
The purpose of this thesis is to explore the role of the U.S. Navy in the suppression of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and West Indian piracy in the 1820s. The life of the U.S.S. *Alligator* provides a microcosmic look at the political environment of the time in regards to naval and slave debates. The Charleston Navy Yard in Boston built the Unites States Schooner *Alligator* in 1820, under a congressional act prohibiting the trans-Atlantic slave trade, notably the importation of slaves into the United States and the participation of Americans in the trade. Congress authorized the president to use public ships to help enforce this act. At the same time, political debates surrounded piratical depredations in the West Indies and the slave status of new states entering the union. The *Alligator* only remained in naval service for two years, yet her assigned missions reflect the political environment of the time. The first two voyages sent the schooner to the African coast, where she apprehended several slave ships and negotiated for land on which to establish a settlement for recaptured Africans and free slaves. On the next two voyages, she served on the West India Squadron, formed to combat piracy in the West Indies. Returning to the United States from Cuba, she ran aground upon a reef in the Florida Keys. Although seemingly a short and insignificant life, the *Alligator*’s naval missions tell a great deal about domestic policy and the international position of the United States in world affairs.
THE UNITED STATES SCHOONER *ALLIGATOR*:
THE U.S. NAVY’S CAMPAIGN
TO SUPPRESS
THE TRANS-ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE AND WEST INDIAN PIRACY.

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Prologue: The *Alligator* Wreck

On the evening of November 20, 1822, at about 21:30, the U.S. Schooner *Alligator* ran aground upon a reef in the Florida Keys. The schooner had been escorting a convoy of merchant vessels, one of the protocols to deter pirate attack. The route from Cuba to the eastern coast of the United States led through the Straits of Florida, a channel of navigable water flanked by dangerous reefs and shoals. Cuba lay to the south and the Florida Keys to the north. Travel northwards was navigable by carefully sailing with the Gulf Stream current, but the islands that bordered this passageway were ideal for pirates to await a passing vessel.

A merchant convoy, chaperoned by naval warships, was returning to the mainland United States from the Caribbean when one of the merchants, the *Ann Maria*, began to stray from the convoy. Lieutenant John Dale, commander of the *Alligator*, changed course to keep an eye on the vessel. Amidst the quickly shallowing water, the lookouts took depth soundings every half-hour and recorded the temperatures of the air and water every hour. Rapid declines in temperature indicate nearing the coastline and a shallowing of the water. Despite the fact that the last depth sounding had indicated no bottom contact at 45 fathoms, (to landlubbers, approximately 270 feet) the schooner suddenly struck a reef, coming to a complete halt.¹

They crew lowered one of the schooner’s boats over the side, and several men rowed astern of the vessel to deeper water to drop an anchor while the crew prepared to

turn the capstan in an attempt to haul the vessel up the anchor line and off the reef. While they tried to drag the ship off the reef, the anchor line parted. The crew threw cannons and shot, followed by anchor chains, ballast, and spare sails overboard in an attempt to lighten the vessel. For two days, the crew endeavored to free the schooner from the reef, a futile attempt, as the wind changed and drove the schooner higher onto the reef. On the morning of November 22, a Bahamian wrecker appeared on the scene, and most of the Alligator’s valuables passed into its services. Soon after, the lookout spotted a set of sails to the west and the Ann Maria sailed into view. The remaining valuable goods and the Alligator’s crew boarded the Ann Maria for a return home. Acting commander Lt. Dale remained on board the Alligator for the night, safeguarding his vessel. The next day, the vessel was set afire to prevent pirates from salvaging it, and at 15:30 on November 23, 1822, the Alligator blew up. A naval investigation ensued aboard the frigate Guerriere concerning Dale’s loss of a naval vessel. The court of inquiry decided that Dale was not accountable for the loss of the vessel under the circumstances and difficult navigation.

The month of November was a trying one for the Alligator’s crew. The Alligator served in the West India Squadron, which had been formed to combat piracy. Pirates in the Caribbean had become more than a mere menace to American commerce. Several fatalities occurred during encounters with pirates, including the former commander of the

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3 Records of a Court of Inquiry.

4 Ibid.
Alligator, Lieutenant William Howard Allen, who was mortally wounded by the pirates’ gunfire just a week before the schooner ran aground.

Even though not well known, the legacy of the USS Alligator lives on. Although its short career was noteworthy, historians have passed over its role in 1820s policy regarding naval missions, slave trade, and piracy. Maps and charts from the mid-1800s to the modern day note the approximate location of the Alligator’s grounding. Just south of lower Matacumbe Key lies Alligator Reef. A lighthouse by the same name, built in 1873, overlooks the reef to warn sailors of the shallow shoals.\(^5\) Nautical charts drawn during the mid-1850s note Alligator Reef, and Blunt’s American Coast Pilot, written in 1842 as a navigation aid, cautions mariners of Alligator Shoal, located to SE by E 4 ½ miles off Old Matacumbe.\(^6\) More recently, a team of underwater archaeologists investigated the site in 1996 as part of an initiative to create an underwater shipwreck trail for underwater enthusiasts.\(^7\)

Hudson, New York, Lt. Allen’s hometown, also dedicated a memorial to him. Although not a well-known hero, a statue evokes his sacrifices. The crew buried his remains with honors at Matanzas, Cuba, but later his remains were exhumed and brought to his home in 1827.\(^8\) Allen Street, in Hudson, was dedicated in 1835.\(^9\) Shortly after his


death, Captain David Porter honored him by christening the naval base established on present-day Key West, Florida, as Allentown. The West Indian Squadron used Allentown for its vessels and as a tactical position for the Navy in the Caribbean.

The life of the Alligator, although short, made a significant contribution to the American maritime and political history of the early 1800s. Its missions affected international, navy, and slave politics as well as economics. The debates and acts of Congress defined the role that the Alligator and its commanders played during the next few years, while within the political system a fascinating change took place that manifested itself in the roles assigned to the navy. This influenced the missions of individual ships, including the Alligator.

\footnote{Ibid, p. 33.}
Introduction

The United States began the construction of the schooner *Alligator* specifically for the suppression of the Atlantic slave trade and Caribbean piracy. The schooner had a short but eventful life, reflecting divisions in America, particularly in the realms of naval policy and the politics of slavery. This thesis will examine the efforts of the United States government, through its navy, to halt the trade in human lives from the coast of Africa and to stop piratical depredations in the Caribbean through a focus on the short life of the schooner *Alligator*. The *Alligator*, its officers, and men embarked on a very interesting set of adventures, encountering slavers, pirates, and hostile natives. The political and legal ramifications of those actions, taken against the backdrops of the political contest or naval action against the kidnapping and enslavement of peoples from another continent, provides a microcosmic look at the efforts of one naval man-of-war to enforce the policies established by the Congress of the United States.

Before delving into the history of the *Alligator* and its specific role in the suppression of the slave trade and piracy, it is important to understand the history of the U.S. Navy and its role in the early days of the nation, as well as the general nature of the slave trade during the nineteenth century. The U.S. Navy’s role in the nation’s defense system was less prominent in the early 1800s than it has been in the twentieth century. During America’s first wars the size of the navy increased, but in subsequent times of peace, Congress reduced its strength. After the War of 1812, Congress initiated an increase in the nation’s defenses and several congressional allocations significantly augmented the navy’s budget. Nevertheless, the service’s role remained minimal in
national affairs. The major peacetime role of the small navy during the early nineteenth century was the protection of commerce. Included in this role was the suppression of pirates, display of the American flag in foreign markets, coastal defense, and the suppression of the slave trade.¹ Devotion to each of these missions varied as public and political interest shifted.

Political affairs in the capital guided naval operations and efforts to suppress the slave trade and piracy through the establishment of long term policy goals. Policy debates began during the Constitutional Convention, although the language of the Constitution supported slavery and the slave trade.² Throughout the next thirty years, Congress passed six acts concerning the Atlantic slave trade and the importation of slaves, and adopted a few more resolutions exploring related international treaties. Several states also passed regulations restricting the slave trade, both domestic and foreign, within their borders and territorial waters. The federal acts strongly condemned the trade and passed in both houses of Congress with a majority, but it was not until the late nineteenth century that suppression of the slave trade was truly successful.

When examining the role of the U.S. Navy in the suppression of the slave trade one must consider several factors — the politics behind specific missions and naval orders. If Congress determined naval roles, the naval administration, including both the secretary of the navy and his board of commissioners, identified missions and authorized


operations. The establishment of the West India Squadron to eradicate piracy, for example, illustrates the organization of a naval mission. The secretary of the navy then determined operations, which involved the actual orders given to commanders. Individual voyages comprised naval operations, and once at sea, the act of boarding or capturing a vessel involved tactics. The individual role of every man onboard the ship became very important when discussing tactics; if men refused to fight or work, it "affected the success of an entire cruise.

The orders to naval captains regarding the slave trade stated that they were only to pursue and apprehend American slavers.\(^3\) Due to expansionist domestic, and isolationist international policies, the American government hesitated to participate in cooperative efforts with other navies. It was not the only nation so inclined; France, Portugal, and Spain were also wary of allowing other nations the right to search their commercial ships. The right of liberty upon the seas was a revered privilege, even more so after the Royal Navy had so openly violated it, when British ships had impressed sailors from vessels of other nations including the United States. Nations that granted a mutual right of visit and search did not do so universally, and thus patrols needed to be especially careful not to infringe upon the maritime rights of other nations.

Slave trade policy involved more than just Congress and its resolutions, and other factors that policy merit attention. Some considerations include the size of the navy and the strength of its role outside territorial waters, the status of slavery throughout the nation, and the economic condition of the country. The year 1807 saw congressional

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\(^3\) *Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Officers*, RG45, M149, Roll 14 (Washington DC: National Archives Records Agency). These letters will be examined individually later.
legislation that outlawed the importation of slaves into the United States and American participation in the slave trade. Refusal to sign international treaties with nations participating in the slave trade demonstrated the American narrowed view of regulating only American slavers. The heated debates concerning the admission of slaves into the Missouri territory demonstrated the widening gap between the ideals of politicians from the north and the south. As the post-war economy boomed, then declined, Congress allocated federal appropriations more judiciously, and the navy saw its own budget decline.

Policymakers in Congress shaped naval roles. Congressional favor for the navy and its role in the nation’s defense system fluctuated a great deal, but immediately after the War of 1812, a positive environment served to stimulate naval construction and increases in the naval budget. The war had demonstrated that a larger fleet could be instrumental in protecting U.S. port cities and the coast. Policymakers and the naval board began to rethink the methods and implications of naval defense.\(^4\) The peacetime role of the navy had a new set of tasks distinct from wartime obligations. Homeland defense was not a primary duty of the navy. The oceans did a good job of keeping invaders at bay, and American soil has seen very few wars relative to its European counterparts, who often attacked one another’s borders. However, our economic stability depended on trade with Great Britain and mainland Europe; America produced

agricultural goods while the industrial processing of these goods occurred in Europe. The navy helped defend commercial alliances by protecting merchant fleets.⁵

After the War of 1812, the nation began to feel prosperous and strong; this positive environment helped lead to naval expansion. As postwar America returned to the business of peace, commercial endeavors again began to flourish. The prospective function of the naval fleet was to act as “insurance” against war and to help demonstrate American political power abroad during peacetime. The navy had played an important role during the recent war, and it used this popularity to revitalize itself, renewing its role as protector of commerce.⁶ This led to a congressional act in 1816 that authorized a gradual increase in the navy’s budget.⁷

At the same time, the naval administration was long overdue for a renovation. Most senior Bureau chiefs were too conservative, maintaining their old values rather than looking to move the navy forward into a new day.⁸ The typical procedure to deal with a maritime situation was to send out one or two vessels as problems arose. This led to widely dispersed resources, scattered deployments, and many single ship cruises. Unfortunately, this approach was often slow and subject to uncertain communication.

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⁵ Ibid, p. 117.


Issues were not resolved in a speedy manner, and news confirming action was slow to reach policy makers in the capital.

The navy began a series of internal reforms, addressing primarily its administration, vowing to make improvements at its naval shipyards and to improve the efficiency of naval operations. The new board of navy commissioners assumed some of the responsibilities of the secretary of the navy, such as assisting in supervising the naval administration and advising the secretary. Major policy decisions, though, remained in the hands of Congressmen, and the naval administration remained subject to their wishes.\(^9\) The naval board created permanent squadrons and established naval stations in strategic areas to help solve this issue. The board created the Mediterranean Squadron in 1815. The Barbary pirates were no longer as much of a threat as before the War of 1812, but nuisances still existed in the Mediterranean. The naval board soon established several more: the Pacific Squadron in 1821, the West India Squadron in 1822, and the Brazil, or South Atlantic Squadron in 1826. It was not, however, until 1843 that the navy officially established an African Squadron. The term “squadron” is somewhat misleading, at least in our modern impression of a naval squadron, as ships typically traveled in pairs or threes, and there was little opportunity for group operations.\(^{10}\) Squadron was a generic term that denoted several ships united under one senior captain, termed commodore.

The navalist vs. anti-navalist debate was not about maintaining a navy, but rather about the prospective role of the navy in the country’s defense policy. Anti-navalists

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\(^{10}\) *Ibid*, p. 118.
questioned the cost effectiveness of maintaining a larger standing navy. Navalists were convinced of the diplomatic value of the navy and its roles abroad, strongly advocating its expansion. A peacetime navy was an expensive organization to maintain in a nation not threatened by war. Many congressmen realized the potential value of the navy in the protection of commerce and for using naval officers as diplomats, while at the same time, those more conservative-minded wished to reserve naval operations only for warfare. The debate raged on, but the navy continued to operate on a small scale in its peacetime role as a protector of commerce.

The naval officer had many roles and duties while serving his country beyond the sailing of a ship. He was a soldier, a humanitarian and rescuer, an explorer, a policeman, and a diplomat and representative. The navy performed global explorations, and sailors were often the first to “discover” new lands and cultures. From contact with naval officers, missionaries, and whalers, foreigners often formed their impressions of Americans. Naval officers, preferably, ensured that it was not a negative one. They typically possessed personality traits that distinguished them from their peers, making them ideal to perform diplomatic roles. These traits included simplicity, candor, and directness. As a diplomat, the naval officer also needed to be able to make sound judgments on his own, as communication with the United States was very slow, and a request for advice would take longer than the situation might allow. He was also able to back his persuasion with the display, or use if necessary, of force. Officers often had the

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12 Charles Paullin, Diplomatic Negotiations, pp. 7-8.
responsibility of negotiating in the name of the United States, as they served as diplomats on specific missions in regions lacking a state department representative. They, however, had little diplomatic power in regions where it would conflict with the function of the department of state. Although agreements determined by naval commanders were usually not officially binding as law, the government usually abided by them until the development of a more formal policy or agreement. Naval diplomatic missions terminated when they gained the specific objective, unlike those of the state department, which maintained a permanent presence in some foreign nations.

The coast of Africa was one of the regions lacking an official, permanent, American diplomatic presence, thus naval commanders often served in diplomatic roles. American representatives to the West African coast typically included naval commanders, American Colonization Society agents, missionaries, and slavers, but the last two named did not represent the U.S. government. Lieutenant Robert F. Stockton, the first commander of the Alligator, purchased land for the American colony on his second voyage to the African coast. The colonists arriving at this settlement, and the ships trading at the colony, formed the majority of U.S. acknowledged representatives on the coast of Africa. Slavers were not, once the trade became illegal, welcomed representatives, but in reality composed of the greatest number of American contacts.

A slaver trading under the American flag was a relatively recent phenomenon. (late eighteenth century) The colonies had played a major role in the triangular trade

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between Europe, the New World, and Africa, exchanging manufactured goods, food, and lumber, for sugar, rum, and slaves. The trans-Atlantic slave trade dated back to the 1500s when European colonizers in the new world, after depleting the local labor supply, turned to Africa, a continent they believed was populated by “uncivilized heathens” who would benefit from being enslaved by the white man and introduced to Christianity. Europeans purchased slaves in exchange for goods and commodities that the Africans had not previously realized that they needed, such as guns, cloth, knives, and beads.\textsuperscript{14} It is important to note that the European demand for slaves did not create the African slave industry; it merely made it more profitable for African suppliers and encouraged their participation. Slavery already existed within Africa, albeit on a much different level and scale. The new form of supplying slaves was based upon kidnapping, whereas within Africa it was often a punishment for a crime or a penalty for prisoners of war. Europeans purchased kidnapped Africans cheaply, loaded them into sailing ships, and brought them to the “New World” to be sold into bondage.

The Middle Passage, a term that identifies voyages taken by slave ships into the West Indies, was notorious for its mistreatment of Africans.\textsuperscript{15} Slavers herded Africans into sailing ships, packed them into the holds, for the long Atlantic journey. Gratings covered deck hatches so that some light and air might enter, but did not allow adequate ventilation. There was not enough room for slaves to sit up or shift positions to make


\textsuperscript{15} Philip Curtin discusses the mortality rate aboard slavers in both the crew and among the slaves in Chapter 10 of \textit{The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census} (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).
themselves comfortable.\textsuperscript{16} Slaves occasionally exercised and “danced” on the deck level of the ship for fresh air, albeit imposed by the cat of nine tails, but spent the remainder of their days in the hold. When the weather turned foul, the sailors battened down the hold, reducing air circulation even further.\textsuperscript{17} Slavers allowed their captives merely a pint and a half of water per day, and meals typically consisted of rice, millet, or cornmeal.\textsuperscript{18} A slave ship would also have onboard large amounts of chain and iron shackles. Disease was rampant on the journey, stemming from unsanitary conditions in the holds, and slavers typically anticipated many losses on the voyage.\textsuperscript{19} The transatlantic crossing could take up to two months.

Demand for labor increased throughout the development of the American colonies as they and their European founders became economically entwined. The number of imports from Africa increased steadily, reaching a plateau in the mid-eighteenth century. At this time, West Indian sugar plantations were at their peak and slave owners often worked their slaves to death, finding that it was more economical to merely replace them than to take care of them. The climate of the West Indies and South America also prohibited sustaining the lives of slave labor, whereas in North America, slave owners


\textsuperscript{17} Alexander Falconbridge, \textit{An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa} (London: J. Phillips, 1788), pp. 32-34. A man who made two voyages as a slave trader wrote this account rather than an abolitionist with an agenda. He quit trading because it did “not perfectly coincide with his ideas, and was not to his satisfaction, being obliged to make use of means for the preservation of the cargo, contrary to his feelings, and sense of humanity,” p. 50.


\textsuperscript{19} Alexander Falconbridge, \textit{An Account of the Slave Trade}, pp. 41-42.
relied upon normal reproduction as a means of sustaining an internal trade. The number of Africans arriving in the Americas gradually increased, peaking in the 1790s, when the trade began to decline. This was during the time of the Napoleonic wars, and shortly after, the British and American prohibition of the Atlantic slave trade into their territories. The data is not concrete on whether these factors were the primary influence on the decline, but they may have played a role.\textsuperscript{20} Other factors influencing the demand for African slaves were the fear of slave revolts and the domestic reproduction of the slaves on plantations. Ironically, during the four centuries of slave trade activity, the North American colonies had always been a marginal recipient of slave imports, as the West Indies and Brazil imported the majority of Africans. The best estimates for the volume of the slave trade show that around eleven to twelve million Africans were shipped from the African coast to the “New World” from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{21} The numbers become intriguing though, as the best estimates show that the United States only received 5-6 percent of the African slaves, but by 1825, “owned” 36 percent of all the slaves in the western hemisphere.\textsuperscript{22}

In historical context, the institution of slavery was “peculiar.” Today, the modern view of slavery and the slave trade holds a moral and ethical repugnance for its horrors and injustices against fellow humans. The extreme conditions onboard slave ships


\textsuperscript{22} Brion David Davis. \textit{The Problem of Slavery}, pp. 58-59.
certainly encouraged humanitarian responses against its continuation. Nevertheless, many of the settlers of the new world did not hold that same view, and they justified their positions using the excuse that slavery had always existed and they were spreading civilization and Christianity. As the institution became a way of life, efforts to remove it became more difficult. Moral arguments stood little chance against economic ones. Slave owners, already defensive about property rights, bristled when activists tried to infringe upon them.

Within the United States, southern plantation owners were not the only ones guilty of promoting the Atlantic slave trade. New Englanders typically built, supplied, and sailed merchant and slave ships. In many ways, the slave trade was as vital to northern mariners as it was to southern slave owners.\(^{23}\) Prior to 1807, most Americans considered slave trading an acceptable, if not respectable, profession. It was also a very profitable trade. As is the case with any commodity declared illegal by the government that the population is accustomed to or desires, trading in slaves became a very profitable endeavor for those willing to take the risk. The demand for slaves increased, forcing owners to pay more for a good field hand. At the same time, the supply on the African coast was also increasing. A slave could be purchased in Africa for $25-$50, but could be sold for $500-$1500 on the slave market — a figure 20 to 30 times greater than the original purchase price.\(^{24}\)

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At the turn of the century, the institution of slavery, and its supporting Atlantic trade, had begun to fragment. Abolitionists began to campaign against slavery on moral and ethical grounds; colonies used the slave trade as a wedge between themselves and their European rulers in their independence efforts; slaves themselves instilled great fears into their owners through revolts; and the economic dynamic that supported the slave trade began to shift. Many hopeful abolitionists anticipated that slavery might die a natural death and that the ugly political discord they were trying to avoid would be minimized. Little did they account for industrial advances that would create a greater demand for raw agricultural material, such as cotton. As abolitionists became more vocal and slave supporters more defensive, the United States embarked upon a track of political disagreements that lasted for nearly a century.

It is questionable how the legislation prohibiting the slave trade ultimately affected the importation of Africans into the Americas before the abolition of slavery. David Eltis and Philip Curtin, as well as numerous other authors, have prepared quantitative analyses of the entire slave trade and have attempted to address the effect of the prohibitions. David Eltis studied the period from 1821-1843, focusing on the sheer numbers of slaves imported.\[^{25}\] He concluded that formal abolition did not mean an end to the slave trade, but rather that there were impediments that did not exist before, such as access to a port, and patrol vessels upon the seas slavers that had to be avoided. Naval patrols on the Atlantic Ocean and the coast of Africa resulted in nearly 200,000 slaves

freed, and their captors subjected to imprisonment, fines, and possibly death. During this period, however, slavers transported nearly 65,000 slaves annually, totaling 1,300,020 slaves. Naval patrols freed merely 6.5 percent of the total imported slaves during this period. Eltis also surmises that the United States, proportionately, never played a large role in the Atlantic slave trade during the nineteenth century. He credits the Portuguese with carrying 71 percent of the slaves, France, 11 percent, and Spain, 18 percent. His data suggests that the United States was not even a statistically significant participant in the slave trade.

