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Cover Page Footnote

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Spanish Consuls and Trade Networks between Spain and the United States, 1795–1820¹

SEAN T. PERRONE

The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1793–1815) created new opportunities for the neutral United States to trade with Spain and its empire. Statistical data on imports and exports indicate this trade's importance to both countries, particularly the United States. In places such as Cuba, the dramatic increase in North American trade altered long established trade routes, further undermining Spain's transatlantic system and mercantile networks.² Concurrently, this expanded trade created new social networks linking North America to the Hispanic world. Statistical data on trade cannot satisfactorily explain how these new social networks formed, how they responded to events, or how information circulated through them. Historical studies of these questions have been inconclusive, because scholars lack sufficient documentation to explain merchants' actions adequately. We consequently have a poor understanding of the process by which economic actors created new ties.³

This study sheds new light on the expansion of North American trade by examining the records of John Stoughton (c.1745–1820), who served as Spanish consul for the district of New England from 1795 to 1820. Consular services expanded rapidly in the eighteenth century, and, by the turn of the nineteenth century, the growing number of consuls put them in an ideal position to promote the commercial interests of their nations.⁴ Consular agents were therefore able to

¹ I would like to thank Drs. J.B. Owens, B. Salerno, and B. Waterhouse for their feedback on earlier versions of this article. A Saint Anselm College Summer Research Grant and a Gilder Lehrman Fellowship made research for this paper.

² See Javier Cuenca Esteban, "Trends and Cycles in U.S. Trade with Spain and the Spanish Empire, 1790-1819," *The Journal of Economic History* 44 (1984), 543; Harry Bernstein, *Origins of Inter-American Interests, 1700-1812* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1945), 30-1, 37-51, 90-1; Barbara H. Stein and Stanley J. Stein, *Edge of Crisis: War and Trade in the Spanish Atlantic, 1789-1808* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 11, 37-8, 46, 131, 212, and 223.

³ For a study on the same period from a different perspective see Silvia Marzagali, "French Merchants and Atlantic Networks: The organization of shipping and trade between Bordeaux and the United States, 1793-1815," in *Spinning the Commercial Web: International Trade, Merchants, and Commercial Cities, c.1640-1939*, edited by Margrit Schulte Beerbül and Jörg Vögele (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004).

⁴ On the growth of the Spanish consular service in the eighteenth century, see Jesús Pradells Nadal, *Diplomacia y comercio: La expansion consular española en el siglo XVIII* (Alicante:

act as brokers between two distinct self-organizing mercantile networks (North American and Hispanic) in a period of change. Consuls' own relationships to these social networks was often ambiguous; they do not fit neatly into any of the models that scholars use for network analysis (e.g., tie-and-node), but rather reflect elements of multiple models. The history of consular services thus offers an opportunity to apply the concept of rhizome to historical studies. This concept, which describes a heterogeneous web of constantly evolving and overlapping relationships, moves us beyond the dyadic relationships that underpin much network analysis.⁵ Regardless of the model, network analysis is essential to explain the actions of individuals or groups within the expanding world economy. It allows us to see the dynamism of individual actors or groups that statistical studies alone cannot show and to place individual actions within what Margrit Schulte Beerbül and Jörg Vögele have called "larger economic, social, and political processes."⁶ Consular records also offer multiple glimpses into how well-known and lesser-known individuals dealt with transition. This chapter provides both a quantitative analysis of John Stoughton's outgoing correspondence to outline network structures and a qualitative analysis of select letters to illustrate how actors used these networks to exchange information and to mobilize resources. Through these analyses, we can gain insight into the social networks that underlay larger economic trends at the beginning of the second global age.

Spain and the United States initiated formal diplomatic relations when Diego Maria de Gardoqui was appointed Spain's first chargé d'affaires to the United States in 1784, but Spain did not send consuls until the two nations signed the Treaty of San Lorenzo, or Pinckney's Treaty (1795), which included articles for creating consular services.⁷ By late 1795, Spain had consuls or vice-consuls in Boston, Massachusetts, Newport, Rhode Island, New York, New York, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Baltimore, Maryland, Norfolk, Virginia, Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia. Many of these consular agents had previously been merchants and thus part of self-organizing mercantile networks.

Universidad de Alicante, 1992), especially chapter 14 on the Spanish consular service in the United States.

⁵ Gernot Grabher, "Trading routes, bypasses, and risky intersections: mapping the travels of 'networks' between economic sociology and economic geography," *Progress in Human Geography* 30, 2 (2006): 166, 178.

⁶ Margrit Schulte Beerbül and Jörg Vögele "Spinning the Commercial Web. International Trade, Merchants, and Commercial Cities, c.1640-1939. An Introduction," in *Spinning the Commercial Web*, 14-15.

⁷ For more on the development of these consular services, see Sean T. Perrone "The Formation of the Spanish Consular Service in the United States, 1795-1860," in *Consuls et services consulaires au XIX^e siècle/Die Welt der Konsulate im 19. Jahrhundert/Consulship in the 19th Century*, edited by Jörg Ulbert and Lukian Prijac (Hamburg: DOBU-Verlag, 2010) and Guadalupe Carrasco González, "La délégation consulaire des États-Unis à Cadix au début du XIX^e siècle," in Idem.

