32.5%
8 = Delaware	138,947	3.1%
9 = Maryland	970,985	21.6%
10 = Virginia	144,639	3.2%
11 = North Carolina	81,005	1.8%
12 = South Carolina	276,598	6.2%
13 = Georgia	42,617	1.5%
TOTAL:	4,478,676	100.0%

Source: Shown in order of appearance in the 1791-92 "Abstract of Duties arising on Goods, Wares, and Merchandize, imported into the United States, commencing the 1st of October, 1791 and ending on the 31st of December following." *ASPCN,* vol. V, p. 203. If placed in order of import level, states would be ranked: 1) Pennsylvania; 2) Maryland; 3) Massachusetts; 4) New York; 5) South Carolina; 6)Virginia; 7) Delaware; 8) Rhode Island; 9) North Carolina; 10) Connecticut; 11) Georgia; 12) New Hampshire; 13) New Jersey.

Appendix A2: State by State Breakdown of Coffee Imported into the United States, Oct. 1791 to Dec. 1792



State	Lbs. of Coffee	% of Total U.S. Trade
1 = New Hampshire	22,730	2.6%
2 = Massachusetts	121,432	14.1%
3 = Rhode Island	10,275	1.2%
4 = Connecticut	13,669	1.6%
5 = New York	34,808	4.0%
6 = New Jersey	--	--
7 = Pennsylvania	457,809	53.1%
8 = Delaware	39,065	4.5%
9 = Maryland	68,886	8.1%
10 = Virginia	31,416	3.6%
11 = North Carolina	16,718	1.9%
12 = South Carolina	42,653	5.0%
13 = Georgia	2,775	.3%
TOTAL:	862,236	100.0%

Note: *ASPCN*, vol. v, p. 166. Subsequent years do not differentiate by state, collapsing all figures into one annual total. If placed in order of import level, states would be ranked: 1) Pennsylvania; 2) Massachusetts; 3) Maryland; 4) South Carolina; 5) Delaware; 6) New York; 7) Virginia; 8) New Hampshire; 9) North Carolina; 10) Connecticut; 11) Rhode Island; 12) Georgia; 13) New Jersey.

Appendix A3: Coffee Imports into Pennsylvania by Port, 1789-91

Export Port	1789-90	% of Total Trade	1790-91	% of Total Trade
British West Indies	323,623	23.2%	155,222	10.6%
French West Indies	826,663	59.4%	1,180,180	81%
Bourbon and Mauritius	26,171	1.9%	--	--
Spanish West Indies	2,986	.2%	24,914	1.7%
Floridas and Louisiana	8,554	.6%	--	--
Dutch West Indies and American Colonies	110,750	8.0%	82,086	5.6%
Cape of Good Hope	--	--	13,064	.9%
Danish West Indies	75,947	5.5%	1,692	.1%
Swedish West Indies	17,545	1.2%	1,692	.1%
TOTALS	1,392,219	100.0%	1,457,128	100.0%

Source: *ASPCN*, vol. V, pp. 83, 179.

Appendix B: Comparison of the Caribbean Provision Trade for Leading Colonial Port Cities, 1768-1773 (values given in tons and percentage this represents of a city's total trade that year)

Year	Boston	New York	Philadelphia	Charleston
1768 inbound (% of total trade):	10,811 (33.8%)	6,301 (28.8%)	11,677 (33.3%)	8,238 (26.1%)
1768 outbound (% of total trade):	10,095 (29.9%)	6,981 (9.6%)	12,019 (32.1%)	5,808 (18.4%)
1769 inbound:	10,495 (25.9%)	6,964 (25.9%)	11,726 (27.6%)	6,123 (21.0%)
1769 outbound:	8,995 (24.2%)	5,446 (20.1%)	11,114 (27.1%)	5,807 (18.6%)
1770 inbound:	11,088 (28.9%)	8,695 (34.0%)	14,946 (31.5%)	9,563 (34.7%)
1770 outbound:	8,248 (22.3%)	7,005 (26.3%)	13,842 (29.5%)	7,374 (24.6%)
1771 inbound:	8,586 (21.7%)	8,191 (32.7%)	13,397 (32.1%)	8,208 (26.8%)
1771 outbound:	9,171 (23.6%)	7,708 (30.2%)	13,449 (31.2%)	6,131(19.6%)
1772 inbound:	12,649 (29.0%)	8,170 (28.3%)	12,947 (30.6%)	6,121 (20.4%)
1772 outbound:	10,073 (23.7%)	8,076 (28.7%)	15,674 (34.2%)	5,749 (18.2%)

Source: *Customs 16:1,* summaries of topsails, sloops, and tonnage for to the Foreign and British West Indies for each year.