This provides a conundrum for students of the suppression of the slave trade. If naval patrols were supposed to apprehend American slavers, and there were virtually none, the task was either useless or unnecessary, and the United States did not need to actively work against its suppression. Other data suggests that the West Indies rather than Africa was the source for the majority of slaves imported into the United States. When the trade became illegal, many slaves were smuggled from Cuba into the Gulf states.

During the early nineteenth century, the Gulf and the Caribbean became significant for more than just sugar, rum, and slave smuggling. A second highly profitable illicit maritime occupation that the United States decided to combat was piracy. Merely a hundred years after the “Golden Age of Piracy” and the reigns of Blackbeard and other notorious pirates, there commenced another peak in piratical attacks. After the

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26 Ibid, pp. 155-177


28 Daniel P. Mannix and Malcolm Cowley, Black Cargoes, pp. 159-160.
War of 1812, Spain’s South American colonies rose in revolt. They began issuing letters of marque to authorize privateering, but naturally the seamen discovered how profitable and how much easier of a life it was to be a pirate than a commercial or naval sailor, so they often turned to illegal action – piracy.\textsuperscript{29} The navy formed the West India Squadron in 1822 to combat Caribbean pirates and smugglers.\textsuperscript{30} Media coverage of piratical attacks, as well as ship-owners’ memorials to Congress, spurred the House and Senate into action, in 1819 Congress passed an act declaring the death penalty for pirates, and authorized the use of the navy to combat the Caribbean menace. The American public strongly supported these acts, and the navy soon eradicated the piratical influence.

The difference between public and political support for the suppression of the slave trade and the suppression of piracy, determined the effectiveness of each mission. The \textit{Alligator} was ordered to participate in both missions; the ship’s objectives, orders, and operations illustrate the attitude of policymakers and the naval administration regarding the suppression of the slave trade and piracy during the early nineteenth century, through the authority granted to naval officers assigned to these mission.

\textsuperscript{29} Francis Bradlee, \textit{Piracy in the West Indies and Its Suppression} (Salem, MA: The Essex Institute, 1923), p. 1.

\textsuperscript{30} Harold and Margaret Sprout, \textit{The Rise of American Naval Power}, p. 118.
Chapter 1. Congressional Acts, Construction, and Naval Command

On April 3, 1821, the U.S.S. Alligator set forth from its dock at the Charlestown Navy Yard in Boston. The hull glistened and the sails billowed as she prepared to sail across the Atlantic Ocean to the west coast of Africa. She sailed out of the harbor, sailors bustling in the rigging — the entire crew parting for a quite interesting mission. Construction on the vessel had begun just a year earlier in response to congressional acts that authorized the navy to patrol the seas for slavers and pirates. A need for smaller vessels in the United States Navy inspired the construction of five new schooners. After the War of 1812, the navy found itself with a shortage of small vessels and had two options; purchase vessels constructed at private shipyards, or commission the work to their own navy yards. The Naval Board ordered naval shipyards to construct small schooners under the two acts passed in 1819 regarding the suppression of the slave trade and of piracy in the Caribbean.¹

The slave trade debate began long before the passage of the act of 1819. Colonial governments debated and passed many laws regarding slavery and the slave trade in their respective colonies, frequently amending them. After the Revolution, the basis of opposition to the slave trade and the importation of slaves varied widely among the states. Political motivations to limit the slave trade generally included overstocked slave markets, domestic reproduction of slaves, and the fear of slave insurrections in the South.

¹“An Act in addition to the Acts prohibiting the slave trade.” United States, The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America, by authority of Congress, Volume 3, 15th Cong., 2nd sess., Ch. 102, March 3, 1819, pp. 532-534. Section six of this act allocated $100,000 to the enforcement of this act; both the Navy and the American Colonization Society shared this budget. The same day, Congress also passed an act entitled “An Act to protect the commerce of the United States, and punish the crime of piracy.” Public Statutes at Large, Volume 3, 15th Cong., 2nd sess., Ch. 77, March 3, 1819, pp. 510-514.
In the north, the rocky terrain and harsh climates proved impractical for plantation style farming using slavery. New philosophies of freedom and the rights of man began to flourish, and abolitionists loudly voiced their opinions. Economically, some states also viewed restrictions on the importation of slaves as a way to impair English merchant control and influence in the colony. Laws varied, some allowing interstate trade, but not African or West Indian trade, while others prohibited the importation of any slaves. South Carolina, for example, passed legislation enacting duties on imported slaves beginning in 1703, increasing the tax periodically throughout the years, culminating in an act in 1787 which prohibited importation altogether. The trouble began when delegates of all the states with widely differing views on slavery attempted to forge a unified policy on this sensitive topic. Although occupying little text of the final document, debates on slavery and federal regulation of the slave trade caused a great deal of strife during the Constitutional Convention in 1787. A clause in the Constitution mandated that Congress was not to enforce any federal legislation that prohibited the importation of slaves until January 1, 1808. This clause temporarily deferred the need for any conclusive actions regarding the slave trade. The slave trade debate fell within the controversy concerning

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4 "The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person." Article 1, Section 9, *Constitution of the United States of America*.  


regulation of commerce. The southern states feared that export taxes on raw materials, navigation laws, prohibition of slavery, and slave trade restrictions could damage their agricultural economy, while the northerners believed that navigation laws and export taxes would generally protect American commerce from European intervention. The slavery issue became part of the commercial debate upon a suggestion to tax imported slaves. The commerce and slave debates created great discord among the Constitution’s authors; delegates recommended avoidance of the slavery issue in order not to jeopardize the constitutional convention.⁵ A compromise exchanging a simple majority vote for federal control over navigation laws and commerce regulation for no intervention with slave trade laws temporarily ended the debate. The drafters of the Constitution effectively excluded the slave trade from commerce regulations and postponed decisive policy action for twenty years.

One of the false suppositions of anti-slavery supporters was the notion that slavery itself was beginning to decline and within the near future it would die a natural death, as it had in the northern states and some southern states. South Carolina, for example, already had importation regulations in place. Politically, the constitution also included an important clause that aided slave supporters in future debates. The “three-fifths compromise” played a significant role in future policy-making by increasing the number of representatives for the southern states relative to their voting population. Overall, the tone of the constitution supported slavery in the United States, and ensured

that it would be difficult for anti-slavery legislators to enact effective legislation against
it.

The federal government did pass several laws before 1808, although none were
strong enough to actually prohibit the importation of slaves from Africa. What they did
prohibit was the participation of Americans and American residents in the slave trade.
The acts also provided federal support for those states that chose to prohibit it
themselves. Congress passed the first act on March 2, 1794. This act prohibited the direct
participation in the slave trade by American residents and citizens, such as outfitting or
sailing a slave ship, subjecting offenders to fines up to $2,000. Congress passed a similar
act on May 10, 1800, which stated that no American citizen or resident could directly, or
indirectly, have any interest in the slave trade. Congress passed another act on February
28, 1803, which demonstrated its support for state policies, banning the importation of
slaves into states that had banned them.\textsuperscript{6} Again using South Carolina as an example, in
1788, the state legislature banned the slave trade for five years, and then in 1792 declared
that it was in its interests not to import Negroes from Africa or the West Indian Islands
into the state. However, by December of 1803, South Carolina reopened their markets to
the African trade.\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{6} "An Act to prohibit the carrying on the Slave Trade from the United States to any foreign place or country." \textit{The Public Statutes}, Volume 1, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., Ch. 11, March 2, 1794, pp. 347-349; "An
Act in addition to the act entitled "An Act to prohibit the carrying on the Slave Trade from the United
States to any foreign place or country." \textit{The Public Statutes}, Volume 2, 6\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., Ch. 51, May 10,
1800, pp. 70-71; "An Act to prevent the importation of certain persons into certain states, where, by the
laws thereof, their admission is prohibitive." \textit{The Public Statutes}, Volume 2, 7\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess., Ch. 10,
February 28, 1803, pp. 205-206.

\textsuperscript{7} W. E. B. Du Bois, \textit{The Suppression of the Slave Trade}, pp. 71-72.
These regulations are not to be confused with activism toward the prohibition of slavery or access to slave markets, but merely controlling the mechanisms for obtaining new slaves. Planters felt that domestic reproduction was ample to meet their demand and that it was economically more profitable.\(^8\) Plantation owners often preferred the more docile, “domestically raised Negro” to those brought off the boat fighting, attempting to escape, or possibly rebelling as they had in the West Indies. The revolt in 1791 on St. Dominique, led by Toussaint L’Ouverture, struck fear into the hearts of American plantation owners, who in turn lobbied to restrict Negroes imported from the West Indies.\(^9\)

On March 2, 1807, Congress passed the first act allowed by the Constitution regulating the trans-Atlantic slave trade.\(^10\) This act prohibited the importation of slaves

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8 There is a very interesting commentary written in Journal, a Georgian periodical, which describes reasons to regulate the domestic trade also. The author’s reasons include the introduction of ‘firebrands’, and that it makes “common sense, not to increase the numbers of an enemy already too populous!” *The Annals of America: Volume 5, 1821-1832, Steps Toward Equalitarianism* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1968), pp. 27-29.


10 "An Act to prohibit the importation of Slaves into any port or place within the jurisdiction of the United States, from and after the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eight." *The Public Statutes, Volume 2, 9th Cong., 2nd sess., Ch. 22, March 2, 1807*, pp. 427-430. The basic elements of this act follow. Sec.1: It shall not be lawful to bring into the US, or any territories any black or mulatto to be held to service or labor. Sec.2: No citizens shall be involved in the outfitting or preparing any ship for the slave trade. The ship will be forfeited to the United States. Sec.3: Every person preparing a vessel will forfeit $20,000. Sec.4: Forfeiture of ship, and fines of $5000 for ship’s operators, importers shall take no interest in the confiscated slaves. Sec.5: Shall be deemed guilty of high misdemeanor, ten year imprisonment and fines not to exceed $10,000, nor less than $1000. Sec.6: Penalties for buying slaves from neighboring countries or territories. Forfeiture of vessel and slaves. $800 per slave, although does not pertain to interstate trade. Sec.7: Vessels having slaves on board may be seized. Armed vessels of the US are so authorized. Sec.8: No Negroes may be transported on vessels of less than 40tons burden, $800 per slave. Does not apply to rivers or inland bays. Sec.9: captains must have manifests that prove the origination and previous ownership of all Negroes on board, and must have permits to transport in the interstate trade, $1000 fine. Sec.10: The above manifests will be delivered to the customs officials prior to unloading, fine of $10,000.
into the United States, participation of Americans in the Atlantic slave trade, and proscribed fines for those found guilty. The irony of this act is that although it prohibited the importation of slaves into the United States, it did not address the issue of what to do with illegally imported Africans, nor methods of enforcement, and it sanctioned a coastal slave trade between the states.

The act of 1807 had the potential to be a much stronger law for the prohibition of the Atlantic slave trade. The punishment for participation in the slave trade was highly debated. The original draft of the act included a clause which charged slavery with a felony, punishable by death, however, the House rejected this section in favor of a charge of a high misdemeanor, by any court having competent jurisdiction, punishable by imprisonment of no more than ten, but no less that five years.\footnote{United States, \textit{Journal of the House of Representatives}, 9\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess., December 31, 1806, p. 504.} Mr. Bidwell, of Massachusetts, made a second very interesting motion during these debates. This suggestion would have reduced the opportunity for corruption. He offered a proviso stating that: “no person shall be sold as a slave by virtue of this act” be added onto the third section. That section stated that “such ship or vessel, if brought into any port or place within a State or Territory, the constitution and laws of which permit slavery, shall, together with her cargo, tackle, apparel, and furniture, be forfeited.” The House was equally divided, and the speaker sided with the nays.\footnote{\textit{Journal of the House of Representatives}, 9\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess., January 7, 1807, pp. 514-515.} The disposal of captured slaves
was a question left unanswered by this act, leaving the courts and states free to sell Africans at their own profit, if they so desired.¹³

Great Britain, not to be outdone by the United States in its abolitionist and anti-slavery efforts, also passed an act in 1807 prohibiting the transatlantic slave trade. Parliament passed an act on March 25, 1807, three weeks after the United States Congress prohibited the importation of slaves, but it went into effect before that of the United States. The British act prohibited the participation of its citizens and residents in the trade, and outlawed the importation of slaves into its colonies. It is important to keep in mind that neither of these acts addressed the status of slavery itself. In 1811, Britain strengthened this act, making participation in the slave trade a felony.¹⁴ During the following years, a few enforcement efforts ensued, but both the British and the Americans suspended them during the War of 1812.

The War of 1812 shaped many American foreign policy positions during the 1820s. The Royal Navy had attempted to recapture British naval deserters and impress them back into Royal Navy service. The United States tolerated this practice until the Royal Navy overstepped its rights and began impressing American seamen and soldiers for service in its ships. The British had become even more brazen as to virtually kidnap American seamen within sight of American ports.¹⁵ Americans feared the practice of impressment and requisite boarding so strongly that it prevailed in future arguments


against cooperation efforts with the British. The Treaty of Ghent, which marked the end of the War of 1812, did not address impressment, and Great Britain initiated a clause for the inclusion of the suppression of the slave trade. The United States agreed to increase its efforts to end the trade, but not in cooperation with Great Britain. Great Britain had begun a quest to make agreements with all European nations and the United States for naval cooperation in the suppression of the slave trade, and the Treaty of Ghent marked its first agreement with the United States.

Great Britain had realized the economic disadvantage of allowing rival nations to supply her colonies with much needed labor. Despite the fact that Great Britain had outlawed the slave trade, she had not abolished slavery as a practice. This motivated many of Great Britain’s advances for slave trade treaties. Most nations, distrusting Great Britain’s motives, resisted its treaty advances due to the fear of continued Royal Navy supremacy upon the oceans. However, throughout the next decade, many nations signed limited agreements with England. In 1814, as a part of the Treaty of Paris, France agreed to abolish the slave trade within five years. This actually happened before the five-year mark, as on March 29, 1815, Napoleon decreed the slave trade abolished by France. Spain negotiated a treaty with Great Britain in 1814, when it agreed to not supply slaves to other Caribbean islands, nor to offer protection for slavers under the Spanish

16 “Whereas the traffic in slaves is irreconcilable with the principles of humanity and justice, and whereas both His Majesty and the United States are desirous of continuing their efforts to promote its entire abolition, it is hereby agreed that both the contracting parties shall use their best endeavors to accomplish so desirable an object.” Article X: “Treaty of Peace and Amity, Between his Britannic Majesty and the United States of America,” The Public Statutes, Volume VIII, February 18, 1815, pp. 218-223.


flag. In 1820, Spain agreed to abolish the slave trade in the Spanish colonies. Portugal, in 1814, agreed to limit slaving activities north of the equator, and then in July 28, 1817 allowed the first concession of mutual right of search between Great Britain and Portugal north of the equator. The Netherlands granted the right of search of vessels suspected to be slavers to the Royal Navy on May 4, 1818.19

The greatest source for many nations’ hesitance to participate with Britain in her quest for the suppression of the slave trade was the crucial measure that would have made naval efforts against the slave trade effective — the right of maritime search and seizure. The trouble with the maritime right of search and seizure was its basis upon the past history of naval practices at sea, where a vessel, merchant or naval, remained sovereign to the nation in which it originates, governed only by that nation’s laws, and not subject to interception or search by any other. The desire to uphold maritime sovereignty governed the United States’ response to treaty negotiations through the 1820s.

Congressmen of the day consistently professed their support for acts prohibiting the slave trade. Nevertheless, these acts did not actively allow for effective suppression. The difference lies in the accepted means of how to suppress the trade. The debates acknowledged that the slave trade would continue unabated without international maritime cooperation between slave trading nations concentrating both individual efforts to patrol for vessels, and naval cooperation and mutual right of search and seizure of vessels suspected to be slavers. Despite this acknowledgement, there remained a strong

resistance to any cooperation with Great Britain, especially allowing the Royal Navy the right to board and search American merchant vessels.

Congress designated the U.S. Navy to enforce the slave trade acts; congressional debates about how strong of a role the navy played in America’s defenses, however, limited the navy’s effectiveness. A congressional act in 1816 authorized a gradual increase in the navy’s allocations, and allocated the sum of $1,000,000 per year for eight years, which included the budget of $200,000 per year allocated in 1815. The president authorized construction of nine large ships (of not less than seventy-four guns each) and twelve medium ships (of not less than forty-four guns each). It also authorized the navy to procure steamships for the protection of U.S. harbors.\(^{20}\)

After the War of 1812, the navy began to restructure its internal affairs. On February 7, 1815, the navy created a Board of Commissioners to take over administrative roles.\(^{21}\) The board’s duties included assisting and advising the secretary of the navy through preparation of reports, correspondence, navy personnel and courts, and equipment and outfitting of ships.\(^{22}\) The secretary of the navy, and board was better equipped than the average mariner to negotiate with politicians, as they had served in public roles, such as lawyers, judges, or policymakers. This gave them the advantage of


\(^{22}\) Ibid, p. 165.
being able to address legal issues, although not being mariners they were not always able to relate with issues experienced at sea.\textsuperscript{23}

The postwar business boom that encouraged naval increases was faltering by 1818.\textsuperscript{24} As business weakened, Congress' allocations to the navy decreased, and the navy deferred the construction of the larger men-of-war in favor of a smaller vessel construction program. Congress repealed the gradual increase of 1816 on March 3, 1821.\textsuperscript{25} The navy laid up its larger vessels and began to use smaller ones, such as schooners, sloops, and brigs. Smaller vessels were cheaper to maintain and operate, but were still capable, perhaps preferable, for performing peacetime functions. Naval appropriations declined, and the naval budget decreased significantly. For example, from 1817-1821, the yearly average budget was $3,700,000, and then in the period between 1821-1825, it fell to $2,900,000.\textsuperscript{26} At the same time, there was a significant decrease in the number of naval personnel. Between 1812-1815, there were 7,384 officers and seamen; by 1816, this figure had dropped to 5,540 officers and seamen. By 1823, only 4,000 officers and seamen served in the navy.\textsuperscript{27} Granted, in peacetime, the navy needed fewer hands to man the guns.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{25} "An Act to amend the act entitled “An act for the gradual increase of the Navy of the United States.” \textit{The Public Statutes}, Volume 3, 16\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess., Ch. 47, March 3, 1821, p. 642.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Harold and Margaret Sprout, \textit{The Rise of American Naval Power: 1776–1918} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942), p. 120.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Charles Paullin, \textit{Diplomatic Negotiations of American Naval Officers: 1778-1883} (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1912), p. 188.
\end{itemize}
Career opportunities in the navy left something to be desired for all ranks.\textsuperscript{28} There were large numbers of applicants for officer positions, as it seemed like an adventuresome and glamorous lifestyle; however, political influence often was more effective than personal qualifications in the selection of midshipmen.\textsuperscript{29} Once in the navy, opportunities for advancement occurred infrequently, to the extent that between 1818-24, only one man was promoted to captain.\textsuperscript{30} At the same time, it was very difficult to recruit sufficient numbers of able seamen. For those interested in a life at sea, the wages were better on a merchant ship.\textsuperscript{31} The life of an ordinary seaman was even less promising than for an officer. Their duties included unskilled, trivial, and menial tasks with little room to hope for better opportunities.\textsuperscript{32} Large crews were needed on men-of-war, especially to man the guns, fight battles, and board and man prize ships. Life afloat was exhausting and boring, there was little room for privacy, thus the moral among enlisted men was poor, often manifesting itself in drunkenness and defiance toward superiors.\textsuperscript{33} Between few promotions, and difficulty enlisting able seamen, the navy was hard pressed at times to fully man their ships.

\textsuperscript{28} Promotions through the officer ranks passed as follows: Midshipman, Lieutenaunt, Commander, and Captain. The term Commodore was complimentary title for the captains commanding a squadron. Harold D. Langley, \textit{Social Reform in the United States Navy: 1798-1862} (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1967), p. 23.

\textsuperscript{29} Charles Paullin, \textit{History of Naval Administration}, p. 194.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid}, p. 189.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibid}, p. 198.


\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Ibid}, p. 15.
The secretary of the navy and the board of commissioners transmitted information to and from policymakers in Congress, and lobbied for additional support. It was often easier for the board to garner congressional support for materials, equipment, and construction programs than for naval personnel.\textsuperscript{34} Communications included feedback from naval officers, annual reports, and opinions regarding the success, or lack thereof, in the completion of a mission. This feedback influenced future policymaking decisions in Congress regarding naval roles, especially in the questions of suppression of the slave trade and piracy.

Congress passed three bills to amend the slave trade act of 1807. These became law in 1818, 1819, and 1820. Each added clauses strengthening the previous act, addressing the issues of how to deal with the captured Africans, how to effectively punish and deter traders, and the means to enforce the acts. The Act of April 20, 1818 increased fines and included prison sentences for those found guilty of participation in the slave trade.\textsuperscript{35} The Act of March 3, 1819 authorized the president to use U.S. public vessels to cruise upon the African coast and instruct these vessel's commanders to seize American vessels participating in the slave trade, and authorized him to appoint an agent on the coast of Africa to receive captured Africans. Most importantly, this act allocated

\textsuperscript{34} Charles Paullin, \textit{History of Naval Administration}, p. 165.

\textsuperscript{35} "An Act in addition to "An Act to prohibit the importation of Slaves into any port or place within the jurisdiction of the United States, from and after the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eight." In addition, to repeal certain parts of the same." \textit{The Public Statutes}, Volume 3, 15\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., Ch. 91, April 20, 1818, pp. 450-453.
$100,000 to carry this law into effect.\textsuperscript{36} On the same day, May 15, 1819, Congress also passed an act authorizing public vessels to protect U.S. commerce against the aggressions of piracy and declared those found guilty of piracy punishable by death.\textsuperscript{37} One year later, on May 15, 1820, Congress deemed slave traders the same as pirates, as they committed robbery of human lives upon the high seas. The courts could punish slavers with a penalty of death.\textsuperscript{38} Unfortunately, strengthening these acts and increasing the punishment did little to put an end to the trade, and if nothing, made it more brutal and inhumane, as traders became more ruthless in their measures to escape capture.

The divided political atmosphere in the Senate and House regarding the slave trade was complicated, but the divisions represented were constant in Congressional debates, and not limited to the topic of slavery. Congressmen at this time were keen to maintain distinct separation of powers: federal vs. state, executive vs. legislative, and domestic vs. international. Initially they voiced loud objections to any international treaties for suppression effort. The United States' policy on international relations was one of neutrality, as the nation focused on its internal development and westward expansion. In January of 1818, Congress rejected a proposal that would initiate cooperation with Great Britain, despite its probable effectiveness for the task. Mr. Troup, Senator from Georgia, stated that he thought that:

\textsuperscript{36} "An Act in addition to the Acts prohibiting the slave trade," \textit{The Public Statutes}, Volume 3, 15\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess., Ch. 101, March 3, 1819, pp. 532-534.