John Stoughton, for example, was a merchant before being named consul for New England in 1795 by his son-in-law, José de Jáudenes, the Spanish chargé d'affaires to the United States (1791–1795). Spain's policy of appointing merchants to diplomatic posts dated back to Gardoqui, whose family firm—Gardoqui e Hijos—had many business contacts in the United States. Spain likely tapped so many merchants for its consular posts for the same reasons it appointed Gardoqui—such men had the know-how and commercial contacts to foster trade and to resolve conflicts promptly. Their skills were especially useful in a time that saw changing Spanish trade policies and prominent cultural difference between North American and Spanish merchants.⁸

The source for this study is Stoughton's letter books, which he began in 1795 and ended in January 1820.⁹ In those 25 years, Stoughton copied 1,352 of his outgoing letters into the letter books. Most of the people whom he addressed were not regular correspondents: 206 out of 370 total addressees (55.6%) received only one letter, according to the letter books; 106 (28.6%) received two to four letters, 27 (7.3%) received between five and nine, and 31 (8.4%) received ten or more. The top recipient, Luis de Onís, Spain's minister to the United States (1809–1819), received 65 letters; the second most frequent correspondent was Pedro Juan de Erice, a prominent merchant in Havana who received 57. In fact, of the 13 correspondents who received more than 20 letters, 9 were Spanish officials and 4 were merchants. The quantitative data testifies to the importance of official correspondence, including simple greetings to new ministers: 28% of Stoughton's outgoing correspondence (382 of 1,352 letters) was addressed to other Spanish consuls or officials.

Even though the majority of the addressees received only a single letter, such correspondence constituted only a small fraction (15.2%) of the letters sent over 25 years. In fact, 31 people (or 8.4% of the addressees) received 52% of the letters. Fifteen of these people were involved in consular issues and 16 dealt in mercantile matters. The correspondence highlights two distinct networks—a consular network made up of people residing in the United States, and a much

⁸ Reyes Calderón Cuadrado, *Empresarios españoles en el proceso de independencia norteamericana: La casa Gardoqui e hijos de Bilbao* (Madrid: Unión Editorial, 2004), 144, 158, 191-2, 297; Linda K. Salvucci, "Anglo-American merchants and stratagem for success in Spanish imperial markets, 1783-1807," in *The North American role in the Spanish imperial economy 1760-1819*, edited by Jacques A. Barbier and Allan J. Kuethe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 133.

⁹ The correspondences are contained in three letter books. The letter book for 1795-1800 is located at the New-York Historical Society, BV Stoughton, Letterbook, 1795-1800 (hereafter BVSL), and the letters books for 1800-1820 are located at the Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Don Juan Stoughton Collection (hereafter DJSC), v.3 and 4.

broader merchant network, who lived both in the United States and abroad. Moreover, these networks involved different organizational structures. The first was formally organized and based on hierarchy and state authority, while the second was informal and self-regulating. Stoughton himself served as a node linking these distinct networks.

Stoughton clearly created strong ties with merchants. According to the records, he reached agreements with at least 36 merchants or mercantile firms to pay him a commission on all consignments that they received based on his recommendation (see Appendix 1). Of Stoughton's outgoing correspondence, 14.4% went to 30 of these merchants or mercantile firms. Since six of them do not appear in the letter books, however, we can conclude that the books give only an incomplete picture of Stoughton's activities.

Strong ties were vital for effective commerce in the early nineteenth century, because they engendered trust and facilitated the spread of information across vast distances. Yet, weak ties were also crucial for extending networks' size and adaptability, and consuls were ideally placed to serve as weak ties. As official representatives of the Spanish government, consuls frequently fielded requests for assistance or documentation from people they did not know—indeed, the letter books suggest that 55.6% of Stoughton's correspondents had very limited contact with him. In some cases, approaching the consul may have been the only option left for individuals with few or no contacts in New England or the Hispanic world. Such people certainly had their own networks, but the eighteenth-century expansion of the consular bureaucracy increased the number of weak ties that isolated individuals could fall back on. Scholars have argued that weak ties created more robust and vibrant systems that could accommodate isolated individuals and more easily reconfigure in light of changing circumstances. Consular documentation, as we will see below, provides new empirical evidence to support this claim. At the same time, it was Stoughton's strong ties to government and commercial networks that made him an ideal weak tie, or bridge, to multiple transatlantic networks.¹⁰

Quantitative analysis of the correspondence also allows us to trace the geographical scope of Stoughton's work. Although the locations for a third of the addressees (126 of 372) are unknown, such letters only represent 14% of the outgoing correspondence. The other 86% provide a helpful picture. Much of Stoughton's correspondence was within the United States (46%): 13% within his

¹⁰ For more on weak ties, see Mark S. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *The American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973): 1360-1380 and "The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited," *Sociological Theory* 1 (1983): 201-233.

consular district of New England and 33% with the rest of the United States. The same proportion of his correspondence (19%) went to Spain and Spanish America. Two percent went to other counties—England, France, Portugal, and the Netherlands. The ten most frequent destinations for his letters were Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (282), Havana, Cuba (213), New York, New York (105), Cádiz, Spain (105), Newport, Rhode Island (57), Baltimore, Maryland (47), Bilbao, Spain (37), Málaga, Spain (25), Providence, Rhode Island (22), and Buenos Aires, Argentina (18). These ten cities account for 911 out of 1,352 letters, or 67.4%. The top four destinations account for 705 out of 1,352 letters, or 52.14%. Correspondence, of course, does not equal trade or indicate the value of trade, but it does reveal geographical and relationship ties. Plotting those ties will help us to describe the spatiality of Stoughton’s networks and to understand the degree to which consuls were structurally embedded in social networks and geographical locations. That is, a consul’s location, as much as his official duties, can explain his social interactions and behavior.¹¹ For instance, the increase in Stoughton’s correspondence with Luis de Onís in 1813 (24 out of 65 total letters) arose directly from Onís’s inability to send dispatches to Spain from any other consular district in the United States (see below).

