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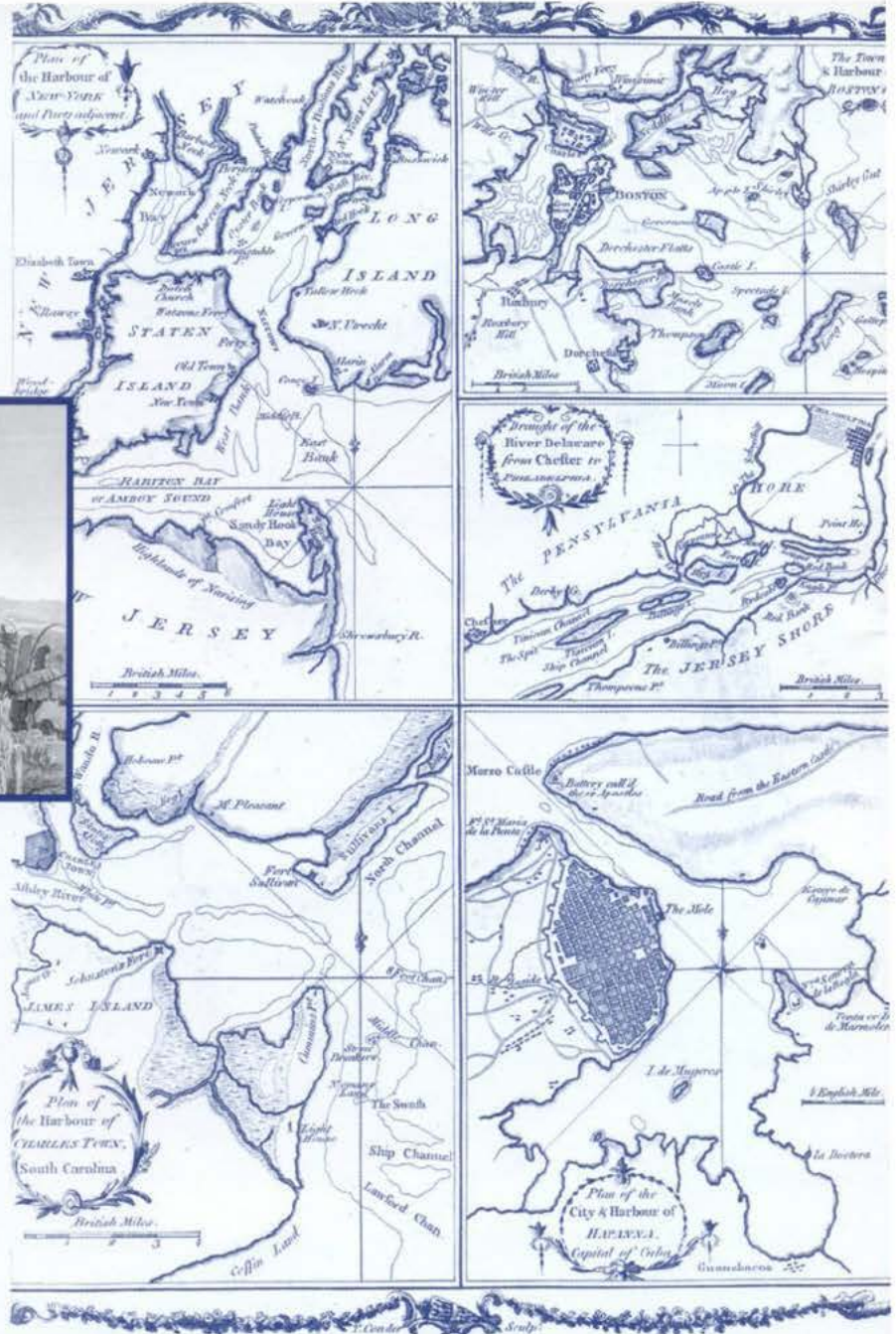
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"A View of the Harbour & City of the Havana, taken from the Hill near the Road Between La Regla & Guanavacoa," in *Scenographia Americana: or, A Collection of Views in North America and the West Indies* (London, 1768).

Right: "Various Plans and Draughts of Cities, Towns, Harbours &c drawn from the latest Authorities," from George Henry Millar, *The New and Universal System of Geography: Being a Complete History and Description of the Whole Modern World* (London, 1787). Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia.



Merchants and Diplomats: Philadelphia's Early Trade with Cuba

By Linda K. Salvucci

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When Valentín de Foronda, Spain's new consul-general for the United States, disembarked in Boston in 1802, he did not linger in New England. Instead, he made his way first to New York and then to Philadelphia, from where he decided to oversee the expanding network of Spanish officials stationed up and down the North American coast. In so doing, Foronda not only followed

in the footsteps of Bourbon predecessors, but also tacitly confirmed that U.S. trade with the Spanish Empire remained centered in the Pennsylvania port.