\textsuperscript{37} "An Act to protect the commerce of the United States, and punish the crime of piracy." \textit{The Public Statutes}, Volume 3, 15\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess., Ch. 101, March 3, 1819, pp. 510-514.

\textsuperscript{38} "An Act to continue in force "An Act to protect the commerce of the United States, and punish the crime of piracy" and to make further provisions for punishing the crime of piracy." \textit{The Public Statutes}, Volume 3, 16\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., Ch. 113, May 15, 1820, pp. 600-601.
no measure could be adopted more replete with danger to the welfare, to the very existence of this country, than a formal coalition, for any purposes, with any foreign nation whatever... he was ready to go as far as anyone, in enforcing, within our own jurisdiction, the abolition of the African slave trade.39

Mr. Burrill of Rhode Island counters this argument by first noting that he:

was pleased to find that Mr. Troup had no objection to the main object the resolution had in view, of putting an entire stop to the African slave trade—on this point, he believed, there was no diversity of opinion throughout the country. He regretted, however, that such a view had been taken of the concert with other nations proposed to effect the object; because it was only by such concert and co-operation that the slave trade could be abolished.40

Even though slavery itself was a divisive issue in the United States, voting records from 1807 through 1825 do not indicate a north-south sectional divide among members of Congress. Conflicts in the constitutional convention and a later civil war might make one think otherwise, but equally as many southerners were voting for strong measures against the slave trade, as northerners voted against them. The same day that the House passed an act that declared slavers to be pirates and offered aid to the American Colonization Society for its efforts, May 12, 1820, it denied a resolution that would authorize the executive branch to enter into agreements with foreign powers. The House voted down the resolution, which would have taken a step towards the effective


suppression of the transatlantic slave trade, with a resounding seventy-eight to thirty-five negative votes. The House then dismissed the resolution by postponing it until the next session of Congress. The following debate concerned not so much the slave trade itself, but who should have the power to make effective arrangements to stop it. Congress postponed the resolution until the next November, and again deferred a decision on slave trade policy. On February 9, 1821, the House proposed a nearly identical resolution.

The debate over the Atlantic slave trade was not the only source of Congressional conflict based upon the slave institution. The United States had been expanding rapidly, and the Union had recently admitted four states: Indiana in 1816, Mississippi in 1817, Illinois in 1818, and Alabama in 1819. In December 1818, Missouri requested admittance. James Tallmadge, Jr., a New York representative, proposed an amendment to the enabling act that would bar the importation of slaves into the new state, and emancipate any slave children born there when they reached the age of twenty-five. The amendment thus made sense to anti-slavery northerners as most of Missouri lay north of a "line" established by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which had banned slavery in any

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41 "Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled, That the President be requested to consult and negotiate with all the Governments, where Ministers of the United States are, or shall be accredited, on the means of effecting an entire and immediate abolition of the African slave trade," Annals of Congress, Senate, 16th Cong., 1st sess., May 15, 1820, pp. 697-700.


43 "Resolved by the House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled, That the President of the United States be requested to enter into such arrangements as he may deem suitable and proper, with one or more of the maritime Powers of Europe, for the effectual abolition of the African slave trade," Annals of Congress, HR, 16th Cong., 2nd sess., February 9, 1821, pp. 1071.

44 An act to authorize the people of the Missouri territory to form a constitution and state government, and for the admission of such state into the Union on an equal footing with the original states, and to prohibit slavery in certain territories, 16th Cong., 1st sess., Ch. 22, March 6, 1820, Volume 3, pp. 545-548, The Public Statutes.
states created north of Ohio River. Southern representatives and senators feared that if slavery was banned in the new state, it might disturb the slave/anti-slave political balance. The territory included land south of the Ohio river, and they argued that the new territory, part of the tract purchased from France in 1803, was not included in the Ordinance, and thus its slave status was not subject to its regulations. A year later, Maine also applied for statehood. A new proposal suggested that the Union admit Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state. President James Monroe signed the Missouri Compromise, although he included an amendment that banned the future admission of slaves in states created in any part of the Louisiana Territory north of 36 degrees, 30 minutes, a line approximately denoted by the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers.

Congressmen argued the slave trade and slavery debates from several very different viewpoints. Two of the main backgrounds for political standpoints included economics and ethics. The economic needs of the southern states and plantation slavery typically held the most powerful influence on southern policy makers, whereas the northern representatives, not dictated by the economies of plantation agriculture, focused upon philosophical and moral reasons for abolition. However, support for slave trade restrictions came from both northern and southern factions. Southerners had a two-fold reason for support of the slave trade acts. An ample supply of slaves within the United States and the natural reproduction of slaves met the current demand; imported slaves

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46 Ibid. p. 154.
would drive the price of domestic slaves down on the market. A widespread fear of slave uprising and rebellions also inspired a hesitation to import more slaves. But the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney at the turn of the century forever changed the cotton industry, increasing the amount of cotton processed exponentially, thereby increasing the number of slaves needed to plant and harvest the cotton.

There were several attempts to enforce slave trade legislation before 1820. One of the first successful forays against illicit slave importation occurred just off the U.S. coast, at Amelia Island in 1817. Pirates had occupied Amelia Island off the eastern coast of Spanish Florida and commenced smuggling slaves into Georgia through Florida. President Monroe addressed the pirate problem in his annual address on December 2, 1817, indicating the federal intention to eradicate the pirates.47 The navy dispatched public vessels to subdue and apprehend the pirates at Amelia Island. This mission was a success by the end of 1818, but the border to Georgia remained difficult to maintain. This mission was successful not only because it was based upon a slave smuggling violation, but also because pirates from the Spanish colonies in South America had violated both their privateering authorizations and U.S. revenue laws.

The first naval vessel ordered to the African coast under the act of 1819 was the Cyane, commanded by Edward Trenchard. He reported the presence of many American slavers on the African coast, but noted that it was difficult to apprehend them due to flag

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47 "A just regard for the rights and interests of the United States required that they [the Amelia Island and Galveston pirates] should be suppressed, and orders have been accordingly issued to that effect. The imperious considerations which produced this measure will be explained to the parties whom it may, in any degree, concern." -James Monroe. In James Daniel Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1896-99), p. 14.
swapping. As nations had not allowed the right of search upon the seas, slavers quickly learned how to avoid a patrol vessel. Slavers typically carried multiple sets of ownership papers and sailors of representative nationalities. If approached by an American naval patrol, a slaver merely needed to run up a Spanish or Portuguese flag, and present the appropriate papers; likewise, if a Royal Navy ship approached a slaver, it suddenly flew an American flag, and a sailor of American origin professed ownership of the vessel.

Also onboard the *Cyane* on this voyage was Samuel Bacon, an agent for the American Colonization Society, and John Bankson, his assistant. The *Cyane* accompanied the *Elizabeth*, a ship commissioned by the American Colonization Society, which was transporting 88 black settlers to the African coast for the first attempt to establish an American colony for freed or recaptured slaves. They attempted to establish themselves on Sherbo, although this turned out to be a temporary site, as the island proved to be unhealthy and many of the colonists perished. Dr. Eli Ayers arrived in early 1821, when the colonists moved to Cape Mesurado.

While the *Cyane* was on the African coast, Congress passed the act of May 1820, which declared slavers to be pirates. Shortly after, two more vessels, the *Hornet*, commanded by G. C. Read, and the *John Adams*, commanded by H. S. Wadsworth, patrolled the African coast for slavers. The *Hornet* captured only one slave vessel, the

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Alexander, while there are no reports of the John Adams making any captures.\textsuperscript{50} On May 15, 1820, President Monroe also signed a bill that authorized the construction of no more than five small vessels of war to be built as the public service might require. This act allocated sixty thousand dollars to carry this act into effect.\textsuperscript{51}

The design and construction of five new vessels for the suppression of the slave trade and the suppression of piracy began in the same year. They included the Alligator, the Shark, the Porpoise, the Dolphin, and the Grampus. Several naval yards undertook the construction project, and built each schooner based upon a design by William Doughty, naval constructor. The exception was the Grampus, which Henry Eckford designed. The Alligator was built at the Charlestown Navy Yard in Boston, while the Shark and Grampus were constructed at Washington Navy Yard, the Porpoise at Portsmouth Navy Yard, and the Dolphin at the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

Commandant Isaac Hull at the Charlestown Navy Yard supervised the laying of the Alligator's keel on June 26, 1820, and on August 22, the yard completed the frame. On October 23, they planked the schooner's hull and christened it the Alligator.\textsuperscript{52} The

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\textsuperscript{\textbullet 51} "An Act authorizing the building of a certain number of small vessels of war." \textit{The Public Statutes, Volume 3, 16th Cong., 1st sess., Ch. 108}, May 15, 1820, pp. 596.

\textsuperscript{\textbullet 52} Alligator file (Washington DC: Naval Historical Center, unpublished).
\end{flushright}
schooner measured 86 feet between perpendiculArs, had a molded beam of 24’9”, a 10’3” depth of hold, and a 9-foot draft. The length to beam ratio was 3.48 to 1. From the plans, it appears that the keel was 70 feet long, creating a rake at the bow of 10 feet, and 6 feet at the stern. The schooner’s hull had a steep deadrise, making it sharper in the water, and alleviating the need for a centerboard, while the forward rake made it sleeker in the water, improving its sailing qualities.

It was, however, heavily built, in order to withstand the strains put on it during naval voyages, especially if it were to enter into a battle. One of the common problems with shoal-drafted vessels is that the wind easily blows them to the leeward, so using a centerboard or simply creating a hull with a sharp deadrise can help to solve this. The

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54 *Alligator File.*
schooners carried a mounted 18 pound pivot gun as well as 10-12 six-pound carronades. Chapelle states that the five schooners were the first ocean-going vessels outfitted with the high pivot gun, as well as the standard ports amidships to permit broadside armament.\footnote{Howard I. Chapelle, \textit{The History of the American Sailing Navy}, p. 332.}

Material acquisition records detail the construction of the \textit{Alligator} at the Charlestown Navy Yard in Boston. Josiah Barker was the chief constructor in Boston at the time, and he oversaw the ordering of materials and the construction process. Letters from the Navy Commissioner to the Navy Agent in Boston, Amos Binney, detail the ordering and contracts. They purchased iron locally, and sent the extra to Portsmouth, New Hampshire for the \textit{Porpoise}'s construction. Blacksmiths forged wrought iron into fasteners. The yard used yellow pine for the masts and spars, and for the floor timbers and frames they used live oak. The naval yard procured live oak from a Boston supplier and ordered extra to ship to Philadelphia for the \textit{Dolphin}. White oak comprised the hull planking and structural knees and the treenails carved of locust timber.\footnote{Robert Neyland, \textit{Analysis of the Hull Remains Hypothesized to the United States Schooner Alligator} (Washington DC: Naval Historical Center, unpublished), pp. 2-3.}

The \textit{Alligator} launched from its ways on November 2, 1820, at 10:30AM; at low tide, the shipbuilders finished coppering her bottom.\footnote{Edwin C. Bearss, \textit{Charlestown Navy Yard, 1800-1842} (Boston: U. S. Department of the Interior- National Park Service, 1984), p. 231.} They ordered copper sheathing and sheathing nails from the foundry of J.W. Revere.\footnote{Robert Neyland, \textit{Analysis of the Hull Remains}, p. 2.} During the late eighteenth century, shipbuilders began using copper sheathing below the waterline on ship's hulls to prevent
fouling of the vessel. Copper is a poisonous metal, and thus, it prevented marine creatures from attaching to the hull of a ship, which both slowed the sailing efficiency of the vessels and degraded the wooden hull structure. Shipbuilders quickly discovered that it was necessary to use copper fasteners below the waterline where they attached copper sheathing. The chemical properties of copper cause the erosion of iron when the two metals come in contact. If iron fasteners contact copper sheathing, the iron corrodes in a galvanic reaction, donating its ions to the copper. When the vessel’s structural integrity failed due to a chemical reaction, the ship could fall apart without outward signs of problems.

Commandant Hull of the Charleston Navy Yard had announced to the navy board that his yard could build one of the anti-slave trade vessels as easily and cheaper than anyone else. One of the measures that he took in order to produce it cheaply was to reduce the pay of his employees! Daily wages that ranged from 90¢ through $1.62 ½ fell to 75 ½¢ through $1.25, those earning the most were carpenters, blacksmiths, boat builders, and caulkers, and the least, laborers. The total construction cost of the Alligator was $29,909.59

Designs for the schooner also include a rigging and stowage plan. Charles Ware, the master sail maker at the Charlestown Navy Yard, prepared these plans. The naval board chose the topsail schooner rig due to its versatility in a range of sailing conditions, so that they would be efficient in both oceanic voyages and coastal sailing. A fore and aft

59 Alligator File.
rig was able to sail close to the wind, which was ideal for coastal sailing and required fewer hands to operate than a fully rigged ship. The schooner rig is also more maneuverable, as it can more easily tack into the wind. However, a square topsail could help capture the prevailing winds needed to move a ship through the ocean waters. The schooner’s masts raked to the aft, and carried a combination of gaff sails and topsails. A raked mast may not have contributed to the speed of a vessel, though it might have helped to ease the pitching motion of the hull while under sail.\textsuperscript{60} Each mast carried a gaff sail and studdingsail to increase the possible sail area. It had square topsails on the foremost and a gaff-topsail on the mainmast. The \textit{Alligator} also had a ringtail, a light weather sail, and three jibs, the inner, outer, and flying jibs, which attach to the bowsprit.\textsuperscript{61}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{sail_plan.png}
\caption{Sail Plan of the \textit{Alligator}, Charles Ware, 1821.\textsuperscript{62}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{61} Howard I. Chapelle, \textit{The History of the American Sailing Navy}, p. 327.

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 327.
Figure 3: Stowage plan of the *Alligator*, Charles Ware, 1821.\(^{63}\)

Naval stores onboard the *Alligator* were sufficient to feed seventy-five men for four months.\(^{64}\) The stowage plan shows the arrangement of hatches, iron ballast,

\(^{63}\) *Alligator File.*
kentledge, water barrels, and spirits in the *Alligator*. The vessel carried 6017 gallons of water in 26 barrels, and 3 barrels containing 437 gallons of spirits.\(^65\) Again, Charles Ware prepared the plans that detail the ballast and water barrel arrangement within the hull of the ship.\(^66\) Due to the steep deadrise of the vessel and the need for its optimal balance, the ship needed significant amount of ballast, and was imperative that it was placed appropriately. The schooners used iron kentledge, as it is a uniform shape and is symmetrically packable. The logbooks and the stowage plan state that the *Alligator* carried nineteen tons of kentledge.\(^67\) This is the weight carried before the addition of water barrels and armaments.

The *Alligator* was equipped with three small boats — a launch, a cutter, and a gig.\(^68\) These nested within one another while under sail, hence requiring diversely sized boats, and were stowed amidships, often lofted off the deck.\(^69\) The small boats served as a means to row to shore, to approach and board other vessels while at sea, as an emergency escape, and proved very useful when fighting Caribbean pirates.

The navy commissioned the *Alligator* for naval duty to the coast of Africa in March 1821. From all perspectives, this call of duty was not a pleasant one. While


\(^65\) *Alligator File*.

\(^66\) *Ibid*.


\(^68\) John M. Dale to Smith Thompson, November 16, 1822, Dale Family Papers, Misc. Collection No. 246, in *Alligator File*.

Congressmen debated politics and issues affecting the laws prohibiting the slave trade in a heated environment, one that would eventually divide the nation, those in the center of naval action and duty upon the African coast fought in an even hotter one. This duty exposed its participants to an unbearable climate, one rife with deadly diseases, and introduced them to distasteful aspects of the slave trade experience. The navy yard received orders on January 22, 1821 to outfit the vessel, and the crew arrived from New York shortly after, on February 27. Lt. Robert F. Stockton arrived March 14. On April 3, the Alligator sailed out of Boston Harbor, destined for the African coast.\(^\text{70}\)

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Chapter 2. The First Voyage Erupts in Diplomatic and International Dissonance

When the Alligator departed from Charlestown Navy Yard in April 1821 the schooner set forth for the coast of Africa. This voyage was the first command for Lt. Commander Robert F. Stockton. Robert Stockton grew up in New Jersey, an was educated mostly by tutors, under the guidance of a father in public service. One of Stockton’s teachers was Robert Finley, a founder of the American Colonization Society.¹ Stockton began attending Princeton College in 1808, where he distinguished himself. Unsure of a career path and not ready to enter law school, an adventurous life in the navy appealed to Stockton. He applied to the navy as a midshipman in 1811, and dropped out of college when accepted. Stockton’s enthusiasm to learn caught the attention of his commanders and he was promoted to lieutenant in 1814.² He continued to impress his superiors, and in 1820 requested command of a ship, preferably “the most dangerous, the most difficult, and the most unpromising employment at the disposal of the government.”³ Even though senior officers had also requested the command, Stockton received command of the Alligator early in 1821.

Stockton’s orders state that he was to “cruise upon the coast of Africa as long as your provisions shall hold out.” He was then to:


² Harold Langley, “Robert F. Stockton: Naval Officer and Reformer,” James C Bradford, ed., Quarterdeck and Bridge: Two Centuries of American Naval Leaders (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997), pp. 77-81. Stockton is better known for his later naval career, his role in the acquisition of California, and for his role in eradicating the practice of flogging on naval ships.

³ Ibid. p. 82.
run towards the West Indies Islands, in the route usually transversed by vessels with slaves, which is mostly north of the Antilles, and the Keys, to Cuba. Enter the most convenient port in the United States and procure the necessary supplies of provisions, etc., and make a second cruise to the coast of Africa, avoiding the rainy and unhealthy season usual upon the coast.\textsuperscript{4}

The \textit{Alligator} first stopped at the New York Navy Yard to pick up additional crewmembers before continuing to the African coast. Stockton’s orders also instructed him to contact the Agents of the American Colonization Society on the coast of Africa, to investigate possible locations to establish a colony and offer any assistance that they might need.\textsuperscript{5} The Colonization Society had previously approached Stockton to request that he obtain a vessel destined for the coast of Africa so that he might be a naval liaison and informal negotiator for them.\textsuperscript{6}

The \textit{Alligator} arrived on the coast of Africa in May 1821 near the mouth of the river Pongo. The voyage had taken nearly a month, as the ship sailed with the prevailing winds crossing the Atlantic Ocean. From the river Pongo, the \textit{Alligator} proceeded to Sierra Leone, then continued south to the river Gallinas.


\textsuperscript{5} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{6} Samuel John Bayard, \textit{A sketch}, p. 39.
Figure 4: Sail Path to the African Coast.\footnote{Unfortunately, navigation records make it so this map is not entirely precise. The logbooks contain only measurements of latitude, but not longitude, so I was forced to apply a version of dead-reckoning.}

At Gallinas, several vessels lay in wait to fill their holds with cargos of slaves.\footnote{Robert Stockton to John Quincy Adams, Society of Friends, \textit{Friend's View of the Present State of the African Slave Trade} (Philadelphia: Yearly Meeting, 1824), p. 35.} Stockton boarded the slave ship, the \textit{Jeune Eugene}, on May 17, 1821, noting that she was an American-built vessel of about 120 tons, with an extra deck laid, gratings placed to allow light and air into the hold, and provisioned with large quantities of food and water.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, pp. 40-41.}

Even though the commander claimed that she was French-owned the papers did not demonstrate evidence of a legal transfer from her original American owners. The
logbooks indicated that she had sailed from the United States to St. Thomas to prepare for the voyage, although no documentation of her cargos or authorized departure from the island existed, and her final destination was unrecorded. The officer in command even declared that upon the Alligator’s approach, he prepared to repel any attempts to discover his identity and nationality.\(^\text{10}\) Armed with the suspicion that it was actually an American slaver, Stockton put a prize crew, under the command of William Kean, onboard the Jeune Eugene the following day.

The Jeune Eugene arrived in Boston on July 3. Kean wrote to Isaac Hull, the Commander of the Charlestown Navy Yard, that on board he had thirteen prisoners. They presently awaited entrance to Boston from quarantine, two having died of “African fever” en route. Kean requested permission to obtain fresh vegetables and beef from shore, as the prisoners have not had any since they departed many months earlier.\(^\text{11}\)

Stockton also examined several other vessels on the coast that May. Three others he returned to the United States, the Eliza, (L’Elize) the Daphne, (La Daphnée) and the Matilda. These, like the Jeune Eugene, appeared to be American-built, without adequate evidence to prove legal transfer of ownership to a French owner. Stockton put prize crews onboard these vessels on May 26, 1821, ordering them to return to the United States. His orders to the commanding officers of the prize crews included a description of the signals that they each should use to communicate with one another on the return

\(^{10}\) Ibid, pp. 40-41.

\(^{11}\) William Kean to Isaac Hull, July 3, 1821, Letters received by the Secretary of the Navy: Captain’s Letters, RG45, M125, Roll 72 (Washington DC: National Records and Archives Administration).
voyage. The *Matilda* would use a blue repeater pendant, the *Daphne*, a white repeater, and the *Eliza*, a red repeater.\textsuperscript{12} The *Alligator* accompanied the three slavers until they progressively separated during the course of the voyage. T.V. Wirsenthal, commanding officer of the prize schooner *Matilda*, arrived in Norfolk in August. The day after they had separated from the *Alligator*, the *Matilda*'s crew retook the vessel and sailed to Martinique. Wirsenthal claimed that W. Hosack and himself did everything under their powers to keep the vessel, but that when most of his men went below decks to rest, the French crew, who outnumbered them, took command of the vessel. The governor of Martinique then ordered the American crew to Fort Royal before sending them on *La Duchefse de Berri* to Norfolk.\textsuperscript{13} Joseph Williston, the commanding officer in charge of the prize schooner *Eliza*, arrived in New York in September of 1821. In a letter to Secretary of the Navy Smith Thompson, he requested that he not be denigrated for losing possession of the vessel, as he claimed that he was under the “disadvantage of having no officer, or man, on who I could place the least dependence while I slept,” and that he did “all in my power for the preservation of the vessel.”\textsuperscript{14} Although there is no report from Lt. Inman, commanding officer of the prize schooner *Daphne*, Stockton lamented that it

\textsuperscript{12} Robert Stockton to the commanding officer of the *Matilda*, May 26, 1821, *Letters received by the Secretary of the Navy from Officers below the rank of Commander*. RG 45, M148, Roll 26 (Washington DC: National Records and Archives Administration).

\textsuperscript{13} T.V. Wirsenthal to Smith Thompson, August 21, 1821, *Letters received by the Secretary of the Navy from Officers*.