Quantitative analysis of the letters also shows when the consular office was busiest as a node in global networks. If we divide the outgoing correspondence into five-year intervals, we see that the busiest periods were at the beginning and the end of Stoughton’s service. Oddly, the middle period (1800–1809), especially the years from 1806 to 1808, which marked the high point of U.S.-Spanish trade, was the least active for outgoing correspondence.¹² In 1801, for example, Stoughton certified that 291 ships left for or arrived from Spanish ports in his district.¹³ In the same year, he only copied 26 letters into his letter book, and none referred to the fees collected for certifying those ships (see Table 2). Stoughton’s records for consular fees clearly indicted the steady rise of trade until the American Embargo of 1807-1808 and its rapid recovery after the embargo.¹⁴ Why the sudden decline in correspondence (or at least the recording of outgoing correspondence) and the absence of references to consular fees and

¹¹ For a more thorough discussion of embeddedness, spatial analysis, and social network analysis, see Steven M. Radil, Colin Flint, and George E. Tita, “Spatializing Social Networks: Using Social Network Analysis to Investigate Geographies of Gang Rivalry, Territoriality, and Violence in Los Angeles,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 100 (2010): 309-311.

¹² Bernstein, *Origins*, 49-50; Peggy K. Liss, *Atlantic Empires: The Network of Trade and Revolution, 1713-1826* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 187.

¹³ DJSC, v.1, “Nota de los Barcos... Enero 1 de 1802.”

¹⁴ In 1802, his fees totaled \$949; in 1803, \$1,450; in 1804, \$1,297; in 1805, \$2,036; in 1806, \$2,055; in 1807, \$2,881; in 1808, \$246; and through September 1809, \$2,124. See NYHS, BV Stoughton, Account Book, 1802-1809.

documents in the recorded correspondence? It is possible that much of Stoughton's interaction with traders took place in person at this time.¹⁵ Alternatively, the answer may lie in the type of trade that was permitted after 1800. Between 1797 and 1799, Spain implemented a policy of *comercio neutro*, allowing neutral vessels to bring goods to Spanish ports, including the colonies. By the early 1800s, Spain adopted a policy of issuing *gracias*, or special licenses, to Spanish merchants to ship goods on neutral vessels to Spanish America.¹⁶ As a result, fewer North American merchants likely set sail for Spanish ports in these years on their own account. Rather, most probably had an agreement with a holder of a *gracia* to ship goods to a specific port before departure. Since North American merchants already had a reliable Spanish partner or customer, the demand for recommendations from Stoughton would thus decrease. Moreover, during *comercio neutro* (1797–1799), some North American merchants must have established reliable contacts in Hispanic ports. The quantity of correspondence, then, does not necessarily reflect commercial activity, and its increase after 1810 seems to relate more to political developments than to commercial developments. Between 1815 and 1819, for instance, much of Stoughton's outgoing correspondence dealt with his efforts to redeem Spanish property in American courts from U.S.-outfitted privateers serving Latin American governments (i.e., prize cases).

Table 1 suggests that the period of greatest trade was not necessarily the period of highest need for the consular network in New England at either the national or the international level. Political developments in the United States, Spain, and Latin America necessitated greater consular intervention at specific points, highlighting the importance of Stoughton—and consuls in general—as nodes in constantly evolving systems. Each consular district, however, developed differently based on local conditions. For example, starting in the 1790s, the consuls in Charleston and Savannah continually had to monitor plots to attack Florida and Spanish Louisiana from the southeastern United States.¹⁷ Stoughton's correspondence contains no references to monitoring such plots, and it seems reasonable to assume that his counterparts in Charleston and Savannah developed

¹⁵ In 1817, for instance, Stoughton only wrote a Spanish captain in Salem, MA, regarding the certification of the ship after the captain sent a man with a false invoice and clearance to the consular office. Had the captain not been caught trying to cheat the consul of his fees, this consular transaction certainly would have gone unrecorded in the letter book, see DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to J.M. Sustacha, 20 October 1817.

¹⁶ For a thorough examination of Spanish trade policies at this time, see Stein, *Edge of Crisis*, chapters 8, 9, and 12.

¹⁷ Sean T. Perrone, "The Role of Spanish Consuls in the United States, 1795-1898," in *Nation and Conflict in Modern Spain: Essays in Honor of Stanley G. Payne*, edited by Brian D. Bunk, Carl-Gustaf Scott and Sasha D. Pack (Madison, WI: Parallel Press, 2008): 86-90.

Table 1:

Years	Outgoing Letters	Percentage of Total
1795–1799	369	27.3%
1800–1804	159	11.8%
1805–1809	165	12.2%
1810–1814	313	23.2%
1815–1819	342	25.3%
1820	4	< ½%

different types of networks within their districts to address distinct local challenges that arose from a specific geographical context.

A partial review of the subject matter of Stoughton's letters indicates how his consular duties fluctuated over time. Table 2 depicts a snapshot of 6 of the 25 years. It is not a random sampling of letters; rather, specific events in those years influenced the content of the correspondence. Nonetheless, these six years account for 382 letters, or 28% of the total, so Table 2 offers a sense of Stoughton's activities. Some letters refer to only one subject, while others discuss a variety of subjects. The subjects they address fall into thirteen broad categories. For example, "consular administrative matters" include such topics as salary issues, appointments, and greetings and protestations to superiors. "News of ships" includes sailing information and the sale and loss of vessels. Stoughton assisted many stranded Spaniards, helped other Spaniards to find work or study opportunities in the United States, and notified relatives of deaths; I have classified such activities as "general assistance". While this is a helpful snapshot, such a partial review makes it difficult to discern patterns in the correspondence, and the paucity of letters in several years makes quantitative analysis of the subject matter of the correspondence problematic.