Appendix C: U.S. Coffee Imports by Region, 1789-1806 in lbs.

Year	Swedish West Indies	Danish West Indies	Dutch West Indies	British West Indies	French West Indies	Spanish West Indies	Other	TOTAL
1794-95	329,342	428,596	2,586,783	5,001,930	43,464,561	492,817	1,656,947	53,960,976
1795-96	314,140	961,706	7,751,433	4,480,463	44,688,310	681,986	2,262,457	61,141,051
1796-97	392,551	943,880	3,783,313	1,695,665	37,164,707	867,768	4,643,618	49,491,502
1797-98	13,782	109,027	3,863,472	1,372,603	42,290,705	1,109,558	8,963,478	57,722,625
1798-99	175,213	2,033,108	10,345,612	778,571	4,918,422	3,919,287	7,817,357	29,978,570
1799-1800	101,604	605,304	3,862,539	805,041	26,055,184	2,918,108	13,042,165	47,389,946
1800-01	97,254	1,631,963	1,993,444	1,188,795	37,975,598	680,103	13,816,747	57,383,904
1801-02	53,496	200,594	1,388,881	1,764,391	25,870,126	591,445	11,017,928	40,886,861
1802-03	327,384	417,034	723,501	1,899,734	8,658,088	452,349	4,350,403	16,828,493
1803-04	698,469	2,116,340	7,979593	1,997,162	19,605,955	4,239,074	12,001,789	48,638,382
1804-05	273,442	2,390,745	992,853	289,206	27,453,284	5,411,664	18,048,130	56,141,320
1805-06	66,833	3,585,073	2,218,818	1,440,658	29,679,201	5,102,115	13,878,954	55,993,788

Source: *ASPCN*, vol. V

Appendix D: U.S. exports to British, French, and Spanish Colonies in the West Indies and Latin America as a Percentage of Total U.S. Exports to the Region, 1790-1805

Year	BWI (1)	BWI (2)	FWI (1)	FWI (2)	SWI (1)	SWI (2)
1790	31.0	10.3	51.5	16.3	.7	2.3
1791	28.0	9.8	56.3	19.7	.4	1.1
1792	30.1	10.4	52.1	18.1	.5	1.6
1793	20.7	7.2	56.3	19.6	.6	1.8
1794	23.9	7.3	40.9	12.4	9.2	2.8
1795	20.9	5.5	39.4	10.3	11.0	2.9
1796	26.2	8.1	40.5	12.5	8.8	2.7
1797	11.5	4.1	44.5	15.7	15.3	5.6
1798	19.8	6.9	24.7	8.6	23.7	8.3
1799	23.1	7.9	10.2	3.5	33.0	11.4
1800	27.4	9.0	21.9	7.2	35.4	11.8
1801	35.1	10.4	26.2	7.7	30.5	9.1
1802	30.8	9.3	30.8	9.3	27.1	8.0
1803	43.0	10.2	27.7	6.6	6.6	1.6
1804	37.6	9.0	19.2	4.6	18.6	4.5
1805	24.3	6.2	30.2	7.8	31.2	8.0

(1) represents the percentage of U.S. exports to the region; (2) represents the percentage of U.S. exports globally.

Source: *ASPCN*, vol. 5, pp. 34, 138, 248, 294, 312, 342, 362, 384, 417, 431, 453, 489, 507, 543, 590, 671, 696, 721, 738, 815, 869, 892, 965, 994, 1023 and Coatsworth, "American Trade with European Colonies in the Caribbean and South America, 1790-1812," *William and Mary Quarterly* 24:2 (April 1967), pp. 243-266.

Appendix E: Percentage of Domestic and Foreign Shipping, 1789-1806

Year	Total Coffee Imports	% Imported in American Vessels	% Imported in Foreign Vessels
1794-95	53,960,976	N/A	N/A
1795-96	61,141,051	N/A	N/A
1796-97	49,491,502	93.5%	6.5%
1797-98	57,722,625	89.8%	10.2%
1798-99	29,978,570	N/A	N/A
1799-1800	47,389,946	91.3%	8.7%
1800-01	57,383,904	88.3%	11.7%
1801-02	40,886,861	88.9%	11.1%
1802-03	16,828,493	79.4%	20.6%
1803-04	48,638,382	98.9%	1.1%
1804-05	56,141,320	80.5%	19.5%
1805-06	55,993,788	84.5%	15.5%

Source: See Appendix D.