\textsuperscript{14} Joseph Williston to Smith Thompson, September 10, 1821, *Letters received by the Secretary of the Navy from Officers*. 
was the only vessel carrying slaves onboard at the time of the capture, and due to her unexpected separation from the *Alligator*, he was unable to remove the slaves from her.\(^{15}\)

By the time Stockton returned to Boston, the French criticized Stockton for his alleged inclination for capturing non-American slavers. In self-defense, he described a scenario where he investigated a vessel suspected to be a slaver, but did not capture it because it was definitely not American. A canoeist on the river Pongo alerted him to this vessel after he first arrived on the African coast. A vessel commanded by W. Pierre Defret, *La Julia*, prepared to receive a load of slaves upriver. Stockton sent crews in two boats to ascertain the character and nationality of the vessel. They found a certificate of American citizenship for Defret, and so brought *La Julia* down the river for further investigation. There was no other evidence that indicated that the vessel was American, so Stockton apologized to the captain for the inconveniences, and offered assistance for damages that might have occurred as a result. The captain accepted rope, whiskey, and pitch, and in return offered some natural curiosities. Apparently, after his return to the West Indies, Defret filed a complaint against Stockton’s investigation.\(^{16}\)

The French responded indignantly to Stockton’s captures of the *Jeune Eugene* and the three other French slave vessels. Although the French had declared the slave trade

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\(^{15}\) "One of the vessels separated from me on the 7th June, another on the 9th of the same month, and the third on the 15th following." Robert Stockton to Smith Thompson, July 26, 1821, *Letters received by the Secretary of the Navy from Officers*.

\(^{16}\) Robert Stockton to Smith Thompson, June 11, 1822, *Letters received by the Secretary of the Navy from Officers*. 
illegal in 1815, and again in 1818, they had not agreed with Great Britain or the United States to allow any rights of search and seizure. The French, like the United States, opted to maintain their own naval force on the coast of Africa, but also like Americans, the French fleet proved ineffective against the numerous French slavers on the coast. To double the insult, the United States had also captured two other vessels, the *Apollon* and the *Neptune*, in Louisiana for violating U.S. revenue laws. The French considered the captures of its vessels to be outrages upon the flag and national honor of France. The French Minister, Baron Hyde de Neuville, threatened to kidnap American vessels in French territory if the United States did not settle the matter satisfactorily. The French Consul, Chevalier de Valnais, demanded that the United States restore the *Jeune Eugene*, along with all of its property on behalf of the owners, Messrs. Raibaud and Labtut, residents of Guadeloupe. The French authorities in the West Indies also expressed their outrage and sent slavers’ testimonies about Stockton’s piratical nature. Stockton refuted


22 Allan Nevins, *Diary of John Quincy Adams*, p. 270.
this allegation, claiming "no vessel has been chased on the coast of Africa by the
Alligator but what has been overtaken by her. This mistake may have originated from
information given by the prisoners that a vessel, under the French flag, had left the coast
with a full cargo of slaves on board a short time previous to our arrival." Smith
Thompson ordered Stockton to pay a visit to Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and
furnish him with an explanation of the captures.

Joseph Story, the circuit court judge in Boston, presided over the trial of the Jeune
Eugene. There were three central questions regarding the slave vessel: whether she was
an American vessel, whether she was engaged in the slave trade, and whether if she were
French and engaged in the slave trade, was the Court bound to restore the property to
France without further inquiry. A more difficult question philosophically was whether
the slave trade was contrary to the law of nations. The court found that the slave trade
was not contrary to the law of nations, and to appease the French, the United States
restored the Jeune Eugene to her owners in May 1822. The United States returned her
without a trial under the slave trade acts, upon Baron Hyde de Neuville’s assurance that
the vessels were exclusively the property of French subjects, with the understanding that

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23 Robert Stockton to Smith Thompson, August 9, 1821, Letters received by the Secretary of the
Navy from Officers.

24 Smith Thompson to Robert Stockton, August 29, 1821, Letters sent by the Secretary of the
Navy, RG45, M149, Roll 14 (Washington DC: National Archives and Records Administration).


26 Helen Catterall, ed., Judicial Cases concerning American Slavery and the Negro, Volume 4
a French tribunal would judge the vessel. Regardless of the diplomatic necessity of the action, both John Quincy Adams and Joseph Story regretted the outcome of the trial and of the return of the vessel to its owners. Story opines:

Now in respect to the African slave trade . . . that it is founded in a violation of some of the first principles which ought to govern nations. It is repugnant to the great principles of Christian duty, the dictates of natural religion, the obligations of good faith and morality, and the eternal maxims of social justice . . . is sufficient to stamp any trade as interdicted by public law, when it can be justly affirmed, that it is repugnant to the general principles of justice and humanity.

Story, however, respected the necessity of observing international delicacy in this situation. Even though he personally disagreed with the institution of slavery, he acknowledged that slavery was not contrary to the law of nations, and as such, American cruisers could not capture vessels of a foreign ownership. Adams also resented the outcome of the situation, stating:

I am satisfied of the expediency of delivering over the Jeune Eugene to the French Consul. But I wish it should be submitted to the consideration of the President how this can be done with a strong though tacit censure of Lt. Stockton. By giving up the vessel, we not only admit the fact that she was entirely French property, but we deprive our officer of the means of showing judicially his reasons for believing her to have been American. We surrender not only the question of further right but the justification of the individual. It seems to me also necessary that some very precise

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27 John Quincy Adams to Baron Hyde de Neuville, February 22, 1822, Worthington Chauncey Ford. The Writings of John Quincy Adams, pp. 210-212. There is no further mention of whether the French tribunal tried the owners of the Jeune Eugene under French slave trade laws.


29 John Marshall had earlier debated on the right of search of a neutral vessel and jurisdiction upon the seas. “Upon the ocean . . . all persons have an entire equality. It is the common highway of all, appropriated to the use of all; and no one there can vindicate to himself a superior or exclusive prerogative there. Every ship sails there with the unquestionable right of pursuing her own business there... in such as manner as not to violate the rights of others.” Benjamin Ziegler, The International Law of John Marshall (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1939), pp. 71, 73.
instruction should be given to all our officers who may be employed on
that service hereafter, that they may know whether they can safely under
any circumstances whatever board a vessel under a foreign flag.  

The outcome of the trial was not unlike the legal trend occurring simultaneously
in Great Britain. The British courts were also finding that the slave trade was not contrary
to the law of nations. In the cases of the Diana, a Swedish vessel, and the Louis, a French
vessel, both captured and tried by British courts, the British admiralty had declared: “the
slave-trade, though unjust and condemned by the statute law of England, was not piracy,
nor was it a crime by the universal law of nations.”  

This was a change of position, breaking the legal precedent, set by the earlier cases of the Amedie and the Fortuna, two American vessels. In these cases, they condemned the vessels because “the slave-trade,
carried on by a vessel belonging to a subject of the United States, is a trade which, being
unprotected by the domestic regulations of their legislature and government, subjects the
vessel engaged in it to a sentence of condemnation.”

These slave trade trials demonstrated changing attitudes on the international arena
regarding the suppression of the slave trade, and the national rights of both enforcers and
of slavers. The ruling that the slave trade was not contrary to the law of nations

30 John Quincy Adams to Daniel Brent, September 22, 1821, Worthington Chauncey Ford,
Writings of John Quincy Adams, p. 179. The Navy Department accepted this recommendation, instructing
commanders: “You will not consider you general instructions under the laws of the United States for the
suppression of the slave trade as authorizing you at any place out of the waters of the United States, to
search, capture, or in any manner whatsoever to interrupt vessels under any other than the American Flag.
Nor will you in execution of your instructions for the suppression of piracy and the protection of our
commerce, infringe upon the Territorial jurisdiction of any other powers.” Smith Thompson to Robert
Stockton, February 1822, Letters sent by the Secretary of the Navy.


highlighted the need to revise policy. However, these court decisions reinforced the nature of the trade that allowed slavers to escape capture by illicitly operating under the flags of foreign nations. The situation was logically more clear-cut in situations involving American slavers captured by the navy, but the decisions did not necessarily reflect stricter punishment.

In April 1820, Captain Edward Trenchard captured several slavers in the river Gallinas. He sent the Esperanza and Endymion to the United States for adjudication, although he acknowledged that four others he investigated the same day were not American. Upon the Esperanza, he discovered a blank Spanish journal, a fact that illustrates the slavers’ disposition to vary their identities. Trenchard noted that the majority of the vessels trading on the coast appeared to be American built, and typically topsail schooners. He also captured the Plattsburg, Science, and Alexander. The Cyane escorted the slave ships back to the United States, and the district courts of New York and Massachusetts condemned the ships and sentenced the commanders to fines and imprisonment. However, all the captures had occurred before passage of the act of 1820, which declared slave traders to be pirates under American law and proscribed the

33 Captain Edward Trenchard to Smith Thompson, April 10, 1820, Society of Friends, Friend's View, pp. 33-34.


death penalty for those guilty of participating. Instead, the condemned merely received fines and jail time.\textsuperscript{36}

The punishment turned out to be laxly enforced, as seen in the case of Adolphe Lacoste, commander of the \textit{Science}, from Charlestown, South Carolina. Judge Story heard the trial and found Lacoste guilty. The court sentenced Lacoste to five years imprisonment and penalized him $3,000. Then the president of the United States pardoned him under the pretext of having previous good character, youth, and an aged mother!\textsuperscript{37}

Slightly more difficult for the American courts was the trial of the \textit{Antelope}, also known as the \textit{General Ramirez}, a trial that began in Georgia in 1820 and continued through appeals and retrials all the way to the Supreme Court in 1828.\textsuperscript{38} The case of the \textit{Antelope} was truly a multi-national one, questioning diplomatic privileges under slave trade laws. In 1819, a Venezuelan privateer, \textit{Columbia}, entered Baltimore and recruited a crew of thirty to forty Americans. The vessel proceeded to the coast of Africa under the name \textit{Arraganta}, where she raided a slaver from Rhode Island, the \textit{Exchange}, taking twenty-five Africans. It then took hundreds of Africans from several Portuguese slavers. Afterwards, it captured a Spanish vessel called the \textit{Antelope} and proceeded to Brazil. The \textit{Arraganta} wrecked off the coast, where locals took the master and his crew prisoner. The


\textsuperscript{38} Helen Catterall, ed., \textit{Judicial Cases}, Volume 3, pp. 9-10.
remaining crew and slaves transferred to the Antelope, under the command of an American, John Smith, and assumed the name General Ramirez.\textsuperscript{39}

The U.S. revenue cutter Dallas captured the General Ramirez hovering off the U.S. coast in March 1820. On board the General Ramirez there numbered upwards of two hundred and eighty Africans, although it was estimated that one third of the Africans originally onboard had died on the voyage. The Dallas brought the General Ramirez into Savannah for adjudication.\textsuperscript{40} The difficulty of this trial was that it included a Venezuelan owned privateer with a primarily American crew, which was in possession of stolen property from American, Spanish, and Portuguese vessels. To make it more complicated, a stolen vessel now carried the illicit cargo, under the command of an American, who brought it into American territory.

The court ordered ninety-three of the Africans returned to the owners of the Portuguese and Spanish vessels,\textsuperscript{41} and declared freedom for the twenty-five originally onboard the American slaver, requesting their transportation to the African colony. While awaiting trial, fifty others died. The marshal distributed the remainder of the Africans in the neighborhood of Savannah, under the supervision of “trustworthy” individuals.\textsuperscript{42} More than a year after their captures and subsequent release into freedom, the navy finally authorized a trans-Atlantic voyage in May 1822 for the twenty-five freed

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{42} Judge William Johnson to John Quincy Adams, June 12, 1821, Society of Friends, Friend's View, p. 44.
Africans.\footnote{John H. Morell, May 4, 1822, Society of Friends, \textit{Friend's View}, p. 47.} Regarding the ninety-three restored to the Portuguese and Spanish, their transporters actually landed them in Florida, where they probably introduced them as slaves.\footnote{R. Habersham to John Quincy Adams, July 18, 1821, Society of Friends, \textit{Friend's View}, p. 46.}

The failure to restore the slaves promptly to their Portuguese and Spanish owners resulted in continued diplomatic enquiries and legal trials. In 1827 the court resolved that the Spanish claimants must first identify the Africans that had been on board their vessel. The second mate of the \textit{General Ramirez} recognized and claimed about forty of the Africans residing in the Savannah area.\footnote{Helen Catterall, ed., \textit{Judicial cases}, Volume 3, pp. 10.} The circumstance of the \textit{Antelope} demonstrated the American lack of urgency toward the slave trade and the fates of free blacks. The U.S. Navy captured the \textit{Antelope} in late 1820, and the trials concerning the privateers and slavers continued until 1828. In the meantime, of the 280 Africans rescued by the \textit{Dallas}, only 18 gained freedom, although it took 2 years to return them to Monrovia.

These judicial trials concerning foreign slavers and American captures only reinforced the necessity of U.S. naval commanders to be extremely cautious when approaching vessels outside of U.S. territorial waters that appeared to be suspicious. The courts had decided in both the cases of the \textit{Jeune Eugene} and the \textit{Antelope}, that the traffic remained lawful under those governments who had not forbidden it, and many of the European nations only partially prohibited it. In a later analysis, Henry Wheaton, who examined international laws and trials, conceded:
The African slave-trade, though prohibited by municipal laws of most nations, and declared to be piracy by the statutes of Great Britain and the United States, is not such by the general international law; and its interdiction cannot be enforced by the exercise of the ordinary right of visitation and search. That right does not exist, in time of peace, independently of special compact.\textsuperscript{46}

The international delicacy of the slave trade issue worked in favor of the slavers, as they were able to exploit governmental resistance to cooperation. The practice of flag switching upon the high seas was common after the passage of the slave trade acts in both Great Britain and the United States. Slavers had quickly learned that they could avoid capture by displaying a flag of a nation that had not entered into a treaty allowing mutual rights of search and seizure. Typically, American slavers traded under the French and Spanish flags, while the European traders operated under the American flag in the proximity of a Royal Navy patrol vessel.\textsuperscript{47} Edward Trenchard noted this trend in April 1820, while commanding the \textit{Cyane}. He wrote:

\begin{quote}
We have made ten captures; some by fair sailing, others by boats and stratagem. Although they are evidently owned by Americans, they are so completely covered by Spanish papers that it is impossible to condemn them. . . . There are, probably, not less that three hundred vessels on the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{46} Henry Wheaton, \textit{Elements}, pp. 165-168.

\textsuperscript{47} "The manner in which most of the American slavers carry on their trade is this; they sail from the U.S. to some port in Cuba, with a cargo of blue and white cottons, India checks, nankin (sp. Type of cotton), powder, tobacco, etc, where they make a sham sale of the vessel, for the purpose of procuring a set of Spanish papers. The officers make oath of the cargo, entitle to debenture, has been landed, and procure the requisite certificates, whilst every article has remained untouched onboard. They then take on board a Spaniard, who passes for the captain, though perhaps this is his first voyage to sea, hoist the Spanish flag, and proceed to the coast of Africa, north of the line keeping three logbooks, two in Spanish, one true and the other false, and one in English. Having obtained their human cargo, and escaped the vigilance of the cruisers on the coast, the next plan is to arrange the logbook to be produced in Cuba, which must show that the slaves were shipped south of the line, and the vessel with her cargo is then admitted to entry. When overhauled by the English or Patriot Privateers, they exhibit American papers, and when by the Americans, Spanish papers, by which means many escape capture and condemnation." Society of Friends, \textit{Friend's View}, pp. 56.
coast, engaged in that traffic, each having two or three sets of papers. I sincerely hope government have revised the law giving us more authority. 48

In 1821, Congress authorized the President to negotiate with European powers to enter into a treaty for the suppression of the slave trade, and John Quincy Adams began talks with the British foreign minister. 49 After this resolution passed, commanders received additional instructions from the secretary of the navy that directed them to cooperate and sail together with Royal Navy patrols on the coast to maximize their search potential. 50 Congress had not yet signed any treaties, but the committee for the suppression of the slave trade acknowledged that international cooperation was the only way that there would be an effectual suppression of the slave trade. Mr. Hemphill reported:

The committee will observe, in the first instance, that a mutual right of search appears to be indispensable to the great object of abolition . . . the slave dealers would avail themselves of a system of obtaining fraudulent papers, and concealing the real ownership under the cover of such flags, which would be carried on with such address as to render it easy for the citizens or subjects of one state to evade their own municipal laws . . . and the very knowledge of the existence of an active and vigorous system of

48 Edward Trenchard to the Secretary of the Navy, April 10, 1820, New American State Papers: Labor and Slavery, Volume 3, pp. 120-121.

49 “Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That the President be requested to enter into such arrangements as he may deem suitable and proper, with one or more of the maritime Powers of Europe, for the effectual abolition of the African slave trade.” U.S., Annals of Congress, HR, 16th Cong., 2nd sess., February 9, 1821, pp. 1071.

50 Additional Instructions Concerning the Slave Trade: “To the instructions heretofore given you . . . an arrangement has been made between the Government of the United States and that of Great Britain . . . as far as may be compatible with the discharge of your own duties, cooperate with the Commander of any British vessel with which you may fall in, cruising, or stationed on the coast of Africa with a view to the suppression of the slave trade.” Smith Thompson, August 1821, Letters sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Officers.
co-operation would divert many from this traffic, as the unlawful trade would become to hazardous for profitable speculation.\textsuperscript{51}

Regardless of this acknowledgement, treaty negotiations with Great Britain were slow, and it was not until 1824 that John Quincy Adams presented a formal treaty negotiation to Congress for approval.

John Quincy Adams was a key figure in strengthening America's foreign policy, which the nation followed into the early twentieth century. The fundamentals of this policy included self-preservation, self-determination, non-colonization, non-intervention, and non-entanglement in European politics.\textsuperscript{52} Adams reiterated the policies set forth by George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, who had advised the nation to follow a policy of "peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none."\textsuperscript{53} Although many Americans may have wished otherwise, the United States could not become truly isolationist due to economic interests and trade with European nations, mainly the exchange of agricultural goods for manufactured ones.

When required to, the United States negotiated treaties with European powers, most of which dealt with concerns on the North American continent.\textsuperscript{54} The majority of treaties with European powers regarded the American acquisition of territories lying on our borders. Laying claim to these lands helped make the United States less vulnerable to

\textsuperscript{51} Annals of Congress, HR, 16\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess., February 9, 1821, pp. 1069.


attack or intervention. The new goal of Americans became expansion throughout the North American continent. "Manifest destiny" was a desire to control the vast territory from "sea to shining sea". Figure 5 demonstrates the control of territory on the North American continent in 1820, illustrating states, territories, and the division between slave and free states.

Figure 5: Map of the United States in 1820.\textsuperscript{55}

The United States purchased the Louisiana territory from France in the late fall of 1803,\textsuperscript{56} increasing the size of U. S. territory by more than a third. The United States also acquired the Florida territories when Spain ceded Florida under the Adams-Onis Transcontinental

\textsuperscript{55} http://rosecity.net/civilwar/capesites/warmap.html

\textsuperscript{56} Alvin Josephy, \textit{On the Hill}, p.131.
Treaty, drafted on February 22, 1819. One of the reasons that the United States demanded the acquisition of the Florida territory is that it felt that Spain was not doing its part to patrol its borders, and northern Florida was a haven for pirates and smugglers bringing slaves and merchandise into Georgia. The Senate ratified the treaty in 1821, establishing Florida as a U.S. territory.

In June 1836, Congress passed a resolution to recognize Texas’ independence from Mexico, beginning the annexation process. It was nearly a decade before Texas entered the union, when Congress passed a bill annexing Texas on December 29, 1845. Earlier that same year, Mexico expressed its distress that the United States had taken its land, leading to the Mexican Wars.

Despite wishes to remain free from any European intervention in American affairs, economic factors required participation in international trade, often conducted by the maritime sector. One of the means to sustain the self-preservation of the nation’s identity was to maintain freedom of commerce and freedom of the seas. Americans saw any infringement upon this freedom as an insult to the nation. Along with freedom of the seas came the idea of maritime sovereignty: the notion that allowing right of search and

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58 Samuel Flagg Bemis, John Quincy Adams, p. 313.

59 "An Act for carrying into execution the treaty between the United States and Spain, concluded at Washington on the twenty second day of February, one thousand eighteen hundred and nineteen." The Public Statutes, Volume 3, 16th Cong., 2nd sess., Ch. 39, March 3, 1821, pp. 637-639.

60 Alvin Josephy, On the Hill, p. 179.

seizure to other navies was as an outrage to national dignity. In the early days of our nation, Great Britain was notorious for its efforts to control commerce coming in and out of the New World through navigation laws, blockades, and privateering. Great Britain’s treatment of its sailors, however, was less than exemplary, causing many to defect. The Royal Navy began a program of impressment, which forced these deserters back onto its ships. The practice of impressment became a problem when the Royal Navy began impressing sailors of any nationality, both to fill their labor shortages and to undermine American naval and commercial maritime fleets. Impressment, along with false blockades and monopolies of commerce, was one of the reasons for the beginning of the War of 1812.\textsuperscript{62} The United States resented this practice long after the war. Thus, the United States regarded Great Britain as a principal threat to American national dignity.\textsuperscript{63}

The Treaty of Ghent, which marked the end of the War of 1812, addressed boundary issues, and included an article on the suppression of the slave trade. The United States and Great Britain drafted the treaty in December of 1814, and the U. S. Senate ratified it on February 17, 1815. The treaty mostly addressed territorial concerns, but the tenth article covered the suppression of the slave trade, an addendum most likely added to relieve pressure from Great Britain to engage in a more binding treaty on the issue.\textsuperscript{64} Great Britain doubtless attempted to instill some sort of cooperation with the other nation that had declared the trade illegal, but the United States maintained that it would be

\textsuperscript{62} Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, and Kenneth J. Hagan, \textit{American Foreign Policy}, p. 70.

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Ibid}, p. 99.

\textsuperscript{64} "Treaty of Peace and Amity, Between his Britannie Majesty and the United States of America," \textit{The Public Statutes}, Volume VIII, February 18, 1815, pp. 218-223.
capable of maintaining its own fleet and putting an end to the American slavers that traded upon the coast.