Nevertheless, it is possible to infer a few conclusions from Table 2. First, even though the number of references to business information is negligible in certain years, such as 1805, all the references to such information tabulated together show that nearly 25% of Stoughton's correspondence for the years under

Table 2: Subject matter of letters from 1797, 1801, 1805, 1809, 1813, and 1817

Subject	1797 (114 letters)	1801 (26 letters)	1805 (17 letters)	1809 (40 letters)	1813 (121 letters)	1817 (64 letters)	Total References per subject
Information: Markets/Prices	3 (2.25%)	4 (13.79%)	2 (10.52%)	12 (21.4%)	2 (1.49%)	2 (2.4%)	25 (5.5%)
Information: Trade Opportunities	10 (7.5%)	1 (3.44%)	2 (10.52%)	0	7 (5.22%)	0	20 (4.4%)
Information: News of Ships	4 (3 %)	0	0	0	19 (14.17%)	11 (13.25%)	34 (7.48%)
Information: General News/periodicals	11 (8.2%)	4 (13.78%)	0	11 (19.64%)	4 (2.98%)	4 (4.8%)	34 (7.48%)
Recommendations & Introductions	19 (14.28%)	2 (6.89%)	2 (10.52%)	1 (1.78%)	9 (6.71%)	4 (4.8%)	37 (8.14%)
Personal & Family Matters	36 (27%)	3 (10.34%)	0	6 (10.71%)	3 (2.23%)	4 (4.8%)	52 (11.45%)
Prize Cases	0	2 (6.89%)	0	0	19 (14.17%)	32 (38.5%)	53 (11.67%)
Consular Administrative Matters	19 (14.28%)	5 (17.24%)	5 (26.3%)	3 (5.35%)	8 (5.97%)	3 (3.6%)	43 (9.47%)
Consular documents/fees	3 (2.25%)	0	0	9 (16.07%)	4 (2.98%)	3 (3.6%)	19 (4.18%)
Bills/Payments	9 (6.76%)	1 (3.44%)	1 (5.26%)	8 (14.28%)	12 (8.95%)	12 (14.45%)	43 (9.47%)
General Assistance	6 (4.5%)	5 (17.24%)	4 (21.05%)	5 (8.9%)	16 (11.9%)	3 (3.6%)	39 (8.59%)
Remitting documents/ mail	11 (8.2%)	2 (6.89%)	3 (15.78%)	1 (1.78%)	31 (23.13%)	4 (4.8%)	52 (11.45%)
Miscellaneous	2 (1.5%)	0	0	0	0	1 (1.2%)	3 (0.66%)
Total References	133	29	19	56	134	83	454

review concerns disseminating or collecting information (exclusive of information gathered for prize cases). Such a result is similar to the percentage of references to business information (27%) that Jon Stobart has calculated from the letter book of Daniel Peck, a Chester, England merchant in the early eighteenth century.¹⁸ It is likely, then, that many merchants believed they exchanged enough information with Stoughton to make a strong tie with him beneficial. Second, the table indicates the importance of events and policies in dictating the subject matter of consular correspondence. For example, Stoughton provided introductions for more people in 1797, during *comercio neutro*, than in any other year; correspondence regarding markets/prices clearly jumped in 1809 because of the lifting of the American embargo; references to ships and remitting of dispatches increased remarkably in 1813 because Boston was one of the few open ports at that point in the War of 1812; and, finally, the Latin American Wars of Independence in the 1810s led to the increased importance of prize cases. Taken together, this data shows that consuls had to be highly responsive to world events, and their ability to do so made them particularly important nodes in multiple networks.

Quantitative analysis of the outgoing correspondence offers a unique perspective on the activities of the Spanish consul of New England. By bringing various correspondents to the surface, if only as names on a list, as well as noting the destinations of letters, quantitative analysis allows us to broaden our understanding of social networks and identify more of the officials, merchants, sailors, prisoners, and even passengers who took part in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century commerce and migration (see Appendix 2). It suggests that the consuls often participated in multiple networks, serving as strong ties and strategic relationships, as well as bridges linking distinct social networks. In conjunction with a close reading of the actual letters, quantitative analysis of the outgoing correspondence should help us to write a more accurate narrative of the social networks that undergirded relations between Spain and the United States.

A thorough qualitative examination of the outgoing correspondence is impossible in a short essay. A brief examination of select letters, however, sheds light on the ways that consuls served as bridges among trade networks and the motives of the people who participated in such networks. For instance, Stoughton's efforts to advance trade between Spanish merchants and New England merchants were not simply altruistic; consuls could collect commissions

¹⁸ Jon Stobart, "Webs of Information, Bonds of Trust: The networks of early eighteenth-century Chester merchants," in *Spinning the Commercial Web*, 230-3.

for facilitating trade.¹⁹ In 1799, for example, the mercantile house of Robert and John Montgomery (Alicante) offered Stoughton a commission for recommending it to American merchants.²⁰ After the Napoleonic Wars, when the Montgomerys sought to renew their trade with the United States, they again turned to Stoughton, offering him a 1% commission on all consignments procured through his initiative.²¹ In a similar instance in 1815, Maury and Company (Málaga) offered Stoughton a commission on consignments it received. On September 15, Stoughton responded:

I willing accept the offer respecting commissions and shall exert myself to procure you consignments among my friends. The late accounts from your vicinity are far from encouraging to adventurers so that few opportunities will occur for me to recommend your house to any advantage for the present but I shall keep you in view and endeavour to improve such as may offer.²²

His letter suggested that social networks alone did not guarantee trade, but they were important vehicles by which merchants and consuls could reach agreements for the payment of commissions. Unfortunately, Stoughton's personal accounts do not survive, so we cannot ascertain how lucrative the consignment business was for him. Nonetheless, the consignment business benefited both Spanish and North American merchants with few ties in the respective marketplaces, and it undoubtedly strengthened networks of trust—essential for long-distance trade—between North Americans and Spaniards.