The strong commercial links between Philadelphia and Cuba, Spain's prized Caribbean colony, stretched back nearly a half century before Foronda's arrival. The origins remain murky, since a variety of

1762–1763: Anglo-American occupation of Havana

1776–1781: Trade contact between Philadelphia and Cuba intensifies during American Revolution

1779: Direct trade is legitimized between Philadelphia and Havana

1793: Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* is published in Spanish

mercantilist prohibitions on both sides discouraged British and Spanish colonists from trading directly with each other. Still, some intrepid ship captains, feigning shipwrecks or other maritime emergencies, smuggled mainland goods into Cuba that were officially destined for neighboring islands. Also, in times of crisis, Spanish ships were licensed to pick up cargoes of provisions on the mainland. While direct trade swelled during the Anglo-American occupation of Havana in 1762–1763, it was during the American Revolution that bilateral contact intensified and was eventually legalized. Cuba's white, free black, and slave populations were already growing, thus making it an attractive market for Pennsylvania foodstuffs. The wartime influx of some 12,000 additional Spanish troops increased demand in and around Havana even more. Some imperial administrators on the island remained wary of these imports, but most conceded that the swelling ranks of European soldiers, new immigrants, and permanent inhabitants needed to be fed. As the map published in London around 1782 indicates, administrators, traders, military men, and travelers around the Atlantic world already appreciated the burgeoning ties between Havana and Philadelphia, along with other American ports.

During the years of the Revolutionary War and early republic, American trade with Cuba was controlled and exploited by a tight circle of Spanish imperial

Right: Robert Morris (1734–1806). From a painting by Gilbert Stuart. Society Portrait Collection.



Bottom Right: John Leamy. Society Portrait Collection.



bureaucrats and merchants in Philadelphia who shared financial, religious, and family ties. On the American end, none other than Robert Morris, prominent Philadelphia merchant and superintendent of finance, quickly realized the opportunities for private and public gain in the late 1770s. Recognizing Cuba as an excellent substitute for British West Indian markets, Morris became the business partner of Juan de Miralles, sent by Charles III to “observe” the new American government. Produce- and mail-laden ships owned by Morris and Miralles were the first to sail from Philadelphia to Havana once direct trade was legitimized in 1779. Their early and successful ventures were cut short by Miralles’s death one year later; along with the observer’s subordinate, Francisco Rendón, Morris was named coexecutor of Miralles’s estate. Rendón, who previously had been posted in Havana, then extended lucrative provisions contracts for Spanish

troops in Cuba to Morris and several other merchants from Pennsylvania and Maryland.

The relationship was not one-sided. When the Spaniard’s remittances from home were late in arriving, Morris did not hesitate to offer funds to tide him over. An Irishman named John Leamy, who relocated to Philadelphia in the early 1780s after residing for several years in Spain, also delivered letters, luxury items, and money to Rendón.

Leamy soon emerged as the most prominent and favored “Philadelphian” to trade with ports in Spanish America, from Havana to the Rio de la Plata; he would do similar favors for well-placed contacts throughout the Spanish Empire at least until the 1820s, long after he had turned most of his attention to domestic enterprises.

Robert Morris had yet another interest in Havana. As an experienced trader with Spanish America, he knew that millions of pesos of Mexican silver flowed into Cuba each year under an imperial funding program known as the *situado*, or subvention. Thanks to war-induced blockades, even more specie than usual had accumulated in Havana. Superintendent Morris hoped to tap this enhanced supply for general circulation in the United States, strengthening the credit of the Bank of North America, and paying the Continental troops. He induced individuals such as John Barry and Oliver Pollock to deliver the specie to Philadelphia by allowing them to trade on their own accounts while carrying out his instructions for the public benefit. No wonder that Morris struggled mightily to keep Cuba open to

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1796: Manuel Torres arrives in Philadelphia
1811: Venezuela and Paraguay declare independence

1804: Haiti gains independence
1818: Chile declares independence

American trade once the war officially ended in 1783. But he left the scene abruptly shortly afterward when his business and political careers collapsed simultaneously. Pollock, meanwhile, engaged in reckless contraband activities, which not only derailed plans to have him appointed as the U.S. commercial agent in Havana, but also landed him in a Cuban prison until he was deported in 1785.

By then, Spain had decided to close the island once again to direct North American commerce. Policymakers in Madrid appear to have ignored two lengthy memoranda by Rendón that suggested a different course of action. The experienced Rendón rightly appreciated the commercial capacities of the newly independent nation. But, however prescient his economic analysis, Rendón nearly destroyed his career by living openly with the daughter of a Protestant merchant; he was recalled to Madrid in 1786. In any event, repression of the U.S.-Cuba trade was short-lived. Before the 1780s ended, Spain began to loosen its restrictions once again, as intensified sugar cultivation on the island heightened the need to import foodstuffs. Throughout the 1790s, it is no exaggeration to state that the American presence in the colony increased exponentially. Cuban importers and bakers expressed a strong preference for Philadelphia superfine flour, which persisted as the standard for quotation in prices current well into the 19th century.