As the navy dispatched vessels to the African coast in pursuit of slavers, feedback from naval officers convinced Congress of the necessity of international cooperation to end the slave trade. The voyage of the U.S. Schooner Alligator was one of a mere few U.S. naval voyages to the coast of Africa authorized by Congress and the navy, to demonstrate that we could honor the Treaty of Ghent and enforce our own legislation prohibiting the slave trade. Congressional support for a more effective means to abolish the slave trade led to serious negotiations between the United States and Great Britain. Nevertheless, policymakers remained reluctant to allow Great Britain the right of search. At first, the secretary of state tried to drive a hard bargain to satisfy the U.S. Congress, appeasing both slave supporters and those violently against the right of search. In 1821, Adams made a suggestion to the British foreign minister, Lord Castlereagh, stating that: "unless Britain will bind herself, by an article, as strong and explicit as language can make it, never again in time of war to take a man from an American vessel, we never for a moment can listen to a proposal for allowing such a search in time of peace."65 This hard line yielded no treaty conventions, so Congress passed a follow-up resolution in April 1822, then again in February 1823, which authorized the president to negotiate for a

treaty. Congress resoundingly supported this resolution, by a vote of 131 to 9.\textsuperscript{66} The committee that recommended the resolution won over the House, acknowledging that:

Our own flag has disappeared from the African coast, only to give place to that of other nations, by whom this trade is alike forbidden; that the occasional vessel which we dispatch for that desolated land, carries with it, under the late instructions of our Government, no authority competent to the execution of our own purpose; and that no measure of an internal policy can shield us from that share of the general calamity resulting from this traffic, which falls peculiarly on our own country\textsuperscript{67}

The overwhelming support for a treaty with Great Britain forced Adams to reevaluate his position on the slave trade, slavery, and the right of search. He began to accept that a restricted right of search between the United States and Great Britain was justifiable, especially if the vessel was characterized as a belligerent one. In order to ensure this qualification, the slave trade would need to be qualified as piracy in the laws of all participating in the treaty.\textsuperscript{68}

Discussions between Adams and British Foreign Minister Stratford Canning resulted in a treaty convention that allowed a mutual, but restricted, right of search and seizure for the purpose of the suppression of the Atlantic slave trade. The proposed convention yielded a compromise similar to what the British had been campaigning for since the end of the War of 1812 and included a distinct restriction on impressment. The treaty convention contained five main elements. Citizens of either nation were punishable

\textsuperscript{66} "Resolved, That the President of the United States be requested to enter upon, and to prosecute from time to time, such negotiations with the several maritime Powers of Europe and America, as he may deem expedient for the effectual abolition of the African slave trade, and its ultimate denunciation, as piracy, under the law of nations, by the consent of the civilized world." \textit{Annals of Congress}, HR, 17\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess., February 28, 1823, pp. 1147.

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Annals of Congress}, HR, 17\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess., February 28, 1823, pp. 1149.

\textsuperscript{68} Samuel Flagg Bemis, \textit{John Quincy Adams}, p. 427.
as pirates and captured ships subject to trial under their own nation's slave trade laws. A reciprocal right of search was allowable, except when in the presence of the other nation's naval forces. No officer had the authority to remove any individual belonging to a ship's crew from an accused vessel, and the officers of the capturing vessels were responsible for their behaviors and any abuse of the right of search.  

Great Britain enacted a law on March 31, 1824, immediately after the drafting of the convention to make the slave trade piracy, demonstrating Britain's enthusiasm for international cooperation. Unfortunately there was slightly more opposition to the treaty in the U.S. Senate, although there were not enough votes to reject the treaty outright. Instead, opponents to the treaty proposed two amendments that altered the convention significantly. The first amendment changed the agreement from a perpetual one, to one terminable with a six months notice. In the second amendment, Senators crossed out the word America from the first article, which designated the right of search on the coast of Africa, the West Indies, and the coast of America. This omission is vitally important for two reasons. Included, the word would have allowed British intervention in our coastwise trade, a trade still considered legal by the U.S. government. However, deleted, it allowed Americans to search vessels in British territory, and did not allow a reciprocal right for the Royal navy to search ships in American territory. The Senate could not reject the


treaty based upon votes; they, instead, changed it in such a way that the British would be sure to reject it.\textsuperscript{72}

There were several reasons that the Senate defeated the treaty of 1824, one of which was slave politics. It was noted at the time that the three main reasons behind the opposition to the treaty with Great Britain were "disinclination to concede the right of search, apprehension of ulterior measures being in contemplation by Great Britain for effecting the total suppression of slavery in all Countries, and thirdly and principally, Party Spirit."\textsuperscript{73} John Quincy Adams was planning on running for president. Several politicians tried to discredit his initiative to participate with Great Britain, and to enrage slave-holding voters. This tactic did not work, as Adams served as president from 1825-1829, with Henry Clay serving as his secretary of state.

At the same time as the United States entered into treaty negotiations, Great Britain also approached colonial issues in the Caribbean and South America. Great Britain, concerned about her own colonial interests and desire for increased new world markets, balked at Spain and France's current policies. European nations often resolved their affairs based upon alliances between the great powers; however, decades of war had

\textsuperscript{72} "This Government finds itself unable to accede to the Convention for the Suppression of the Slave Trade, with the alterations and modifications that have been annexed to its ratification on the part of the United States. He said that none of these alterations or modifications would have formed insuperable bars to the consent of Great Britain, except that which had expunged the word America, from the first article, but that this was considered insuperable." Mr. Rush to Mr. Adams, August 9, 1824, \textit{New American State Papers: Labor and Slavery}, Volume III, p. 300.

\textsuperscript{73} Addington to Canning, May 21, 1824, W. Stull Holt, \textit{Treaties Defeated by the Senate: A Story of the Struggle between the President and Senate over the conduct of Foreign Relations} (Glouster, MA: Peter Smith, 1964), pp. 48-49.
ravaged the political and economic structures of European nations.\textsuperscript{74} Meanwhile, the South and Latin American colonies had begun their quest for independence against European control. Great Britain wished to maintain its economic standing in the New World, and so Stratford Canning attempted to enlist American backing for a non-intervention statement to prevent Spain and France from conflicts in the Americas. Great Britain had also expressed an interest in the island of Cuba, and maintained a large fleet in the region, albeit for the purpose of chasing pirates.\textsuperscript{75} The United States, distrustful of Great Britain's ulterior motives, and not wishing it to acquire territory just off the southern coast, chose to prepare a statement itself.\textsuperscript{76} Policymakers recognized, however, that if the continental powers truly wished to intervene, the United States would need Great Britain's assistance.

President James Monroe empathized with the South American situation and he, along with other policy makers, was convinced that an independent policy was wise. He expressed the national attitude toward European colonization and interference in our affairs, on Dec 2, 1823, in his seventh annual message to Congress. This famous speech is known as the Monroe Doctrine. The doctrine focused on barring Russian expansion in the Pacific Northwest and supporting Latin American nations in their pursuit of independence from Spain. Monroe announced to Congress and to the world:

\textsuperscript{74} Edward Tatum, \textit{The United States and Europe: 1815-1823} (New York: Russell and Russell, 1936), p. 9.

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Ibid.} p. 168-169.

As a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European power.... Our policy in regard to Europe, which was adopted at an early stage of the wars which have so long agitated that quarter of the globe, nevertheless remains the same, which is, not to interfere with the internal concerns of any of its powers; to consider the government de facto as the legitimate government for U.S.; to cultivate friendly relations with it, and to preserve those relations by a frank, firm, and manly policy, meeting in all instances the just claims of every power, submitting to injuries from none".  

Monroe’s challenge to the European powers was that the Americas would no longer permit subordination by the interests of European powers. The United States also demonstrated support for Latin American and South American revolutions against their European dominators and hinted that Great Britain should take no interest in Cuba. By speaking out in favor of the South American nations rebelling against their colonizers, the United States was beginning to step away from its policy of neutrality, and it demonstrated the autonomous thinking of American policy makers.  

After a tumultuous set of negotiations, where the United States tried to maintain its autonomy, Congress initiated no further slave trade treaties until 1842. The Senate ratified the Webster Ashburton treaty, which allowed for joint cruising, but no rights of search, between the U.S. and Royal navies upon the coast of Africa.  

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79 "A Treaty to settle and define the boundaries between the territories of the United States and the possessions of Her Britannic Majesty in North American; for the final suppression of the African slave trade; and for the giving up of criminals, fugitive from justice, in certain cases." Articles 8 and 9, *The Public Statutes*, Volume VIII, August 9, 1842, p. 576.
Senate rejected Adam's treaty convention; the committee reporting on the president's annual message rejected any invitation to renegotiate. The political strife escalated, as the executive branch, shifting from the lame-duck James Monroe to the newly elected John Quincy Adams, waited for a Congressional initiative on the issue while the House expressed its displeasure that the Senate had rejected a treaty proposed in the United States.\textsuperscript{80} The United States finally conceded a mutual right of search in the Treaty of 1862, which allowed a reciprocal, unrestricted right of search, mixed courts, and the right to search a vessel traveling in a convoy. This time there were no slave supporters to stand in the way of an effective treaty.\textsuperscript{81} The year 1862 was also the first time a slaver suffered the punishment proscribed under U.S. slave trade laws, when the U.S. District Court in New York condemned Captain Godon, of the slaver \textit{Erie}, to death.\textsuperscript{82}

As such, with no treaty between Great Britain and the United States, naval commanders continued to cruise to the coast of Africa to patrol for, ineffectively, American slavers. Commanders' orders also directed them to pass through the West Indies to patrol for pirates on their voyage to, or return from, the African coast.\textsuperscript{83} On the first voyage, Stockton inspected several vessels on the African coast, and captured four that contained evidence of trading in slaves and of American ownership. He put prize

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Annals of Congress}, 18\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess., February 16, 1825, pp. 72-75.

\textsuperscript{81} Samuel Flagg Bemis, \textit{John Quincy Adams}, p. 435.

\textsuperscript{82} W. E. B. Du Bois, \textit{The Suppression of the Slave Trade}, p. 191.

crews onboard and directed them to Boston. Stockton's captures erupted in diplomatic difficulties between the United States and European slaving nations, and instigated an American re-evaluation of their own international policies regarding the Atlantic slave trade. Stockton regretted the ineffectiveness of his voyage, writing:

Though my cruize has not been conspicuous or successful; though I have not given actual liberty to more than two slaves, still I have the great satisfaction in the reflection; that I have procrastinated the slavery of some eight hundred, and broken up this horrible traffic to the northward of Cape Palmas for at least this season.84

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84 Society of Friends, Friend's View, p. 34.
Chapter 3. American Colonization Society

The Alligator departed on its second cruise from Boston on October 4, 1821. The voyage to the coast of Africa took nearly a month, and as the schooner neared the Madeira Islands, she encountered another vessel. On November 5, 1821, she fell in with a large vessel showing signs of distress. It hoisted its flag at half-mast, so Robert Stockton changed his course so that he might aid the vessel. When the Alligator arrived within range, a gunshot fell forward of the bow. Stockton raised the American colors, ensigns, and pendants, yet more shot rained on her. Lt. Abbott described the event, stating that the Alligator was attacked “in a most outrageous and piratical manner, but the pirate was foiled in her attempt to capture her and after an action of about an hour and a half surrendered to the Alligator.” He estimates that the ship was between three and four hundred tons, mounted with four long twelve pound guns, two long six pounders, and four twenty-four pound carronades. The two ships traded gunfire until a boat from the other vessel rowed over to the Alligator. Stockton dispatched one of his boats to fetch the captain. The captain was Portuguese, and when asked why he fired upon the Alligator, he replied that he thought that she was a pirate preparing to attack. Stockton examined the ship’s papers and logs, but as they were in Portuguese, he could not understand them. Therefore, he ordered the ship sent to the United States for further examination, as well as for being attacked him without provocation. Captain De Britto, the Portuguese master,

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2 Lt. Joel Abbott to Smith Thompson, December 1821, Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy: Captain’s Letters. RG45, M125, Roll 4 (Washington DC: National Records and Archives Administration).
replied that he would hold Stockton liable for costs and damages if detoured from his course. Stockton put the crew of the *Marianna Flora (Mariano Faliero)* in irons, and brought additional provisions onboard. He put Lt. Abbot and a prize crew onboard her for the transatlantic voyage. They departed two days later on November 7, 1821.

The *Marianna Flora* sailed into Boston harbor on December 26, 1821. John Shaw, officer on the U.S. ship *Independence*, reported her arrival to the secretary of the navy. The vessel’s return voyage from the African coast to Boston was long and arduous. The entire journey took fifty days, and a storm blew the vessel off course. The ship had sustained considerable damage in her rigging, spars, and sails, and the crew needed to throw four of the carriage guns overboard during the gale. The long voyage at sea had depleted the provisions onboard the *Marianna Flora*, leaving both the prize crew and the prisoners in dire want of fresh food and water.\(^3\) Lt. Abbott reported commanding a prize crew of sixteen men and of holding twenty-nine men prisoner.\(^4\)

John Shaw ordered the ship, its property and crew delivered to the Marshall, and Lt. Abbott and his crew transferred to the *Independence*.\(^5\) The case underwent trial in both the state court of Massachusetts and in the U.S. Supreme Court, both of which Joseph Story attended.\(^6\) The evidence proved that the *Marianna Flora* was a Portuguese

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\(^3\) John Shaw to Smith Thompson, December 26, 1821, *Captain’s Letters*.

\(^4\) Joel Abbott to Smith Thompson, December 1821, *Captain’s Letters*.

\(^5\) John Shaw to Smith Thompson, December 26, 1821, *Captain’s Letters*.

merchant ship on her way from Bahia to Lisbon. The Circuit Court restored the ship to its claimants. The claimants brought the case to the Supreme Court in 1826, suing Stockton for costs and damages incurred by capturing and bringing the vessel into an American port for investigation. Joseph Story upheld his decision that it was a mistaken identity on both parties, and that Stockton was not liable.

After the prize-crew had departed on the Marianna Flora, Robert Stockton, and his crew, continued to the African coast. American slave ships and patrols typically cruised in the regions north of the equator. Portuguese and Spanish slavers dominated in the southern parts of Africa. Figure 6 demonstrates both the proximity of the colonization sites of Sierra Leone and Cape Mesurado (C. Mount.), the river Gallinas — where the Alligator apprehended its slave ships, and the extensive miles (4000) of coast where slavers operated.

The Alligator arrived in Africa at the Island of Sherbo, now part of Sierra Leone, but which was the present site of the settlement for the American Colonization Society (A.C.S.). One of the instructions included in the naval commander’s orders was to assist

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7 Ibid, pp. 500-501.


A.C.S. agents in their attempts to establish a colony. Navy ships transported agents to Africa, explored the West African coast for appropriate sites, convoyed ships carrying settlers, and helped protect the settlements.

**Figure 6: Map of the African Slave Coast.**

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10 "When you shall arrive upon the coast of Africa, you will endeavor to find the U.S. Agents. ... Bring onboard the *Alligator*, one of the U.S. Agents, and one of those appointed by Colonization Society, and proceed along the coast to examine the different points and most suitable place to be fixed on for a future settlement, taking into view the conveniences of navigation, and a good harbor for our ships of war which may cruise upon the coast for the suppression of the slave traders. ... In all reasonable requests of the Agents for your assistance in transporting them, cruising the coast, making such surveys and reports as shall be at present the objects contemplated, you will, as maybe compatible with propriety and the safety of the vessel under your command, afford a ready compliance." Smith Thompson to Robert Stockton, February 14, 1821, *New American State Papers: Naval Affairs*, Volume II, pp. 362-363.

Robert Finley, a minister and teacher from Baskinridge, N.J., was one of the initiators of the colonization plan. Finley noted the growing number of free blacks in his hometown, and often wondered how “religious men could prevent them from falling into pauperism, vice, and infidelity.” In 1790, more than sixty thousand free blacks lived in the United States, and by 1820, that number had increased to a quarter million.\(^{12}\) Robert Finley argued that he believed that while Negroes were perfectly capable of improvement and self-government, it would not happen while they lived among whites. The Negro was a “son of Africa” by color, fortune, and temperament, so it would be best to create a colony where Negroes could establish their own societies. He met with Elias Caldwell, a Supreme Court clerk, and Francis Scott Key, a lawyer, in Washington, DC, in 1816 to discuss plans, and to enlist backing for an African settlement.\(^{13}\) The white population in the United States held two general positions regarding freed Negroes. Southern plantation owners feared them, as they believed that they might corrupt their slaves’ minds with ideas of freedom, while it disturbed non-slave owners and former slaves that free Negroes were unable to obtain an equal standing or fundamental rights in the United States. The A.C.S. founders imagined a benevolent cause into which to apply their energies, and they believed that a colonization scheme on the coast of Africa would favor the general good


\(^{13}\) *Ibid*, p. 24.
for both whites and Negroes while providing a means to carry civilization and Christianity to the African continent.\textsuperscript{14}

The primary objectives of the American Colonization Society included colonizing free African-Americans, providing a location at which recaptured slaves could be returned, and establishing a Christian outpost on the coast for missionaries in Africa. The A.C.S. was not an abolitionist society. In fact, the A.C.S. had many slave-owning promoters, who supported it because they wanted to rid the nation of free blacks. Religious advocates believed that setting up a colony upon the coast of Africa would establish a base for missionary activities into the interior of the continent.\textsuperscript{15} They also hoped that the colonists themselves would also be able to help spread the good word, as if having skin color in common might be able to better influence the natives. The government of the United States saw the colony as an opportunity to have a friendly base on the coast of Africa for naval operations and it provided a possible solution for an issue unresolved in slave trade debates — that of how to deal with recaptured slaves.

The British founded Sierra Leone in 1808 in order to return Africans recaptured by the Royal Navy from slavers,\textsuperscript{16} and the colony served as a model for the A.C.S., and provided a great deal of assistance to the American agents during the establishment of their colony. Late in 1817, Samuel J. Mills and Ebenezer Burgess voyaged to West Africa to find an appropriate place to found the colony. They arrived in Sierra Leone in

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, p. 19.


March of 1818 to discuss their ideas under the guidance of the English colonial agents. When Burgess and Mills returned to the United States they presented animated accounts of Africa, describing the lush, fertile land, and displayed local goods and artwork. Burgess emphasized that, most importantly, Africa awaited an honorable trade. The trade in slaves obstructed legitimate commerce and trading, slave raids decimated peaceful villages, and crops went untended. The lack of other agricultural pursuits left many natives in the position that supplying slaves was the only means of survival. Burgess argued that colonization was the best remedy for this problem, as it would inevitably assist natives in driving off slavers and welcome trading in honorable commerce. Colonial settlements along the coast would also help to choke off the illicit traffic at its source. Early members and supporters of the A.C.S. included Presidents James Madison and James Monroe, Supreme Court Justice Bushrod Washington, and Henry Clay. Samuel Southard, secretary of the navy, and Robert F. Stockton were two of Robert Finley’s students growing up in New Jersey, and they too sympathized with the effort.

While Burgess and Mills investigated options on the African coast, the founders actively memorialized Congress for federal support. They petitioned the House of Representatives in January of 1817 to ask for federal assistance in their efforts. Mr. Pickering from the Committee on the African Slave Trade reported on the committee’s opinion a month later. They declared that it was impossible that a colony should be established on the American continent, and that “Africa, the native land of Negroes, is the

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17 Ibid, p. 49.
18 Ibid, p. 16.
only country on the globe to which it would be practicable to transfer our free people of color with safety and advantage to themselves in the civilized world." The committee also wondered whether it might be possible to make a proposal to Great Britain to land the colonists at Sierra Leone. This report concluded in a resolution that authorized the President to discuss the matter with the government of Great Britain. Great Britain, however, refused this advance. Further debates and petitions inspired Congress to include the A.C.S. in the act of 1819. Section 2 authorized the president to appoint agents to the coast of Africa and act as the administrative body of the future colony alongside A.C.S. representatives. The A.C.S. would also be a recipient of a portion of the hundred thousand dollars allocated for the suppression of the slave trade. Nevertheless, the government would not accept the colonization effort as a national policy, per our foreign policy that rejected European colonization in our own hemisphere. The president and secretary of the navy were careful to remind Samuel Bacon, one of the first agents to the coast that:

It is to be understood that you are not to connect your agency with the new plans of the Colonization Society, with which, under the Law, the Government of the United States has no concern. You are not to exercise any power or authority founded on the principles of colonization, but to confine yourself to that of performing the benevolent intentions of the Act

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20 "An Act in addition to the Acts prohibiting the slave trade." United States Congress, The Public Statutes at large of the United States of America, by authority of Congress, Volume 3, 15th Cong., 2nd sess., Ch. 101, March 3, 1819, pp. 532–534. Section 2 states “And it be further enacted, That the President of the United States be, and is hereby, authorized to make such regulations and arrangements as he deem expedient for the safe keeping, support, and removal beyond the limits of the United States, of all such Negroes, mulattoes, or persons of colour, as may be so delivered and brought within their jurisdiction: And to appoint a proper person or persons, residing upon the coast of Africa, as agent or agents for receiving the Negroes, mulattoes, or persons of colour, delivered from on board vessels, seized in the prosecution of the slave trade, by commanders of the United States' armed vessels.”
of Congress of the 3rd of March, 1819, which will govern you in all other respects. 21

Typically, the president appointed one or two governmental agents, and the A.C.S. simultaneously sent representatives to the coast.

Samuel Bacon and John Bankson were the first agents appointed by President James Monroe. In preparation for his voyage, Bacon purchased enough supplies to feed and equip three hundred rescued Africans for one year. He packed wagons, wheelbarrows, plows, iron works for a sawmill and gristmill, two six-pound cannons, one hundred muskets, twelve kegs of gunpowder, a fish seine, and a four-oared barge. He hired free blacks as carpenters and laborers, who were also colonists. He chartered the Elizabeth to transport the first settlers and supplies to the coast. There were eighty-six settlers on board, one-third of whom were men, while the rest were their wives and children. The U.S. Sloop Cyane accompanied the settlers on their voyage to Africa. 22 The Elizabeth and the Cyane departed from New York harbor on January 31, 1820. 23

The colonists landed at Campelar, which is on Sherbo Island, six weeks later, in early March. It was a low-lying, marshy island, and had no accessible harbors for ships to land supplies. The water on the island was brackish and unhealthy, and the land infertile. It was not an ideal location to establish a colony, but they had arrived during the rainy season, so they remained there until the weather cleared. The harbors on the island

21 Smith Thompson to Samuel Bacon, January 17, 1820, Correspondence of the Secretary of the Navy: Relating to African Colonization: 1819-1844, RG45, M205, Roll 1 (Washington DC: National Archives and Records Administration).


23 Ibid, p. 58.
proved too shallow to accommodate larger vessels, so Bacon purchased a small schooner at Sierra Leone, the *Augusta*, to help unload supplies and building materials. The *Augusta* was a vessel of one hundred four tons, a swift sailer, and previously was probably a slave vessel, outfitted to carry one hundred. The prospects of obtaining a more suitable location soon seemed very favorable, so Samuel Bacon dismissed the *Elizabeth*. Several colonists contracted African fever, several suffered dysentery from the water, and many died, including both agents, eight sailors of the *Cyane*, and many laborers. Daniel Coker took charge of the settlement on Sherbo Island until J. B. Winn and Ephraim Bacon relieved him. Provisions and supplies had been spoiled or exhausted, and the colony was in dire need of supplies. In November of 1821, Eli Ayres sailed to Africa onboard the *Shark*. Ephraim Bacon, who had become sick and crazy, fled to the West Indies. In December, Stockton arrived in the *Alligator* and arranged to join Ayres. They departed from Sherbo on December 6, sailing both the *Alligator* and the *Augusta* down the coast to search for a more appropriate site. They approached Cape Mesurado, and prepared to negotiate for a piece of land.