Stoughton also assisted Spanish merchants and their agents in the United States. In 1803, Julian Hernández Barruso purchased a license to ship 450 tons of goods from the United States to Buenos Aires, Chile, and Lima. Stoughton helped Hernández contact Boston merchants and quickly issued passports for those merchants to set sail. The value of the goods shipped was significant: one ship, the *Cordelia*, carried 25 tons of merchandise, including prohibited goods, worth \$107,915.61. Hernández's conduct in executing his license quickly came under official scrutiny and, in June 1804, Stoughton had to defend himself to the consul general over accusations that the merchants were abusing the license. In December, the viceroy of Buenos Aires complained that Hernández was sending too many ships with small cargos from Boston (three ships with 37 tons of cargo but with a combined carrying capacity of 1377 tons). The viceroy speculated that

¹⁹ DJSC, v.3, Stoughton to Antonio de Sarria e Hijos, 10 September 1802.

²⁰ BVSL, Stoughton to Robert and John Montgomery, 15 October 1799.

²¹ Pennsylvania State Archives, Pennsylvania Collection (Miscellaneous), Ms. Group 8, #176.

²² DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to Maury & Co., 15 September 1815.

the North Americans were using the rest of the cargo space to ship contraband and recommended revoking the license; the Spanish government did so on 15 July 1805. News of the revocation quickly spread to the United States, leading Stoughton to ask an associate of Hernández in October 1805 whether the certificate that Hernández had granted for the ship *Massachusetts* to trade in Buenos Aires was still valid. Despite these mishaps, Stoughton remained on good terms with Hernández and, in February 1806, he informed the *madrileño* that his friends in Boston were saddened by the turn of events.²³ They had undoubtedly profited handsomely from the business link, but for Stoughton, the results were probably mixed. His reputation with the consul general clearly suffered, but his reputation with Bostonians and Hernández remained intact. Those relationships were probably more important for Stoughton's long-term effectiveness as a consul and a bridge between New England and the Hispanic world.

In 1815, Stoughton wrote an all-purpose letter of introduction for Celestino Oyarbide, an agent of the firm Ventura Gomez de la Torre y Nietos of Bilbao. The letter, addressed to no particular contact, recommended Oyarbide as a correspondent in general because he had extensive knowledge of Spanish markets and his firm had broad experience trading with the United States.²⁴ It is unclear whether this letter opened many doors for Oyarbide in North America, but Stoughton's long relationship with the firm—starting as early as 1800 and continuing until at least 1815—suggests that his recommendation was more than merely perfunctory. The North American merchants who knew Stoughton likely took the letter into serious consideration. It is also worth noting that Stoughton's correspondence with Gomez de la Torre ended in 1815. Does this suggest that Oyarbide became the firm's agent in the United States? If so, does the establishment of resident agents indicate the maturing of Spanish-U.S. commercial relations? The outgoing correspondence unfortunately cannot answer such questions. Some merchants, such as the Montgomerys and Maurys, still sought consular assistance after 1815, but at some point consuls must no longer have needed to act as intermediaries between Spanish and North American

²³ Patricia H. Marks, *Deconstructing Legitimacy: Viceroy, Merchants, and the Military in Late Colonial Peru* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 114; Liss, *Atlantic Empires*, 187; Josef Garriga, *Continuación y suplemento del prontuario de Don Severo Aguirre, que comprende las cédulas, resoluciones, etc. expedidas el año de 1805, y algunas de los anteriores* (Madrid: Repulles, 1806), 264-6; Virginia Historical Society, Mss 3 Sp 155, Section 18, Folder 2; DJSC, v.3, Stoughton to Valentin de Foronda, 30 June 1804, Stoughton to Manuel Moreda, 10 October 1805, and Stoughton to Julian Hernández Barruso, 20 February 1806.

²⁴ DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to Unaddressed, 30 September 1815. Ventura Francisco Gomez de la Torre y Xarabeitia was the most important commercial house in Bilbao in the second half of the eighteenth century. The firm was a major importer of cod from North America, but had few ties to Massachusetts prior to 1776. For more on Gomez de la Torre, see Calderón, *Empresarios*, 192-5.

merchants as self-organizing merchant networks once more became independent of state institutions. On the other hand, one aspect of the transition to the second global age may be that the two types of networks (consular and merchant) functioned in tandem, especially in times of restricted trade and political upheaval.²⁵

In addition to helping Spanish merchants establish themselves in the United States, Stoughton helped North Americans to make contacts in Hispanic ports. In August 1816, his nephew John Lynch went to Havana to establish a business.²⁶ Stoughton immediately wrote to his contact in the government at Havana, Alexandro Ramirez, as well as the North American merchants (Nathaniel Fellows, Vincent Gray, John Murdock, and David Nagle) who resided there, recommending his nephew and asking them to assist him.²⁷ Stoughton even wrote a letter of recommendation for his nephew to the governor of Cuba, José de Cienfuegos, whom he informed that Lynch had served the Spanish king as secretary in the consular office of New England for six years with zeal and was the son of natives of La Coruña.²⁸ Several months later, in May 1817, Stoughton again wrote to Ramirez, thanking him for the attention that he had given to Lynch.²⁹ In March 1819, Stoughton told his nephew: “I will exert myself among

²⁵ Self-organizing social networks did exist at this time between Spanish and North American merchants. In 1797, Stoughton informed the consul general that many North Americans who traded cod with Spain already had contacts there and were not interested in forming a new commercial relation for the export of cod with an unknown Spaniard like Bernardo La Costa. The Derby firm of Salem, Massachusetts, for instance, had commercial relations with Gardoqui e Hijos from at least 1794, and Elias Hasket Derby contacted Francisco Bustamenta y Cuesta in 1799 proposing a plan to facilitate the transfer of credit in Cádiz. At the same time, Stoughton apparently served as a go-between in discussions between a Havana firm and the Derbys to ship goods from Salem to Vera Cruz. That venture, however, did not materialize. It would appear, then, that even merchants with connections to Spain had heterogeneous webs of relations that included consuls. See BVSL, Stoughton to Josef Ignacio de Viar, 16 February 1797, Stoughton to Sres Santa Maria y Cuesta, 1 July 1799; Essex Institute (Salem, MA), Mss 37 v. 13 Derby to Gardoqui e Hijos, 11 July 1794 and v.14 Derby to Francisco Bustamenta y Cuesta, 5 February 1799.

²⁶ John was the son of Mr. Francis Lynch of New York and presumably related to the prominent New York merchant, Dominick Lynch. Dominick Lynch and Thomas Stoughton (John Stoughton's brother) were partners in the firm of Lynch and Stoughton from 1783 to 1795. Dominick Lynch was the son of a rich Galway merchant with extensive ties in Europe, and when he came to America in 1785, Dominick supposedly brought more cash to the United States than “any other single individual in living memory.” See Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 272: DJSC, v. 1 July 1816.

²⁷ DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to Alexandro Ramirez, Nathaniel Fellows, Vincent Gray, John Murdock, David Nagle, 24 August 1816.

²⁸ DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to J. De Cienfuegos, 18 October 1816.

²⁹ DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to Alexandro Ramirez, 16 May 1817

my friends to procure your business.”³⁰ Such an overture was for naught, however, as Lynch died several months later.³¹ Stoughton’s help was not limited to relatives either: In October 1816, he asked Ramirez to assist Ebenezer Stocker, a Boston merchant, who was traveling to Havana for both commercial and health reasons.³²

Such letters of introduction were often crucial for merchants seeking to establish themselves in Spanish-U.S. trade in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Linda Salvucci has noted, for instance, that John Leamy used his ties to Spanish diplomats to become the principal Philadelphia merchant trading with Spanish America, and that merchants without ties to Spanish officials often floundered in the Hispanic marketplace.³³ Many New England merchants had such ties with Stoughton, and he certainly helped them to make contacts in unknown ports. At the same time, the relationships that made such contacts viable needed to be nurtured. Stoughton, for instance, repeatedly sent the most recent periodicals to Ramirez, who was a noted botanist and member of the American Philosophical Society.³⁴ Such gestures were small, but undoubtedly valuable to keep relationships alive.

Consuls also protected distant merchants from becoming victims of fraud. In August 1798, Stoughton informed Murphy Brothers and Company of Málaga that a young French man had recently arrived in Boston bearing bills of exchange totaling 32,600 *livres tournois*. The bills were drawn on Murphy and payable to the youth.³⁵ Stoughton attached a bill to his letter, asking them to inspect it and report back to him immediately. He explained that he had become suspicious when the youth submitted another bill with a forged signature. Since the youth was currently in jail and would face a formal charge of forgery at the next court session, Stoughton wanted to hear from the Murphy Brothers before then. He also asked them to send him copies of their signatures “in case any other impositions of a similar nature may come within my knowledge or merchants residing within the district of my appointment.” In June 1799, Stoughton informed the Murphy Brothers that the French youth had been condemned to stand an hour in the pillory

³⁰ DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to Lynch & Martin, 6 March 1819.

³¹ DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to Mr. Martin, 14 July 1819.

³² DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to Alexandro Ramirez, 24 October 1816.

³³ Linda Salvucci, “Merchants and Diplomats: Philadelphia’s Early Trade with Cuba,” *Pennsylvania Legacies* 3 (November 2003), 6-10.

³⁴ DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to Alexandro Ramirez, 16 May 1817; For some brief references to Ramirez’s scientific connections to the United States, see Bernstein, *Origins*, 56 and 93.

³⁵ The Murphys (or Morphy in Spanish) were prominent international merchants, and members of the family established the firm of Gordon & Murphy in 1806 for the shipment of silver from New Spain to Europe. See Stein, *Edge of Crisis*, 107-8, 322, 351-61.

and jailed for a few months. He also thanked them for their signatures, which he averred would help him to catch any would-be forgers in the future.³⁶ The letter books contain no further correspondence with Murphy Brothers and Co., but Stoughton continued to correspond with several Murphys, including his consular colleague, Diego Morphy, and a member of the Murphy family served as the United States' consul in Málaga. The example of the Murphy family illustrates the apparently common intersection of kindred relationships with business and consular networks.³⁷ Without this intersection, Stoughton's relationship with the extended Murphy family would most likely not have developed into a strong tie.

Consuls in port cities helped not only Spanish merchants, but any Spaniards in dire straits. In August 1796, Stoughton asked his vice-consul to call upon the owner of the brig *Union* in Newport, Rhode Island, to obtain payment of \$150 in wages for three Spanish sailors who had signed on for a voyage from Newport to St. Michael. When they requested payment at their destination, the captain instead gave them an obligation for their wages, which according to Stoughton:

appears an odd mixture of ignorance and malice ... [and] seems extremely probable, that the paper was meant merely to satisfy these men till the vessel could sail from St. Michael, for the Capt. must have known that they neither could nor would wait for his return, and therefore if ever they meet with him again it must be the effect of chance.³⁸

The outcome of this case is unknown, but it illustrates both the international character of the merchant marine and the specific efforts of the consular network to assist Spaniards in business transactions with Americans. This example provides further evidence that consuls served as important weak ties—that is, anyone could approach them—and that their strong ties enabled them to solve problems that arose from globalization.

³⁶ BVSL, Stoughton to Morphy Brothers and Company, 22 August 1798, and Stoughton to Murphy Brothers, 6 June 1799.

³⁷ The prominence of Anglo-Irish merchants and diplomats in both Spain and the United States suggest an ethnic angle to these transatlantic social networks. In addition to familial and ethnic solidarities, religious affiliation must be considered as well, especially in the case of Spanish-U.S. trade where a chance meeting between consuls and merchants at Mass often led to discussions of commercial ventures. It must not be forgotten that religious, familial, and ethnic solidarities often bridged differences between agents in multinational networks that shared business interests alone could not bridge. See Pradells Nadal, *Diplomacia*, 590-591; Marzagali, "French Merchants," 165-173; Salvucci, "Merchants and Diplomats," 6-10; Calderón, *Empresarios*, 115.