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24 Ibid, p. 60.


26 Eli Ayres to Smith Thompson, January 15, 1823, Society of Friends, *Friend's View*, p. 49.

27 Ibid, pp. 50-51.


In aiding the American Colonization Society, Stockton acted as a representative for their efforts. They needed someone who could help negotiate for land, someone who could display military power to back up their demands. The negotiation for the piece of land on Cape Mesurado, also known as Cape Montserrat, Mensurado, Monrovia, or Liberia, has produced both “A Contract” and a legend. Stockton had begun negotiations with King Peter, a local ruler, regarding the acquisition of a portion of land around the Cape. The negotiations proceeded slowly at first, but eventually King Peter agreed to meet and complete a trade for a land parcel. However, on the day of the agreed meeting, December 15, King Peter and his people did not meet at the agreed location. They had retreated to the interior, twenty miles inland, leaving only instructions to “follow him if they dared.” It was a territory where few white men ventured; the route traveled through swamps and jungles, and rumors abounded about wild animals and “savage” natives. When they arrived at the village to which King Peter had retreated, the natives met them with a less than friendly reception. Several natives suspected the intention of Stockton’s advances and had convinced their ruler that he should not sell because it would injure their interests in the slave trade. The natives appeared angry to see Stockton and Ayers, and they were armed and ready to attack at a moments notice. Stockton, reportedly known for a clear and commanding voice, held the attention of all the natives when he began to speak. He gave a pistol to Ayres, commanding him to shoot if anything were to happen, and himself drew another one, leveling it at the head of King Peter. With the two pistols aimed, he began a speech to convince the King to sell him the land. At the same moment, the sun broke through the clouds, bathing Stockton in a magnificent light, as if
God himself had sent him on this mission. The natives immediately became more cooperative and agreed that the land would be sold.\textsuperscript{30} That is the legend\textsuperscript{31} that precedes the contract signed by six kings: King Peter, King George, King Zoda, King Long Peter, King Governor, and King Jimmy, and the Americans – ‘Captain’ Robert F. Stockton and Eli Ayres, M.D. This contract ceded the land bound on the north and west, by the Atlantic Ocean and on the south and east, the Mesurado River, including Dozoa Island, to the Citizens of America. They paid the natives for the land with muskets, beads, tobacco, gunpowder, iron, cooking utensils, clothing, provisions, and rum.\textsuperscript{32}

The settlers moved to Cape Mesurado in early January 1822. Eli Ayres describes the island as “favorable, the land juts into the sea, is high enough to partake in the refreshing sea breeze, but not catch pestilent land vapours and be rendered damp and unhealthy. It has a fertile island in the middle of the river, a good harbor, and a good watering place.”\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{30} Samuel Bayard, \textit{A sketch of the life of Commodore Robert F. Stockton} (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1856), pp. 43-47.

\textsuperscript{31} Eli Ayres recounted this story in a report to the American Colonization society, and has been repeated in every history regarding Stockton and the acquisition of Liberia. I was unable to find any descriptions written by Stockton to verify the truth of this account. Eli Ayres to the Society’s Managers, December 11, 1821, A.C.S., \textit{Fifth Annual Report}.


\textsuperscript{33} Eli Ayres to the Society’s Managers, December 11, 1821, A.C.S., \textit{Fifth Annual Report}. 
In honor of the president, they dubbed the first settlement Monrovia. Even at the new location, life at the colony was neither easy nor pleasant. The weather was still harsh, and the continent rife with exotic diseases, such as yellow fever and malaria. The colony lacked adequate supplies and provisions, having used most of them during their first attempts at Sherbo, and supply ships did not come often enough. There now were only nineteen effective laborers to establish the new colony. The land was infertile, making agricultural endeavors difficult, and unfriendly natives believed that the settlers had stolen their land thus were inclined to raid and attack the colony in revenge.

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34 Maps available from the Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, accessible online at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/liberia.html.

35 Eli Ayres to Smith Thompson, January 15, 1823, Society of Friends, Friend's View, p. 52.
In August 1822, the Brig *Strong* arrived. Earlier that year in May, Samuel Sitgreaves, Jr. happened to be in Baltimore as the *Strong* prepared to depart. He was an aspiring minister, and sympathetic to missionary causes. He wrote a letter to his uncle describing the event. He claimed that onboard there were thirty-six Negro colonists, several from a captured slave ship, plus agent Jehudi Ashmun and his wife. Twenty-five of the settlers had been recaptured from the privateer *Antelope*, which was still undergoing trials. He described the settlers as lively and intelligent, noting that the only dumb ones were those raised as slaves in this country. The captured Africans gave him lively accounts of their captures and subsequent treatment. While waiting in the United States, they had learned to speak English. He concluded that the colonists were “the very pick of the blacks in goodness, judgment and intelligence and I am sure will become admirable missionaries of our Religion (glorious even in them) among their benighted race.”

The next agent appointed to the colony, Jehudi Ashmun, traveled onboard the Brig *Strong*. He carried supplies for the colony for six months. Ashmun tried to initiate trade with the natives for domestically produced goods, food, and wares as a means to integrate the colony into the local economy and supplant imported provisions, but the colony was unprepared for this. It would have involved venturing into the interior of the continent to conduct business, but the inhospitable attitude of the natives and the internal

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38 Eli Ayres to Smith Thompson, January 15, 1823, Society of Friends, *Friend's View*, p. 52.
instability of the colony prevented such ventures. Beyond fostering business opportunities, Ashmun had hoped for a chance to spread Christianity into the interior.\textsuperscript{39} The colony’s population grew in the fall of 1822 with the arrival of settlers on the Oswego and the Fidelity, which also brought supplies and provisions. The colony now comprised about 150 settlers.\textsuperscript{40}

On November 11, 1822, a throng of native warriors attacked the colony. The colonists fended off the attack using their cannons, causing many natives’ casualties to the loss of only a few colonists. However, a second attack soon followed. The colonists again prevailed in this attack, but the colony was in poor condition, needing assistance and protection.\textsuperscript{41} The schooner Augusta had fallen into disrepair, and the agents abandoned it. In the spring of 1823, the Cyane, commanded by Richard Spence, visited Mesurado. Secretary of the Navy Smith Thompson directed Spence to remain at the colony, offering his protection until relieved by another American naval vessel.\textsuperscript{42} He ordered his crew to help rebuild the colony’s defenses, initiated an investigation into the

\textsuperscript{39} P. J. Staudenraus, The African Colonization Movement, p. 88.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, p. 67.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, p. 89.

\textsuperscript{42} “By recent accounts received from Cape Mesurado and the Coast of Africa, it appears that the American settlement there has been attacked by the natives, and the safety of this people endangered. Their situation therefore such as requires immediate relief & protection. I wish you to remain near them until you shall be relieved or receive further instructions from this Department, and afford to the settlement & to the Agent of the Government, all the aid & protection in your power. The lateness of your arrival on the Coast of Africa left the settlement for some months, exposed, without any Naval force for its protection; one armed vessel at least should constantly be kept on the Coast, and one will be immediately designated for that purpose to relieve you.” Smith Thompson to Robert Spence, April 3, 1823, Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Officers, RG 45, M149, Roll 14 (Washington DC: National Archives and Records Administration).
whereabouts of the *Augusta*, and ordered its repair.\textsuperscript{43} However, fever halted the work, and forty of the *Cyane*’s men died at sea. Just the *Augusta*’s presence seemed to have a preventative effect on the slave activity of that region of the coast, and tempered the agitation of the natives against the colony.\textsuperscript{44}

The colony worked to make itself self-sufficient. It still depended on supplies and aid from the United States, but Jehudi Ashmun encouraged agricultural pursuits and legitimate trade within the African continent.\textsuperscript{45} During the 1820s, 571 blacks, both free African Americans and recaptured slaves, repaired to the colony.\textsuperscript{46} American merchants began sending their ships to the colony to trade in ivory and African camwood, bringing provisions, tobacco, and trade goods destined for the African markets.\textsuperscript{47} The presidentially appointed agents governed the colony, until it declared itself the Commonwealth of Liberia in 1839. It received its independence several years later, becoming the Republic of Liberia in 1847.\textsuperscript{48}


\textsuperscript{44} “A slight insight into the policy of these tribes, will discover, that they never will venture to assail an establishment on shore, which has the support of even the most inconsiderable naval force. Your foresight has produced for us this important means of security, by repairing, manning, and allotting to the protection of the establishment, the schooner Augusta; her presence at Mesurado will likewise have a most salutary influence in checking the sale and transportation of slaves in the neighborhood of the Cape.” J. Ashmun to Robert T. Spence, March 31, 1823, *Annual reports of the Department of the Navy: 1822-1866*, RG45, M1099, Roll 1 (Washington DC: National Records and Archives Administration).


\textsuperscript{47} P. J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement*, p. 158.

The colony was not as much of a success as its founders had hoped. The unfavorable conditions on the coast of Africa did not support a fledgling, undersupplied settlement. The other major factor was American support for the project. The reasons for supporting the colonization project differed widely. The same reasons that some disliked it were what made it favorable to others. Prominent abolitionists supported it and many pro-slavery men opposed it, because it seemed to offer a concrete means for abolishment. The colonization scheme also offered a means to reduce the presence of free blacks, a factor encouraged by pro-slavers and disliked by abolitionists.\footnote{49} The majority of African Americans opposed the scheme. They felt as if they were Americans; many had no remaining memorable connections to Africa, as several generations of their families had been raised on American soil.\footnote{50} Many free blacks registered their opposition from the start as they viewed the A.C.S. as a proslavery and racist organization. The A.C.S. did not really have the best interests of the African American in mind, but rather based itself upon a white man's naïve perception of what the free African American might desire. Only 2 percent of free American blacks voluntarily moved to the colony at Mesurado.\footnote{51} For many blacks, the idea of Africa was only a dream, but not one that most blacks


\footnote{50} "Our claims are on America, it is the land that gave U.S. birth; it is the land of our nativity, we know no other country, it is a land in which our fathers have suffered and toiled; they have watered it with their tears, and fanned it with sighs. . . . I might as well tell the white man about England . . . and call him a European, as for him to call U.S. Africans." Thomas Jinnings, In Elizabeth Bethel Rauh, \textit{The Roots of African-American Identity}, p. 115.

wished to realize. The A.C.S. also did not consider that Cape Mesurado was not a homeland for slaves who, or whose ancestors, descended far from that coast, their tribes, cultures, and languages.\textsuperscript{52}

The A.C.S.’s African project was not the only colonization scheme, a factor that offered competition to the Society. The island of Haiti had declared slavery illegal and encouraged freed Negroes to emigrate there, promising citizenship after one year. The Caribbean was much more accessible than Africa, so this project received favor for a while, but it collapsed due to misuse of money and mistreatment of the emigrants.\textsuperscript{53}

The colony’s role as a deterrent on the coast for slavers was minimal, as it protected only one river access, and the United States did not maintain naval patrols there to help protect and watch over the area, so enforcement was obviously negligible. However, naval voyages, ostensibly for the suppression of the slave trade, acted to aid and protect the fledgling African colony.

If life was tough for the free blacks in Monrovia, the same was true for the American sailors onboard a naval patrol vessel off the coast. The conditions that weakened the population of the colony also affected the vessels hovering off the coast. American sailors, who were not immune to tropical diseases often fell ill to the “African fever.” The ships used on the slave duty were small and cramped, and due to the coastal

\textsuperscript{52} Examples of cultural memory are included in several compilations: Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, \textit{The Roots of African-American Identity}; Philip D. Curtin, \textit{Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade} (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), and Maria Diedrich, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Carl Pedersen, eds., \textit{Black Imagination and the Middle Passage} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

\textsuperscript{53} P. J. Staudenraus, \textit{The African Colonization Movement}, pp. 82-84.
environment, health protocols forced sailors to stay onboard. The sun was intense and hot, but at night, when anchored off the coast, men were not allowed to sleep on deck in order to avoid the “bad air” carried by the land breeze. Typically, health problems began to occur when the ships remained in close proximity to, or landed, on shore for any period of time, even as short as two weeks. The mosquitoes that transmitted malaria and yellow fever also arrived with the land breeze.\footnote{Allen Martin Richman, “The Development of Medical Services in the United States Navy in the Age of Sail: 1815-1830” (Master’s thesis: University of Minnesota, 1973), pp. 185-187.} The term “African fever” often refers to a variety of symptoms and illnesses, including fevers, gastrointestinal disorders, severe headaches, inflamed eyes, and heat exhaustion. Contact with natives and brackish water also contributed to health complications. Naval surgeons attempted to treat the illnesses with calomel, opium, and revulsives, but as they did not fully understand the causes, many deaths occurred. Convalescence from the African fever often took months, and relapses were easily triggered by damp weather.\footnote{Ibid, pp. 186, 188.} Captain Robert Spence noted his own weakening health onboard an African cruise due to the heat, and ordered his men to avoid land as much as possible, to obtain pure water, and to serve grog and spirits three times a day.\footnote{Robert T. Spence to Richard Dashell, February 28, 1823, Letterbook, 1822-1823, Cyane.} He died in the early summer of 1826, likely from an illness contracted on the African coast.\footnote{Mrs. Robert T. Spence to Samuel Southard, June 26, 1826, Area File 4, RG45, M625, Roll 5 (Washington DC: National Archives and Records Administration).}

In the Royal Navy, the mortality rate for the African Squadron was significantly higher than for any other squadron in the world. During the years 1825 to 1845, the
average rate of mortality, based upon the number of men who died per thousand, ranged from the South American Squadron (7.7), closely followed by the Mediterranean and Home Squadrons, (9.3 and 9.8 respectively), then the East and West Indies (15.1 and 18.1). The African Squadron tripled the runner up, with a mortality rate of 54.4 per thousand men.  

Beyond the high rates of illness and death on an African patrol cruise, life onboard a small vessel such as the Alligator was not pleasant. The Alligator was only eighty-six feet long, but supported a crew of over ninety men. J. Taylor Wood, who served on the brig Porpoise, a vessel comparable in size to the Alligator, described the vessel as a “little ten-gun coffin.” It, like the Alligator, was heavily sparred and round hulled, which made her so wet that even in moderate seas it was necessary to batten down. Robert Stockton wrote: “we had an interesting cruise upon the coast, from the Shoals of the Great River to Cape Palmas; it was during the most unhealthy season, and under the circumstances, not the most flattering. Being in a very small vessel, we were often exposed to heavy rains, and occasionally encountered great fatigue.” Only five feet separated the decks, the quarters cramped and uncomfortable, so the crews lived on

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59 After the first voyage to the African coast, several officers requested a change of orders, to “be considered an applicant for any other larger vessel that may ordered on service afloat.” Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Officers below the rank of Commander, RG 45, M148, Roll 27 (Washington DC: National Archives and Record Administration).

60 Robert Stockton to Smith Thompson, December 1821, Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Officers.


deck as much as possible. The ship was so slow that chasing a prize was often futile, and success came only by chance.\textsuperscript{63} The \textit{Alligator}'s top sailing speed was about eight knots, although when driven hard, the heavy spars, hefty rigs, and full bow tended to dive under, making the vessel dangerous.\textsuperscript{64} Conversely, slavers purchased ships for their speed, especially after the passage of slave trade laws, when being able to outsail a naval patrol was a benefit, and a shorter voyage might decrease the mortality rate of the cargo. Often slavers purchased Baltimore clippers, noted for their sleek shapes and sailing qualities, rather than for roomy cargo holds. Slave ships frequently armed themselves so that they might be able to fight off a pirate or patrol vessel, or just cripple it enough that they could make an escape.

The geography of the African coastline also made apprehending slavers difficult. There were four thousand miles of coast where slavers could trade, much more distance than a single, or even a few, naval patrols could manage. The rivers and harbors of the coast made it easy for a slaver to travel upriver, where a patrol could not follow, load his slaves, and pass under the cover of darkness.\textsuperscript{65} If a patrol vessel approached a suspicious ship on the African coast, officers were required to positively identify the ship as an American slaver. It was easier to prove that the vessel was a slaver because she would be outfitted to either carry slaves, or have a cargo of humans onboard than it was to prove


her nationality. An officer could expect to find a slave ship to be fitted out with an extra deck, gratings on the hatches, large amounts of chain, and iron shackles and provisions, exceeding what was normally required to feed an average crew. The actual task of apprehending a slaver was quite unpleasant, as slave ships were reputed to have a terrible odor about them, and the inhumane conditions on board would certainly churn the stomach of any man with a shred of human dignity. These conditions would make a visitation a very difficult proposition, one that may have deterred naval patrols from apprehending slavers who had already loaded and begun their voyage. If a slave ship that could not disguise its purpose was approached, a slaver would likely attempt to disguise his identity under a foreign flag, so to avoid being sent in for adjudication.

On this second voyage, Robert Stockton did not capture any slave vessels. Given the legal ramifications of his first voyage, he was much more cautious in ascertaining that suspected vessels were, in fact, American slavers. As a result, he did not return a slave ship to the United States for adjudication. After the French outcries earlier in 1821, Stockton, as well as all naval commanders, was cautioned by the secretary of the navy not to apprehend any vessel that was not an American one. On this second voyage, Stockton’s major accomplishment was aiding the fledgling American Colonization Society in its efforts to obtain a more suitable location for the settlement. The *Alligator* returned to the United States, and entered the navy yard at Charleston, South Carolina.

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67 “From the time we first got onboard we had heard moans, cries, and rumblings coming from below, when there arose a hot blast as from a charnel house, sickening and overpowering. In the hold were three or four hundred human beings, gasping, struggling for breath, dying; their bodies, limbs, faces, all expressing terrible suffering.” J. Taylor Wood, “The Capture of a Slaver,” p. 5.
Chapter 4. The West India Squadron and Piracy

At the navy yard in Charleston, South Carolina, preparations to outfit the Alligator for the next voyage began. Stockton received orders very soon after to depart for the West Indies to patrol for pirates.¹ The Alligator joined the West India Squadron, formed in 1821 to combat Caribbean piracy. The recent attempts of South American colonies to obtain their independence from European nations resulted in a glut of privateers authorized to prey upon their European suppressors. They discovered, however, the lure and profitability of piracy and soon turned renegade, preying indiscriminately on merchant ships of any nationality. Although the United States supported the independence efforts of South American colonies, Americans did not commend all the means used to obtain this goal.

The practice of privateering began centuries before, when the Queen of England issued “letters of marque” to sea captains authorizing them to prey upon Spanish commerce. European nations vying for New World colonies frequently used this economic tactic. This practice was tolerable until sea captains abused their privileges. Piracy, on the other hand, was intolerable.

On March 3, 1819, Congress passed An Act to protect the commerce of the United States, and punish the crime of piracy. This act authorized the president to use the navy to

¹ “It is very desirable that the U.S. Sch. Alligator under your command should make immediately another cruise to afford protection to our commerce in the West Indies which is daily exposed to the depredations of Pirates; for this purpose I wish if practicable to prevail on the crew of the Alligator to continue their services for three months longer, and as an inducement to do so, you can advance to each the amount of one or two months pay- in case they positively refuse to reenter for that period, proceed immediately to New York and afford your arrival.” Smith Thompson to Robert F. Stockton, January 21, 1822, Letters sent by the Secretary of the Navy to officers, RG45, M149, Roll 14 (Washington DC: National Archives and Records Administration).
cruise in the Caribbean, particularly in the Straits of Florida and near Cuba, the main American trade route into the Caribbean, in search of pirates. The punishment for convicted pirates was death. ²

The first commodore of the West India Squadron was James Biddle. The initial fleet comprised of a half-dozen vessels of war, but they did not necessarily sail as a group.³ In early 1822, the squadron increased to nine vessels. In early 1823, David Porter assumed command of the squadron and a Congressional act again increased it, this time with an additional fifteen vessels.⁴ The navy successfully eradicated piracy in the Caribbean by the year 1827.⁵ This successful mission was due to the dedication of Congress, the navy, and the public. The best vessels for work on pirate patrols were the smaller, shallow drafted vessels able to enter coves, bays, and inlets in pursuit of pirates, rather than large men-of-war.

The Alligator departed from Charleston on February 18, 1822. The Alligator came upon a struggling merchant, the Jane, in the end of April. Pirates had captured the schooner Jane, of Boston, and sailed it to a cove where three other pirates awaited. Jane’s

² “An Act to protect the commerce of the United States, and punish the crime of piracy.” United States, The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America, by the Authority of Congress, Volume 3, 16th Cong., 1st sess., Ch. 113, March 3, 1819, pp. 600-601.


⁴ Samuel Southard, December 1, 1823, Annual Reports of the Department of the Navy, RG45, M1099, Roll 1 (Washington DC, National Archives and Records Administration).

⁵ “No piracies have been committed in the West Indies. The prudent and active application of our small force has accomplished all that was anticipated.” Samuel Southard, December 1, 1827, Annual Report.
crew was threatened and beaten, and the ship plundered, but subsequently released.\textsuperscript{6} Lt. Stockton and a twenty-three-man crew transferred to the \textit{Jane}, with intentions of returning her to the United States, leaving Lt. William Kean in command of the \textit{Alligator}. The details at this point are unclear, but the day before they rescued \textit{Jane}, the \textit{Alligator} rendezvoused with the schooner \textit{Grampus}, at Havana, Cuba, to pursue a pirate called the \textit{Senegal}. The \textit{Senegal} had captured the sloop \textit{Fox}, possibly a naval vessel, as the officers onboard the \textit{Alligator} held an enquiry regarding twenty men who displayed cowardice by not boarding the pirate, causing the \textit{Fox} to be taken.\textsuperscript{7} After the convoy returned to Norfolk, Captain Arthur Sinclair, the commandant at the Norfolk Navy Yard, requested advice on how to deal with twenty men held onboard the \textit{Alligator} for cowardice. The captain was unsure whether to hold a court martial for them, or release them, as the navy yard was short handed and unable to offer marines to guard them.\textsuperscript{8}

The \textit{Senegal} may have been the American name for a captured Columbian privateer, noted in all other sources as the \textit{Ciega}.\textsuperscript{9} This pirate carried five guns and thirty men.\textsuperscript{10} The \textit{Alligator} captured the pirate on April 29, with all her crew onboard, and

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{6}] The History of the Lives and Bloody Exploits of the most noted Pirates; their trials and executions, including a correct account of the late piracies committed in the West Indies, and the expedition of Commodore Porter (New York: Empire State Book Company, 1926), p. 267.
\item[\textsuperscript{7}] \textit{Alligator} logbook, RG24, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel (Washington DC: National Archives and Records Administration). I was unable to find any other mention of a naval sloop \textit{Fox}, and am uncertain that it was a military man-of-war, however, the fact that they were subject to a naval inquiry and a possible court martial indicates the likelihood.
\item[\textsuperscript{8}] A. Sinclair to Smith Thompson, June 7, 1822, \textit{Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy: Captain's Letters}, RG45, M125, Roll 26 (Washington DC: National Archives and Records Administration).
\item[\textsuperscript{9}] The dates of capture are the same, and the logbooks do not indicate any pirate named \textit{Ciega}.
\item[\textsuperscript{10}] Francis B.C. Bradlee, \textit{Piracy in the West Indies}, p. 29.
\end{itemize}
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began a return journey to the United States in a convoy with the *Senegal*, the *Jane*, the *Grampus*, and the *Fox.*\textsuperscript{11} Before returning to an American port, the convoy pursued three other pirate ships at Sugar Key.\textsuperscript{12} On May 4, Stockton and his crew onboard the *Jane* boarded and burnt one of the pirate vessels; from the second they released the plundered cargo; and the third they chased onshore, where the pirates escaped.\textsuperscript{13}

The *Alligator* returned to Norfolk to re-supply and man the ship. During the last voyage, one prize crew had transferred to the *Jane*, another prize crew to the *Cieghna*, and twenty men awaited release from their irons onboard the *Alligator*. The schooner was shorthanded. Stockton was transferred, and Lt. William Howard Allen received orders from the secretary of the navy to take command of the *Alligator*. He arrived in Norfolk on June 20, 1822.\textsuperscript{14} The logbooks detail several days of preparing the vessel for the next voyage. They brought up all of the ballast, cleaned and weighed it, cleaned and painted water casks, whitewashed the hold, stored provisions, and overhauled the rigging. They weighed the ballast and shot, recording over ten tons of kentledge and pig iron and over six tons of varied sizes of shot. On June 28, 1822, they repacked the ballast in the hold.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{11} *Alligator* logbook.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{14} A. Sinclair to Smith Thompson, June 7, 1822, *Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy: Captain's Letters*, RG45, M125 (Washington DC: National Records and Archives Administration).

\textsuperscript{15} *Alligator* logbook.
The *Alligator* departed from Norfolk on July 15, 1822, and sailed to New York to procure additional officers and crew.\(^6\)

The *Alligator* returned to the West Indies for a second, and final, cruise with the West India Squadron. Duty on this squadron was less trying than on a mission to the African coast. There was no Atlantic crossing; there were more naval ships, thus more support, and naval officers wielded more authority in apprehending pirates. Public outcry and congressional support for an anti-piracy campaign in the Caribbean was strong. Piratical depredations affected everyone, from the manufacturers, shippers, and merchants to the consumers.

Pirates typically committed their attacks using the element of surprise and large numbers of men, remaining concealed from view to overtake, plunder, and frequently torture a merchant and its crew.\(^7\) Some of the gruesome stories of pirates that are part of our legends today come from this later period of piracy.\(^8\) Between 1821 and 1823, there are records of thirty-seven merchants captured by pirates, although this is likely to be a very low number, as many more may have disappeared without a trace, the pirates having stolen ships or murdered entire crews. Ship owners and merchants memorialized Congress, encouraging forceful action.\(^9\) Lobbyists also urged policymakers to intervene in Cuba, which lay on the edge of the Straits of Florida and was a haven for pirates to

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\(^6\) A. Sinclair to Smith Thompson, July 15, 1822, *Captain's Letters*.

\(^7\) Francis B.C. Bradlee, *Piracy in the West Indies*, p. 23.

\(^8\) "They beat the mate unmercifully and hung him p by the neck under the maintop. They also beat the captain severely- broke a large broadsword across his back, and run a long knife through his thigh, so that he almost bled to death." Francis B.C. Bradlee, *Piracy in the West Indies*, p. 14.

hide. A resolution passed the Senate on January 24, 1822 to increase the number of ships of war on the West India Squadron. It vindicated the opinion that pirates “seem to have aroused the indignation of the whole community; and, in fact, every part of the Union is equally interested in suppressing them.”

Several months later, Mr. McLane reported: “The extent, however, to which the system of plunder upon the ocean is carried on in the West India seas, and Gulf of Mexico, is truly alarming, and calls imperiously for the prompt and efficient interposition of the General Government.” He did caution though “the committee are of opinion, that it would be dangerous, and productive of great evil, to vest in the commanders of our public vessels an authority to treat as pirates, and punish without trial, even such persons as described above.”

Naval commanders were unable to ignore diplomatic delicacy, even in the case of piracy, which all nations abhorred. Their orders required them to observe the sovereignty of Caribbean island governments. Although the navy could pursue and apprehend pirates at sea, they never received authorization to chase a pirate onshore after he had landed. James Biddle, the first commodore of the West India Squadron, approached the governor of Cuba, Don Nicholas Mahy, to discuss co-operation at sea and

20 “Resolved, That the committee on Naval Affairs be instructed to inquire into the expediency of providing by law for the building of an additional number of small vessels of war, for the protection of the commerce of the United States.” Annals of Congress, Senate, 17th Cong., 1st sess., January 24, 1822, pp. 151-157.


22 Legal analysis has qualified that piracy is, and was, against the law of nations. “Pirates being the common enemies of all mankind, and all nations having an equal interest in their apprehension and punishment, they may be lawfully captured on the high seas by the armed vessels of any particular state, and brought within its territorial jurisdiction, for trial in its tribunals.” Henry Wheaton, Elements of International Law (New York: Oceana, 1964), p. 162.
on land for the suppression of piracy. He requested that Mahy sanction naval landings on the Cuban coast to pursue pirates.\(^23\) He was not granted such permission, Mahy responded:

> With respect to the permission you solicit, for landing upon this coast with troops and people in boats, for the purpose of pursuing those pirates, I cannot and must not consent to it. I repeat that the necessary measures have been adopted to defend my territorial jurisdiction, and for the apprehension of every description of outlaws.\(^24\)

The goods taken from merchant ships and sold on the island probably supplied Cuba very cheaply, and Mahy had to officially support anti-piracy efforts, but probably was under pressure to safeguard the island’s illicit imports.

Lt. Allen’s orders instructed him to sail first to Puerto (Porto) Rico, to cruise for pirates and to await further instructions from Commodore Biddle.\(^25\) In November 1822, the *Alligator* was patrolling the area around Cuba. On November 8, as they came in to anchor at the port of Matanzas, a ship informed them that an American brig and schooner had been captured several days before, in a bay on the east side of Point Hycacos, which was fifteen leagues to the windward of Matanzas. The pirates demanded a $7000 ransom


\(^{25}\) “Proceed to sea with the U.S. Sch. *Alligator*, as soon as that vessel shall be justified and pursue the route to the Island of Porto Rico passing the Sombreso and the Mona passages, in which you will cruise for some time under the general instructions herewith transmitted. Should you not fall in with the Ship *Macedonian*, Capt. Biddle, you will take the route along the Southern side of Hispaniola to Port au Prince, and thence to the Coast of Cuba to the Havana, where you will report yourself to Capt Biddle and follow his further instruction, in cruising for the protection of the commerce of the United States.” Smith Thompson to William H. Allen, June 27, 1822, *Letters sent by the Secretary of the Navy.*
from the merchant vessels and sent a master and mate from the vessels to fetch the money. The *Alligator* proceeded with the master and mate to recapture the vessels. The *Alligator* anchored just outside the bay. The water being shallow, thirty-two seamen and three officers rowed in on the boats (a launch, a cutter, and a gig) plus the small merchant schooner, making chase after the pirate’s schooner. The pirates raised a red flag, and began assailing the approaching boats with round and grape shot. When they had closed in the range, the *Alligator*’s men returned fire to the pirates with muskets, while the oarsmen maneuvered close enough to allow crewmembers to board the pirate ship. A second piratical schooner then began to fire upon the boats. Lt. Allen received two severe wounds. As the *Alligator*’s crew tried to board, the pirates on the first schooner made way to escape to the second. They failed on their first attempt, and re-boarded the schooner, but as the *Alligator*’s crew approached they successfully made a second attempt. Lt. Allen directed midshipman Henley and his crew of four to take possession of the first schooner. The two other boats rowed toward the second schooner, armed with only small arms and boarding pikes. The pirates outnumbered the *Alligator*’s crew and prevented them from boarding and capturing the ship; the schooner’s crew experienced a shower of heavy gunfire. Thwarted, they returned to the first prize to remove the wounded and killed. The armaments on the pirate’s schooner included one long twelve-pounder, two six-pounders, two five-pound carriage guns, and two swivel guns. In the cabin, there were a number of bottles filled with powder and slow matches laced through the corks. The pirates had intended to blow the ship up upon their departure, but when they returned after their first escape attempt, extinguished the fuses, and did not relight
them before their second escape. The pirates, all on the second schooner, rendezvoused with a third pirate schooner, ran into shore, and abandoned their catches. There were 137 pirates onboard the three schooners. Best estimates state that fourteen pirates died in the melee, and several others drowned trying to escape. Four hours later, Lt. Allen died from his wounds. All reports indicate that Lt. Allen remained cheerful after receiving his wounds, and he commanded his men until the last hour. Two other seamen died, and four others were hurt or severely wounded. The Americans recaptured one ship, two brigs, and two schooners. The *Alligator* and crew proceeded to Matanzas where they interred the remains of Lt. Allen with military honors.

Lt. Allen’s death spurred further congressional action against the West Indian pirates. Mr. Taylor reported to the House of Representatives:

Piracies are multiplied to an alarming degree. It is to the disgrace of civilized nations that they have been perpetrated so long, so wantonly, and under the eye of constituted authorities. Public feeling at length is aroused. But it required an invaluable sacrifice to effect it. The shade of the brave departed Allen invokes immediate protection for our defenseless seamen. This youthful hero is laid in his grave, distant, far distant from his native land, and from the protecting roof which filial piety had afforded to his now disconsolate friends. . . . Let us, in justice to public feeling, which, in every portion of our country is deep and indignant against the inhuman, the unrelenting cruelties of the pirates in the West Indies, promptly organize a force adequate to their total extermination.  

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26 *The Pirate Fight* Extract of letter from an officer on board of the United States Schooner *Alligator*, to his friend in Washington City, Norfolk & Portsmouth Herald, Dec. 9, 1822; John Dale to Smith Thompson, November 16, 1822, *Letters received by the Secretary of the Navy from officers below the rank of commander*, RG45, M125, Roll 77 (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration).

Not only did Lt. Allen’s heroic actions lead Congress to increase the size of the West India Squadron, but the Committee on Naval Affairs also discussed a bill to support Lt. Allen’s widowed mother and sister. They authorized a pension equaling one-half of his monthly pay remitted to his mother and sister for a term of five years.\textsuperscript{28} Lt. Allen’s death and the continuing reports of piratical attacks incited Congress to pass another act, which again increased the number of ships of war on the West India Squadron. This act also allocated $160,000 for the suppression of piracy.\textsuperscript{29} The squadron now consisted of six naval vessels of at least twelve guns each, eight small schooners armed with at least three guns each, two steamers, one transport vessel, and five barges.\textsuperscript{30} (See Appendix D) This fleet, under the command of David Porter, departed from Norfolk on February 14, 1823.\textsuperscript{31}

Porter’s orders included instructions to observe diplomatic tact in his encounters with foreign ships and countries, and to assist in efforts for the suppression of the slave


\textsuperscript{29} “An Act authorizing an additional naval force for the suppression of piracy.” \textit{The Public Statutes}, Volume 3, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., Ch. 1, December 20, 1822, p. 720.

\textsuperscript{30} Samuel Southard, December 1, 1823, Annual Report.

\textsuperscript{31} Francis B.C. Bradlee, \textit{Piracy in the West Indies}, p. 36.
trade. This is significant because the primary source for slaves introduced into the United States was not the direct trans-Atlantic trade, bringing slaves from Africa, but from the Caribbean Islands, from where they were often smuggled into the Gulf States and Florida. Shortly after the squadron sailed, the debate in Congress continued. Mr. Mercer report of Congress:

Mr. Speaker, the volumes before me abound with unquestionable evidence of the deplorable extent to which these horrible cargoes are smuggled into our Southern States. The evidence consists of numerous letters from the custom-house officers of the United States, the faithful though ineffectual agents of our laws for the exclusion of this forbidden, impolite, and guilty commerce . . . that not less than thirteen thousand African Negroes were annually smuggled into the Southern States . . . through Galveston, and the adjacent shores, into the Territory of Louisiana.  

American naval patrols captured equally as many slave ships in the West Indies as they did on the coast of Africa. In the West Indies, smugglers attempted to introduce them in the United States. Between 1817 and 1822, naval patrols apprehended ten slave ships in the Caribbean and along the Gulf States, while on the coast of Africa, eleven slavers were captured by the Alligator, the Cyane, and the Hornet. (See Appendices C and E)

32 "You have been appointed to the command of a squadron, fitted out under an act of Congress of the 20th of December last, to cruise in the West India seas and Gulf of Mexico, for the purpose of suppressing piracy, and affording effectual protection to the citizens and commerce of the United States. Your attention will also be extended to the suppression of the slave trade, ... while it is your duty to protect our commerce against all unlawful interruption, ... you will observe the utmost caution not to encroach upon the rights of others, ... and you will do everything on your part, that accords with the honor of the American flag." Smith Thompson to David Porter, December 20, 1822, New American State Papers, Naval Affairs, Volume 5, pp. 33-35.


At the same time that Congress deliberated an increase in the West India Squadron, the navy contemplated establishing a naval depot on Key West. They dubbed it Thompson's Island, after Secretary of the Navy Smith Thompson. Reasons to establish a naval outpost included its proximity to Cuba, its suitability as a base for anti-piracy squadrons, and to provide a way station for ships passing through the Florida Straits.\textsuperscript{35} Matthew Perry addressed the difficulties of navigation in the Florida Straits in his report on Thompson's Island, including currents, shoals, and reefs.\textsuperscript{36} The navy authorized the establishment of a naval outpost at Key West in early 1823. Porter dubbed the establishment Allentown in honor of the late commander of the \textit{Alligator}.

The navy's annual reports, begun in 1822, detailed the ships operating on the West India Squadron. In the 1822 annual report, Smith Thompson notes that there were twenty-seven captures of piratical vessels during the past year, but the list is deficient, as it lacks the \textit{Alligator}'s captures of the \textit{Ciega} and \textit{Marianna Flora}.\textsuperscript{37} (See Appendix E)

Samuel Southard took over the position of the secretary of the navy in 1823, and his annual reports are more detailed and reflect changes within the naval administration. Southard served the longest term yet (1823-1829), and was probably the most efficient


\textsuperscript{36} "It may well be supposed that on a coast so peculiarly dangerous as the Florida Keys, the difficulties of navigation must be very numerous- requiring on the part of the Navigator the utmost caution to avoid the innumerable Shoals, Rocks, and Sand Banks that surround him in every direction, and altho' these dangers, are laid down with admirable accuracy by the English Surveyors, yet the tides and currents are so rapid and irregular that until proper and Skillful Pilots are established, it would be imprudent for our large vessels to cross the reef." Matthew C. Perry to Smith Thompson, March 28, 1822, Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., \textit{The Territorial Papers}, p. 386-387.

\textsuperscript{37} Smith Thompson, November 30, 1822, \textit{Annual Report}. 
secretary thus far. He frequently made practical recommendations that would help improve naval affairs. He authorized improvements at naval yards, construction of dry docks, exploring expeditions, coastal surveys, reorganization of the naval and marine corps, and initiated the foundation of a naval academy to educate officers.\(^{38}\) Southard’s attitude regarding the suppression of slave trade and the suppression of piracy reflected that of policy makers in Congress. In 1823, he reported:

Piracy, as a system, has been repressed, in the neighborhood of the Island of Cuba, and now requires only to be watched, but a proper force, to be prevented from afflicting commerce, and further, in that quarter. The public authorities of the Island of Cuba manifested a friendly disposition towards the squadron, and rendered much assistance in the pursuit of its objects.\(^{39}\)

However, he opined that in regards to the use of naval ships for the suppression of the slave trade on the coast of Africa, he was much less concerned, assigning ships to that duty only as a detour from the West India Squadron.\(^{40}\) He noted that naval commanders Robert Spence and Matthew Perry “neither saw nor heard of any vessel, under the American flag, engaged in the slave trade” on their last voyages to Mesurado.\(^{41}\)

This statement however ignores the true tone regarding the slave trade that Captain Spence attempted to impart. He had written:


\(^{39}\) Samuel Southard, December 1, 1823, *Annual Report*.

\(^{40}\) “It is proposed, as the most efficient and economical arrangement, that the commander of the West India Squadron, shall, from time to time, detach one or more of the vessels belonging to his command, to cruise along the African coast, occasionally touching at Cape Mensurado, and ministering to the wants of the people there; and following, in their return, the usual track of the slave ships.” Samuel Southard, December 1, 1823, *Annual Report*.

\(^{41}\) Samuel Southard, December 1, 1823, *Annual Report*. 
Although I am inclined to believe from my own observations that a very large diminution of this guilty traffic has been effected by the combined exertions of powers honestly enlisted in the attempt to suppress it entirely, yet it is a melancholy fact not to be concealed, that it is still found to a degree calling loudly for greater union of feeling and effort.42

Beginning in 1824, despite the fact that fourteen vessels served on the West India Squadron, very few vessels voyaged to the African coast in pursuit of slavers.43 During Congressional debates requesting additional antipiracy vessels, the naval report estimated that the annual expenditure on the West India squadron, if increased, should not exceed $115,308.50.44 Congress authorized this naval expenditure, allocating $160,000 for the protection of American merchantmen in the Caribbean.45 This allocation demonstrates a dedication to the enforcement of congressional acts authorizing the use of the U.S. Navy against pirates that contrasts greatly with the total expenditures for the suppression of the slave trade. The following figure reflects the funds used to support U.S. agents for the A.C.S., and naval expenditures for the construction of five new vessels, and the costs of operating anti slavery missions. The entire amount spent, since the passage of the act in 1820, allocating $100,000, until 1827, was $185,140.12.46 Congress was willing to allocate nearly as much per year to the suppression of piracy as it allocated for nearly a

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43 Samuel Southard, December 1, 1824, Annual Report.


46 Samuel Southard, December 1, 1827, Annual Report.
decade of anti-slave trade efforts. The reasons for this disparity included unified Congressional and public support, and economic motivations for the suppression of piracy. In contrast, suppression of the slave trade was a volatile political and economic issue.

Further favorable reports regarding conditions on the African coast most likely persuaded naval administrators and policy makers alike that a naval presence was unnecessary.47 Between 1825 and 1828 American men-of-war detoured to the African coast to check on the colony, but there is no other mention of naval commanders’ opinions of the situation, nor records of any captures of slave vessels. Each year, the number of naval vessels assigned to the West India Squadron decreased, until 1827, when Samuel Southard claimed: “No piracies have been committed in the West Indies. The prudent and active application of our small force has accomplished all that was anticipated.” He also noted: “the object of the laws for the suppression of the slave trade had been, in this respect, accomplished; and the effects on the trade will be salutary.”48 The West India Squadron had successfully met its goal, and the navy no longer needed to maintain it. Along with it, many of the available ships needed for anti-slavery patrols disappeared.

47 “There have been two vessels under American colours heard of on the coast, after slaves in the last year. They come on the coast under the guise of fair traders, but finding no American armed vessels there to interrupt them, they take the cargoes that will be most profitable. . . . The colony was left in a tolerable state of prosperity all the late emigrants were convalescent and of the old settlers there has not been a case of serious illness since they have been located on the cape.” Eli Ayres to Samuel Southard, February 16, 1824, Area File 4, RG45, M625, Roll 5.

48 Samuel Southard, December 1, 1827, Annual Report.
The *Alligator* departed the coast of Cuba, at Matanzas, where Lt. Allen had been buried, for the return voyage accompanying a convoy of merchant ships, several of which she had recently rescued. The *Alligator* was to protect these ships from further predations during the journey through the Florida Straits. Lt. John Dale had assumed command of the schooner, which departed from Cuba on November 18, 1822. The *Alligator* met its fateful end two days later, December 20, 1822, on a reef just south of Matacumbe Key, now known as Alligator Reef.
Conclusion

The *Alligator*’s final tour of duty had been to accompany a merchant convoy consisting of at least seven vessels, all recaptured merchants taken by pirates near Havana.¹ The *Alligator* itself rescued five of these from their kidnappers in a bay near Point Hycacos. On the evening of November 19, 1822, while trying to guard a merchant vessel that had strayed from the convoy, the *Ann Maria*, the schooner struck a reef. Knowing the navigational difficulties of the Florida Straits, the crew had been regularly checking the depth and watching for signs indicating that they were nearing land and the abruptly rising shoals. Nevertheless, the strong and irregular currents had carried the *Alligator* off course; under the cover of a dark and cloudy night, she rode the shoals of the Florida Keys too closely.

For several days, the *Alligator*’s crew, commanded by Dale, endeavored to free the schooner from the reef. On November 23, they transferred all valuables to the *Ann Maria* and set fire to the *Alligator*. Dale lit a fire on the ship in order to ensure that no pirate or wrecker would be able to come and salvage it. The *Alligator* blew up at 1530, and the crew returned to Norfolk in the *Ann Maria*.

The news of the *Alligator*’s demise spread quickly along east coast ports. Newspapers in Norfolk, Boston, and even London reported the pirate fight, the death of

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¹ “The *Iris*, and the *Sarah Mary Anne*, both of Boston, and bound to New Orleans; the *Argus* of Salem, bound to Matanzas; the schooner *Nancy* and *Mary* of Boston, from Virginia to Pensacola, the *William Henry*, of New York, bound to New Orleans were taken near Havana early in November, by two Piratical vessels.” *Lloyd’s List*, January 3, 1823 (London). Plus the *Ann Maria*, which was not listed.
Lt. William H. Allen, and the loss of the schooner. Allen’s death inspired greater focus and attention for the need to halt piratical depredations, and Congress authorized an immediate increase of the West India Squadron.

The court of inquiry assigned to Dale, held aboard the frigate Guerriere, determined that he not be held responsible for the loss of the vessel.

That the loss of the Alligator is to be attributed to: the variety of courses steered to keep company with the convoy, the counter currents, and the haziness and darkness of the night. There appears to have been a vigilant lookout kept, but the navigation is known to be dangerous and the charts unfaithful; and they believe that the ablest navigators are often deceived in this coast.