³⁸ BVSL, Stoughton to Joseph Wiseman, 5 August 1796 .

Of course, at times, extenuating circumstances prevented parties from keeping agreements. In 1817, a former merchant named Stephen Codman informed Stoughton that a consignment of cacao sold in Barcelona in 1806 for £2027.9 belonged to Luis Antonio Rico of Guayalpil. The money was remitted to Codman, but during his bankruptcy in 1809 that money had become mixed with his personal accounts and been lost. Codman asked Stoughton to convey to the representatives of Rico's widow that he was only eking out a living as a public notary and was unable to repay anything. He expressed particular remorse because Doña Francisca Rocafuerte had five daughters to support. Stoughton dutifully wrote to the widow's representatives in Cádiz, assuring them that Codman was an honorable man who, if he were better off financially, would immediately liquidate his debts. Stoughton likewise expressed his sympathy for Doña Rocafuerte, whose hopes were frustrated, and wished that he could have provided better news, especially given her large family.³⁹ Whether Stoughton's letter convinced Doña Rocafuerte's representatives to expunge the debt is unknown. The exchange suggests, however, that Codman turned to Stoughton because he needed a reputable person whose word would carry weight in Spain to attest to his character. Codman clearly had been linked into a global trade network involving Spanish merchants previously, but by 1817 he recognized that Stoughton's familiarity with Boston society and reputation in Spanish circles were crucial to support his claims in a transatlantic exchange.⁴⁰ Stoughton's reputation in multiple networks thus allowed him to link members of non-overlapping networks, resolving conflicts and fostering new relationships and ties.

Stoughton's outgoing correspondence increased significantly with the Latin American Wars of Independence. Many Spanish vessels captured by Latin American privateers were brought into the United States, and consuls attempted to redeem these ships through legal actions. Spanish merchants who were aware of the role consuls could play thus used the extensive consular network to regain their stolen goods. In the fall of 1816, a Spanish merchant asked Stoughton for

³⁹ DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to Bernabe Antonio and Gasper de Elias, 30 May 1817.

⁴⁰ Codman was probably involved in the shipment of goods from Boston to Lima for Hernández Barruso, which were consigned to Gasper Rico in Lima. A Richard Codman was certainly involved, and it seems likely that Richard and Steven were related and that Gasper and Luis Antonio were related. Most of Spain's consuls were enmeshed in the communities where they resided and thus participated in the many complex relationships of their communities. Stoughton was no exception. He socialized with many of the most prominent Bostonians and was a leader in the Catholic community. Local relationships certainly bore on his duties as consul, but because the letter books rarely make reference to them, they are not addressed here. See Marks, *Deconstructing*, 114 fn 23; Robert H. Lord, John E. Sexton, and Edward T. Harrington, *History of the Archdiocese of Boston: In the Various Stages of Its Development 1604-1943* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1944), vol.1, 507, 553-558, and 673; and Elias Boudinot, *Journey to Boston in 1809*, edited by Milton Halsey Thomas (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 43-44.

help retrieving a seized vessel. Stoughton reported that he had no news of the ship in question but would remain vigilant, and if the vessel arrived in his district, he would do everything in his power to redeem the property for the rightful owner.⁴¹ In 1819, he received a similar inquiry from Pacavinis Mandry & Co.⁴² The Spanish consuls also exchanged information on captured Spanish ships among each other and disseminated information they received from merchants. Without the steady exchange of information that the consular networks created, Spain would have had far greater difficulty compelling U.S. federal officials to enforce neutrality laws and reclaiming Spanish property unlawfully seized on the high seas.⁴³

Even with those networks, however, redeeming property was not easy. For example, consuls routinely faced the problem of obtaining power of attorney to act on behalf of the owners. United States' law allowed consuls to libel the ships, but not to pursue the case without power of attorney. Moreover, only by acting as the agent of the owners could the consuls reap a monetary reward—often 5% of the cargo's value—for their effort. Of course, the owners were often unknown because the privateers had destroyed the ship's papers. In September 1817, Stoughton wrote an open letter to the owners of the cargo of *La Industria* in Tenerife, informing them that their ship was in his jurisdiction but he needed power of attorney to redeem the ship and its cargo.⁴⁴ A month later, Stoughton again asked the still unknown owners to send him the most ample powers immediately. He explained that prominent Portland merchants had purchased the goods and, he was certain, would prefer to reach a settlement than go to court, but without power of attorney it would be difficult to achieve anything. He also requested a copy of the ship's register and other documentation.⁴⁵ Despite the diligence of the consuls, prize cases took time to wind through the courts. In November 1818, Stoughton wrote Ramon Bustillo and Mariano Mendibe, presumably *La Industria*'s owners, that the court had postponed the case until May for lack of evidence and testimony.⁴⁶

Without their connections in both political and merchant circles, Stoughton and other consuls could not have redeemed as much Spanish property as they did (thereby achieving a crucial political and economic goal of Spain). Prize cases represented a new type of network, "project networks," that were

⁴¹ DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to Francisco de Paula Moreno de Mora, 25 October 1816.

⁴² DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to Pacivinis Mandry & Co., 10 March 1819.

⁴³ For a detailed study of a prize case see Sean T. Perrone, "John Stoughton and the *Divina Pastora* prize case, 1816-1819," *The Journal of the Early Republic* 28 (Summer 2008): 215-241.

⁴⁴ DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to Owners of *La Yndustria*, 12 September 1817.

⁴⁵ DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to Owners of *La Yndustria*, 7 October 1817.

⁴⁶ DJSC, v.4, Stoughton to Ramon Bustillo and Mariano Mendibe, 15 November 1818.

distinct from other types of networks I have already discussed. Project networks were temporary networks formed for a particular task; in such cases, consuls acted not simply as bridges but as active participants. In addition, project networks emerged to address highly localized issues that had trans-local dimensions; that is, prize cases were set in the North American legal system, but evidence for them came from across the Atlantic. The formal consular network thus helped people who had few ties in the United States and little time to develop the personal confidences necessary to engage in a crucial task like a prize case, which required the expertise that consuls had. The temporary nature of project networks and the high-stakes nature of the task meant that any lack of trust could create serious problems. Nonetheless, the creation of short-term networks for a particular task, such as a lawsuit, would have been nearly impossible to do quickly and efficiently without consular resources.⁴⁷

The revolutionary period at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century shook the political and commercial foundations of the Atlantic world. New networks emerged and old networks tried to adjust to changing circumstances. The quantitative and qualitative analyses of Stoughton's letter books provide some insights into the formation and function of social networks in that period. Consuls were deeply involved in the activities of Spanish merchants and sailors in the United States, helping them to achieve trade objectives, meet North American merchants, and overcome economic hardships. Some of these people became regular correspondents with whom Stoughton developed decades-long relationships. Others appear to have been weak ties, but the existence of so many weak ties suggests that consuls played a pivotal role as bridges in a period of transition. Weak ties allowed Stoughton to forge contacts between merchants in North America and those in Spain and Latin American, links that otherwise would not have existed. Once these contacts were established, it is unclear whether Stoughton continued to recommend the same merchant, as he clearly did in the case of his nephew, or if a single recommendation was sufficient to create a social tie for a merchant in a new marketplace.

Yet Stoughton was more than just a bridge between networks; he was also a part of them. First and foremost, he was a member of the consular service, a network that included Spanish officials in the United States and overseas. A strict institutional view of Stoughton's contacts, however, would obscure the relationships that he maintained with merchants. These mercantile contacts were often as vital to his ability to fulfill his duties as were relationships with consular colleagues. For example, his effectiveness in redeeming prizes depended on his ability to tap both consular colleagues and mercantile colleagues for information.

⁴⁷ Grabher, "Trading routes," 168-9.

Finally, the prize cases placed Stoughton in temporary “project networks” with unknown merchants.

Dyadic models cannot explain the multiple webs of relationships that Stoughton belonged to over 25 years. In fact, the disruptions of the period required him to undertake new tasks and form new networks repeatedly, all the while maintaining older networks and relationships. Consequently, the rhizome might serve as a better metaphor for the commercial and diplomatic webs spun in the Atlantic world at this time. Stoughton’s strong ties with consular colleagues and merchants were the stem from which a number of roots extended in various directions, overlapping other roots and stems. Visualizing such intertwining webs is difficult, but the idea of roots constantly spreading and changing direction based on the ground’s contours helps us to move away from the static view of many network models, which emphasize a condition of stable equilibrium and leave little room for market innovation and change. The concept of rhizome better accounts for the dynamism of this age and more adequately explains the multiple networks that governmental officials and entrepreneurs could tap into to achieve their goals in a period of flux.⁴⁸

The examples provided here, even incomplete ones, illuminate human actions in ways that statistical data on trade cannot. These snippets suggest that further case-study research in consular records would prove invaluable and lead to a more comprehensive narrative on the transition to the second global age by relating small-scale (or micro-level) interactions to large-scale (or macro-level) patterns.⁴⁹ Sufficient data should ultimately give us greater insight into the social dynamics that underlay larger economic trends and help us to understand changes in self-organizing mercantile networks during a period of acute turmoil as well as the role state-sponsored networks played in that transition.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 166, 178-9; Beerbül and Vögele “Spinning the Commercial Web,” 13-15, 17.

⁴⁹ Granovetter, “Strength of Weak Ties,” 1360.

Appendix 1:

Alicante	Robert & John Montgomery
Alicante	Sres. Don Francisco Piqueres e Hijo
Barcelona	Sres. Arabet Gautien Manning y Ca.
Barcelona	G.G. Hilliger et Co.
Barcelona	Francisco Olivella
Barcelona	Don Antonio Pont y Closas
Bilbao	Alvarez & Son
Bilbao	Don Ventura Gomez de la Torre y Nietos
Bilbao	Don Antonio de Sarria y Hijos
Bilbao	Bago y Gordia
Buenos Aires	Don Manuel de la Piedra
Buenos Aires	Don Pedro Duval
Buenos Aires	Don Tomas Antonio Romero
Buenos Aires	Don Pedro Andres Garcia
Cadiz	Bernhard & Hilliger
Cadiz	Bernardo La Costa
Cadiz	Josef Moreno de Mora
Havana	Marques de Casa Calvo
Havana	Don Thomas de la Cruz Muñoz
Havana	Don Pedro Juan de Erice
Havana	Gabriel de Herrera
Havana	Richard M. Madan
La Coruña	D. Pedro Llano
Madrid	Don Julian Hernandez Barruso
Madrid	Juan José Marco del Pont
Madrid	Manuel de Moreda (friend of Barruso)
Madrid	Narciso de Heredia
Malaga	Duncan & Shaw

Maracaybo	Don Diego de Alegria
Marseilles	Pierre Collique et. Co.
Puerto Cabello	Don Juan Torres
San Sebastian	Don Fermin de Ayscorbe
San Sebastian	Yarza y Olozaga
Valencia	Don Vicente Jaudenes
Valencia	Mr. Tappen, Danish Consul
Vigo	Don Buenaventura Marco del Pont

Source: Don Juan Stoughton Collection, Baker Library, Harvard Business School, v.3, "Lista de correspondientes que me han prometido una parte de la comision que sacaren de los barcos que les fuesen consignados por mi recomendacion."