The ambiguity of the charts is evident by examining one of the Florida Straits, drawn in 1821. This map may have been similar to the type of navigation chart available to those on the Alligator. Detailed coastal surveys of the Florida coast began in the 1850s. The chart in Figure 9 shows an estimation of the locations where the Alligator’s navigators believed themselves to be.

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2 Lloyd's List, The Boston Herald, Norfolk and Portsmouth Herald, and The American Beacon all included reports.


4 The coastal surveys of the Florida coast began with a “Preliminary Chart of Key West and its Approaches,” drawn in 1852. From the Image Archives of the Historical Map and Chart Collection, Office of Coast Survey, National Ocean Service, NOAA. Images online at http://chartmaker.ncd.noaa.gov.
Figure 8: Map of Florida, 1821

Figure 9: Map of the Florida Keys showing approximate coordinates.

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Peyton J. Henley, sailing master, noted that they struck ground on Matacumbe Reef, a part of Carysford Reef. His navigation records state that, at meridian on the day they grounded, they sailed at latitude 24°36', longitude 80° 57', although he “placed no confidence in the longitude.” Victor M. Randolph, acting Lieutenant, noted that they grounded on part of Carysford Reef, the northeast part of Largo Island. His last navigation recordings placed them at latitude 24°57', and longitude, 80°18', by dead reckoning. Navigation techniques at the time were as imprecise as the charts that they navigated by. It was easy to determine latitude, however, chronometers, the instrument used to determine longitude, were not commonly carried on all ships. Navigation was based upon dead reckoning, an estimation of location based upon continuous plotting of one's location based upon the direction and speed the ship traveled. With this method, any error quickly compounds.\(^6\)

These figures, when plotted on a modern chart, place their estimated locations many miles from one another. These plots are, of course, even more inaccurate when plotted on a modern chart due to compass variation; however, they illustrate the disparity in estimating the wreck-site of a particular vessel. Alligator Reef lies halfway between the two estimated positions, as seen in Figure 9.

Since the grounding, locals have approximately identified the alleged location of the Alligator. The reef soon inherited the name of the schooner that wrecked upon it. In

\(^6\) Records of a Court of Inquiry held on Board the Frigate Guerriere to ascertain the causes of the loss of the U. S. Schooner Alligator, Lieut. John M. Dale, 13 Dec. 1822.

\(^7\) The Alligator's logbook did not note any estimation of longitude for their cruises.
1842, Blunt’s *American Coast Pilot* warns mariners of Florida Keys’ dangerous shoals, including "Alligator Shoal, from the circumstance of the U.S. schooner being lost on it."

In 1873, they named the lighthouse built upon the reef Alligator Light; keepers of the light identify the wreck visible from the lighthouse as the *Alligator*. Recent archaeological work has shed light on the wreck visible from Alligator Light. A preliminary survey in 1990 determined that the prominent features of the site are a ballast pile and several partially exposed frames. In 1995, a photomosaic of the site was prepared and a site map drawn from the preliminary site measurement, notes, and photographs.

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12 The photo mosaic was taken by David Whall, National Center for Shipwreck Research archaeological diver, and the site plan prepared by David Moore, consulting marine archaeologist. Duncan Mathewson, “National Register of Historic Place Registration Form, 1996” (Washington DC: National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, unpublished).
In July 1996, underwater archaeologists completed a more thorough investigation of the site.\textsuperscript{13} There were two objectives in this survey: to describe and interpret the exposed hull timbers, and compare their construction with the documentation of the schooner’s construction. The archaeological team mapped out the site in detail.\textsuperscript{14} The archaeological survey in 1996 may have proven the local lore wrong. The one piece of evidence casting doubt upon the wreck’s identity was the presence of ballast stone on the site. The \textit{Alligator}'s logbook, as mentioned previously, details the cleaning and reloading of over ten tons of iron ballast.\textsuperscript{15} Unless the crew unloaded the iron ballast, exchanging it for stone between July and November of 1822, the wreck visible from Alligator Light is highly unlikely to be the U.S.S. \textit{Alligator}.

In order to find the actual site of the \textit{Alligator}, a remote sensing survey would be necessary. There are several other wreck sites on Alligator reef, a few of which have been located, but not identified. The many tons of iron kentledge thrown overboard would cause a large magnetometer hit, so targeting possible locations would not be difficult. Nevertheless, the problem of verifying the \textit{Alligator}'s identity lies in the ground-truthing phase of a search. The site formation process makes it clear that a ship, whose heavy materials such as ballast, shot, and cannons were offloaded in an attempt to free the

\textsuperscript{13} The 1996 survey ran as a field school for the National Center for Shipwreck Research, Ltd., from July 15 to July 24. Several organizations participated in the project, the Naval Historical Center, NOAA (National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration) and Bateaux Below, Inc. Joseph Zarzinski, “1996 United States Schooner \textit{Alligator} Project—Project Manager’s Report” (Washington DC: National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, unpublished).


\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Alligator} logbook, RG24, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel (Washington DC: National Archives and Records Administration).
vessel from the reef, leaves little for the archaeologist to examine. Compounding the problem are several more factors. Dale started a fire on board and when the flame ignited the schooner’s gunpowder, the Alligator blew up. Moreover, shallow waters of the Florida Keys were a haven for wreckers, so it is likely that they would have salvaged any diagnostic or valuable items long ago. Lastly, it is possible that the remains of the Alligator lie on a different part of Matacumbe, or even Carysford, reef as stated by the original navigators. A remote sensing survey would, of course, be valuable to the State of Florida’s underwater archaeologist and NOAA (National Atmospheric and Oceanographic Administration), and would help add to their comprehension of all of the wrecks that lie within the National Marine Sanctuary. However, an archaeological investigation of the Alligator appears to be an expensive exercise for a site that would not yield adequate information to learn more about the vessel, the navy, or the suppression of the slave trade and piracy.

The historical records, nevertheless, provide an interesting tale about early nineteenth century American politics, especially in regards to slavery and the navy. From the act of 1807, which prohibited the importation of the slaves into the United States, through the treaty negotiations of John Quincy Adams with British foreign ministers, there evolved a subtle, yet distinct, political resistance to effective measures to prevent the importation of slaves. Congress passed several additional acts to suppress the Atlantic slave trade, thereby acknowledging, and attempting to correct, weaknesses in each previous act. At each step, however, policymakers resisted granting the acts any clauses
necessary to make the act truly effective, as seen in the Senate amendments to the treaty
convention in 1824.

America was not prepared to relinquish its maritime sovereignty for the
suppression of the slave trade by allowing the right of search to Great Britain. The Royal
Navy's previous maritime practice of impressment garnered distrust in the United States
towards allowing Great Britain an increased power upon the seas. Not only the
Americans held this attitude; European nations resisted treaty agreements with Great
Britain for the right of search, although many of them signed treaties restricting slave
trade activity. Nor did European nations co-operate with the United States on the issue, as
seen in several legal cases regarding the captures of the slave ships, the _Jeune Eugene_ and
the _Antelope_.

The acts' purposes were to prohibit the importation of slaves into the United
States and the participation in its trade by American citizens. Nonetheless, it did not
prohibit the coastwise trade, and the shipping of slaves between the states remained legal.
This clause afforded opportunities for smugglers to illegally bring slaves into the United
States. More slaves imported to the United States came from the West Indies than from
Africa. Quantitative analyses demonstrate that after the passage of the slave trade acts
there were an insignificant number of Americans participating in the trade; if they were
trading, they were doing so under the Portuguese, Spanish, and French flags. This fact
made congressmen suppose that an American presence was no longer necessary upon the
African coast.
The first naval cruises to the African coast yielded several captures, but diplomacy tied naval officers' hands; they could only apprehend American slavers. Slavers quickly learned that they could exploit these restrictions, merely by carrying several sets of ownership papers. The effectiveness of the navy decreased due to the widespread duties, lack of concentrated forces, and prospects of legal challenges.

The voyages also focused heavily on aiding the efforts of the American Colonization Society. Naval officers helped them negotiate for land, make repairs, and a naval presence helped prevent native attacks. As reports came back to the naval administration and policymakers from commanders serving on the African patrols and from agents of the American Colonization Society, their tone indicated that enforcement efforts had met the goals set by the slave trade acts. Very few American traders operated openly on the African coast, hence, an American presence there was unnecessary.

The navy's role in the protection of commerce during the nineteenth century also merits consideration. Eradication of piracy in the West Indies conformed well to this purpose. But, the United States, by using the navy to enforce the prohibitory laws against the importation of slaves, would, in a sense, be working against its own protection of "commerce" since southern states still used slavery as a primary source of labor.

The secretary of the navy ultimately diverted naval missions from the African coast to the West India Squadron. Ending piracy in the West Indies was more important and generally more supported by policymakers and the public than was the suppression of the slave trade. Piratical depredations occurred close to home, as it lied just off the southern coast, and often injured Americans. Congress allocated more money to the naval
budget for the suppression of piracy. A squadron, consisting of from six to twenty-four
navy ships, inundated the Straits of Florida, the Caribbean, and the Gulf of Mexico in
search of pirates. Focused efforts of the U.S. Navy virtually eradicated piracy in the West
Indies in a few years. The navy’s success against the pirates in the West Indies
demonstrated that if Congress and the navy had dedicated the resources to create a truly
effective African Squadron, and co-operated with other slave trading nations, it might
have effectively abolished the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Nevertheless, that did not
happen, and the slave trade endured until the abolition of slavery.16

The life of the Alligator illustrates the role of the United States in the suppression
of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Congressional acts authorized its construction, but aside
from a few voyages to the African coast, enforcement efforts did not end the trade. By
using one ship to provide a microcosmic look at of the enforcement efforts, we are able to
imagine that experiences and events aboard other naval sailing ships for the same purpose
were similar. Even in the Alligator’s short career, we are able to glean an understanding
of the political environment of the United States during the 1820s regarding the navy,
slavery, and maritime commerce. Although built as a patrol vessel for slavers, the
Alligator, like the United States, saw more success in the suppression of piracy than in
the suppression of the slave trade.

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16 The United States abolished slavery with the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which
was ratified in December of 1965. The slave trade and slavery continued into South America until 1887
when abolition in Brazil became complete.
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-----. *Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from officers below the rank of Commander*. RG45, M148. Washington, DC: National Records and Archives Administration.

-----. *Letters sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Officers*. RG45, M149. Washington DC: National Archives and Records Administration.


*Extract of a letter from an officer on board of the United States Schooner *Alligator*, to his friend in Washington City.* Norfolk & Portsmouth Herald, Dec. 9, 1822.
Appendix A: Congressional Acts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/22/1794</td>
<td>An Act to prohibit the carrying on the Slave Trade from the United States to any foreign place or country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/10/1800</td>
<td>An Act in addition to the act entitled &quot;An Act to prohibit the carrying on the Slave Trade from the United States to any foreign place or country.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/28/1803</td>
<td>An Act to prevent the importation of certain persons into certain states, where, by the laws thereof, their admission is prohibitive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/2/1807</td>
<td>An Act to prohibit the importation of Slaves into any port or place within the jurisdiction of the United States, from and after the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/18/1815</td>
<td>Treaty of Peace and Amity, Between his Britannic Majesty and the United States of America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/29/1816</td>
<td>An Act for the gradual increase of the Navy of the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/3/1817</td>
<td>An Act more effectively to preserve the neutral relations of the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/20/1818</td>
<td>An Act in addition to &quot;An Act to prohibit the importation of Slaves into any port or place within the jurisdiction of the United States, from and after the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eight.&quot; In addition, to repeal certain parts of the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/1819</td>
<td>An Act to authorize the President of the United States to take possession of East and West Florida, and establish a temporary government therein.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/1819</td>
<td>An Act in addition to the Acts prohibiting the slave trade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/1819</td>
<td>An Act to protect the commerce of the United States, and punish the crime of piracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/6/1820</td>
<td>An act to authorize the people of the Missouri territory to form a constitution and state government, and for the admission of such state into the Union on an equal footing with the original states, and to prohibit slavery in certain territories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15/1820</td>
<td>An Act to continue in force &quot;An Act to protect the commerce of the United States, and punish the crime of piracy.&quot; and to make further provisions for punishing the crime of piracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15/1820</td>
<td>An Act authorizing the building of a certain number of small vessels of war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/1821</td>
<td>An Act to amend the act entitled &quot;An act for the gradual increase of the Navy of the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/1821</td>
<td>An act for carrying into execution the treaty between the United States and Spain, concluded in Washington, on February 22, 1819.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/20/1822</td>
<td>An Act authorizing an additional naval force for the suppression of piracy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

1 This chart has been compiled from the U.S. Congress, The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America, by the Authority of Congress (Boston: Little, Brown, 1867), Volumes 1-4.
### Appendix B: U.S. Navy Ships on the African Coast: 1820-1823

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>U.S. Navy Ship</th>
<th>Commander</th>
<th>Notables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td><em>Cyane</em></td>
<td>Trenchard</td>
<td>Captured 6 slavers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td><em>Hornet</em></td>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Captured 1 slaver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td><em>John Adams</em></td>
<td>Wadsworth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td><em>Alligator</em></td>
<td>Stockton</td>
<td>Captured 4 slavers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1822</td>
<td><em>Shark</em></td>
<td>Perry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td><em>Cyane</em></td>
<td>Spence</td>
<td>Helped rebuild settlement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Appendix C: Slave Ships Searched by the U.S. Navy: 1817-1823

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>U.S. Navy</th>
<th>Commander</th>
<th>Slaver</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Fate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/1817</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Hoffman</td>
<td>Eugene</td>
<td>Gulf of Mexico</td>
<td>Captured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1817</td>
<td>Saranac</td>
<td>Elton</td>
<td>Tentativa</td>
<td>Amelia Island</td>
<td>Brought to Savannah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/1817</td>
<td>Boxer</td>
<td>Porter</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>New Orleans</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/1817</td>
<td>Boxer</td>
<td>Porter</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>New Orleans</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/1817</td>
<td>Surprise</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Estrella</td>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/1818</td>
<td>John Adams</td>
<td>Henley</td>
<td>Neptune</td>
<td>Amelia Island</td>
<td>Detained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/1818</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Constitution</td>
<td>Florida Coast</td>
<td>Captured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/1818</td>
<td>Surprise</td>
<td>McKeever</td>
<td>Merino</td>
<td>Pensacola</td>
<td>Condemned, 5 yrs litigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/1818</td>
<td>Surprise</td>
<td>McKeever</td>
<td>Louisa</td>
<td>Pensacola</td>
<td>ditto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/1820</td>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>General Ramirez</td>
<td>U.S. Coast</td>
<td>25 freed, 8 yrs litigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/1820</td>
<td>Cyane</td>
<td>Trenchard</td>
<td>Endymion</td>
<td>River Gallinas</td>
<td>Condemned in New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/1820</td>
<td>Cyane</td>
<td>Trenchard</td>
<td>Esperanza</td>
<td>Gallinas</td>
<td>Condemn. NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/1820</td>
<td>Cyane</td>
<td>Trenchard</td>
<td>Plattsburg</td>
<td>Gallinas</td>
<td>Condemn. NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/1820</td>
<td>Cyane</td>
<td>Trenchard</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Gallinas</td>
<td>Condemn. NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/1820</td>
<td>Cyane</td>
<td>Trenchard</td>
<td>Dasher</td>
<td>Gallinas</td>
<td>Condemn. MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/1820</td>
<td>Hornet</td>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Alexander</td>
<td>Gallinas</td>
<td>ditto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>General Artigas</td>
<td>Port of Baltimore</td>
<td>Condemned in Baltimore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1821</td>
<td>Alligator</td>
<td>Stockton</td>
<td>La Julia</td>
<td>River Pongo</td>
<td>Released</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1821</td>
<td>Alligator</td>
<td>Stockton</td>
<td>Jeune Eugene</td>
<td>Gallinas</td>
<td>Released to French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1821</td>
<td>Alligator</td>
<td>Stockton</td>
<td>Matilda</td>
<td>Gallinas</td>
<td>Escaped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1821</td>
<td>Alligator</td>
<td>Stockton</td>
<td>Daphne</td>
<td>Gallinas</td>
<td>Escaped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1821</td>
<td>Alligator</td>
<td>Stockton</td>
<td>Eliza</td>
<td>Gallinas</td>
<td>Escaped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/1821</td>
<td>Hornet</td>
<td>Henley</td>
<td>La Penseé</td>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td>Brought to Louisiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/1822</td>
<td>Porpoise</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/1822</td>
<td>Hornet</td>
<td>Henley</td>
<td>Theodore</td>
<td>Matanzas</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix D: U.S. Navy Ships on the West India Squadron

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>U.S. Navy Ships</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>U.S. Navy Ships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td><em>Hornet</em>, sloop</td>
<td>1822</td>
<td><em>Congress</em>, frigate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Enterprise</em>, brig</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>John Adams</em>, corvette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Spark</em>, brig</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Peacock</em>, sloop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Shark</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Spark</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Porpoise</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Alligator</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Grampus</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Grampus</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Shark</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Porpoise</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Gun Boat no. 158</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td><em>John Adams</em>, corvette</td>
<td>plus</td>
<td><em>Terrier</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Peacock</em>, sloop of war</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Fox</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Hornet</em>, sloop of war</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Wildcat</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Spark</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Beagle</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Grampus</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Musquito</em>, barge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Shark</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Gnat</em>, barge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Sea Gull</em>, steam galliot</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Midge</em>, barge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Greyhound</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>SandFly</em>, barge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Jackall</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Gallinipper</em>, barge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ferret</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Decoy</em>, transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Weazel</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td><em>Constellation</em>, frigate</td>
<td>plus</td>
<td><em>Sea Gull</em>, steam galliot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>John Adams</em>, corvette</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Beagle</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Hornet</em>, sloop</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Weazel</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Spark</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Terrier</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Shark</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Fox</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Grampus</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ferret</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Porpoise</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Decoy</em>, transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td><em>Constellation</em>, frigate</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Shark</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>John Adams</em>, corvette</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Grampus</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Hornet</em>, sloop</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Fox</em>, schooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Spark</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Decoy</em>, transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Plus the barges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td><em>Constellation</em>, frigate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>John Adams</em>, corvette</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Hornet</em>, sloop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Grampus</em>, schooner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix E: Pirate Ships Captured by the U.S. Navy: 1819-1827

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>U.S. Navy</th>
<th>Commander</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Pirate</th>
<th>Fate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/1819</td>
<td><em>Lynx</em></td>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>Gulf Mexico</td>
<td>2 boats</td>
<td>hung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1819</td>
<td><em>Lynx</em></td>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>Galveston</td>
<td>1 boat</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1821</td>
<td><em>Enterprise</em></td>
<td>Kearney</td>
<td>Cape Antonio, Cuba</td>
<td>4 schooners, 1 sloop</td>
<td>1 escaped, 2 burnt, 3 sent- Charleston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1821</td>
<td><em>Hornet</em></td>
<td>Henley</td>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td><em>Moscow</em></td>
<td>Sent to Norfolk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1821</td>
<td><em>Porpoise</em></td>
<td>Ramage</td>
<td>Cape Antonio</td>
<td>1 boat</td>
<td>Crew escaped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1821</td>
<td><em>Enterprise</em></td>
<td>Kearney</td>
<td>Cape Antonio</td>
<td>1 schooner</td>
<td>Crew escaped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/21</td>
<td><em>Alligator</em></td>
<td>Stockton</td>
<td>Madeira Is.</td>
<td><em>Marianna Flora</em></td>
<td>Sent to Boston, returned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/1822</td>
<td><em>Porpoise</em></td>
<td>Ramage</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>6 vessels</td>
<td>Crew escaped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/1822</td>
<td><em>Spark</em></td>
<td>Elton</td>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td>Dutch sloop</td>
<td>Sent to Charleston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/1822</td>
<td><em>Gun Boat</em></td>
<td>Hamersly</td>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td>1 barge</td>
<td>Crew escaped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/1822</td>
<td><em>Enterprise</em></td>
<td>Kearney</td>
<td>Cape Antonio</td>
<td>3 launches, 4 barges</td>
<td>Crew escaped, boats destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/1822</td>
<td><em>Alligator</em></td>
<td>Kean</td>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td><em>Ciegnia, Senegal</em></td>
<td>sent to U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1822</td>
<td><em>Jane</em></td>
<td>Stockton</td>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td>3 schooners</td>
<td>1 burnt, crew esc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/1822</td>
<td><em>Shark</em></td>
<td>Perry</td>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td><em>Bandara, D'Sangare</em></td>
<td>3 prisoners, vessels to U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/1822</td>
<td><em>Grampus</em></td>
<td>Gregory</td>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td><em>Palmyra</em></td>
<td>sent to Charleston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/1822</td>
<td><em>Peacock</em></td>
<td>Cassin</td>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td>5 schooners</td>
<td>2 burnt, 2 to N Orl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1822</td>
<td><em>Alligator</em></td>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>3 schooners</td>
<td>Pirates escaped, Rescued 5 ships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/1823</td>
<td><em>Gallinipper Musquito</em></td>
<td>Stribling, Kelly</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>1 schooner</td>
<td>Crew escaped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/1823</td>
<td><em>Peacock</em></td>
<td>Cassin</td>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>1 barge</td>
<td>Crew escaped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1823</td>
<td><em>Grampus</em></td>
<td>Gregory</td>
<td>Campeachy</td>
<td>2 boats</td>
<td>1 crew escaped, 1 to authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/1823</td>
<td><em>Gallinipper Musquito</em></td>
<td>Watson, Inman</td>
<td>Sigaumpa</td>
<td><em>Catilina</em></td>
<td>Half drowned, half taken prisoner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/1823</td>
<td><em>Greyhound Beagle</em></td>
<td>Kearney, Newton</td>
<td>Cape Cruz, Cuba</td>
<td>Burnt town, took 8 boats</td>
<td>Party landed, pirate surrender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/1823</td>
<td><em>Weazel</em></td>
<td>Kennon</td>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td><em>Gallego Seg</em></td>
<td>surrendered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/1824</td>
<td><em>Terrier</em></td>
<td>Paine</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>1 boat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1824</td>
<td><em>Porpoise</em></td>
<td>Skinner</td>
<td>Matanzas</td>
<td>4 boats</td>
<td>Crew escaped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1824</td>
<td><em>Grampus Beagle</em></td>
<td>Sloat, Platt</td>
<td>Porto Rico</td>
<td>Town of Foxardo</td>
<td>Received reparations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/1825</td>
<td><em>unknown</em></td>
<td>Pendergrass</td>
<td>Boca Infierno</td>
<td>1 sloop</td>
<td>taken prisoner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1827</td>
<td><em>Porpoise</em></td>
<td>Cooper</td>
<td>Andros Is.</td>
<td>5 boats</td>
<td>crew killed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>