For several more years, the rapidly expanding trade remained under the control of an elite network of Bourbon imperial bureaucrats and merchants based in Philadelphia who assiduously cultivated each other. The new Spanish minister plenipotentiary to the United States, a seasoned merchant from Bilbao named Diego de Gardoqui, had brought with him two assistants, Josef de Jáudenes and

Diego de Gardoqui, minister plenipotentiary from Spain. From a miniature by Francisco Goya y Lucientes. Stauffer Collection.



José Ignacio Viar, who were charged with dispensing trading permits to Cuba. They, in turn, were well attended to by American merchants who wanted the licenses; indeed, Jáudenes would later be accused of pocketing fees for the permits, which were supposed to be issued gratis. Moreover, Jáudenes lived in a house owned by Leamy and married the daughter of Leamy's long-time New York associate, John Stoughton. Gardoqui's successor, Carlos Martínez de Irujo (after 1802 the Marqués de Casa Irujo), married the teenaged Sally McKean, from a prominent Philadelphia merchant and political family. Other successful Philadelphia traders with Spanish America, such as

John Craig, already an in-law of the Olivers of Baltimore, had female relatives (in Craig's case, a sister) who were married to influential Spanish bureaucrats.

What made these brides so attractive to the Spaniards was the fact that they, unlike Rendón's intended, came from American families that openly practiced their Roman Catholic religion. In fact, it would be hard to overstate the importance of religion in

cementing personal and commercial relationships. The English-speaking diplomats and the Spanish-speaking traders dined together at City Tavern, to be sure, but they all worshiped regularly at St. Mary's as well, where the first three rows of pews were reserved for the Spanish legation. Viar, Leamy, Stephen Girard, and several other flour merchants also subscribed to St. Augustine's in 1796. Aspiring traders did not hesitate to use the offices of the church to gain entry into the tight circle of Spanish diplomats and Pennsylvania merchants. For example, Gardoqui had advanced the cause of John Carroll at the Vatican, and the American was subsequently named as the first Catholic bishop of the United States. Meanwhile, flour trader James Barry called upon Carroll to introduce him to Jáudenes and Viar. Barry and his brother later procured royal contracts to supply troops in the Spanish Caribbean and even became business partners of Casa Irujo in 1797. The Marqués, in turn, had rooted himself so firmly in Philadelphia that he resisted moving with other foreign diplomats to Washington in the early 1800s, a source of great consternation on the part of some American politicians.

If bonds of religion and marriage served to facilitate Philadelphia's early trade with Cuba, so did reliance upon male relatives who actually traveled to and resided for long



Top: Marqués de Casa Irujo. Lithograph from a painting by Gilbert Stuart. Society Portrait Collection.

Left: Sarah McKean, The Marchioness de Casa Irujo. Lithograph from a painting by Gilbert Stuart. Stauffer Collection.

1820: Spanish consulate is established in Philadelphia to help manage the growing sugar trade
1821: Mexico, Peru, and Central American states declare independence

stretches in Spanish imperial ports. Siblings of Leamy and the Stoughtons were on the scene in Havana to smooth the way in the 1790s and early 1800s. Notarial records in Havana note the death of Thomas Stoughton there in 1807, just as there are records of the terminal illness of Leamy's brother James in Cuba in 1798. The use of resident agents was an excellent strategy, since Bourbon

bureaucrats at different localities and levels sometimes worked at cross-purposes. A trading permit from Jáudenes and Viar did not always smooth the way once ships entered Havana harbor. Known and knowledgeable supercargoes had to be able to work the system at the point of arrival, just as they had to be trusted by the merchants back in Philadelphia. Interestingly, during this stage of the U.S.-Cuba trade, there was not much reliance upon Spanish or creole correspondents; they did not appear to possess the influence, inclination, or loyalty to guarantee successful outcomes. Nor were U.S. consuls stationed in Havana particularly effective in protecting the interests of American merchants in the early 1800s.

Agricultural foodstuffs and a few simple manufactures had been the backbone of the export trade from Philadelphia to Havana from its inception. In addition to the omnipresent flour, cargoes included pork products, wood (staves, planks, sugar boxes), tallow candles and soap, rice, footwear, fish, beef and dairy products, other grains, legumes, apples, beer, nails, and farm tools. In the tumultuous 1790s, when nearly constant warfare between Great Britain and France disrupted transatlantic trade, "neutral" American merchants



The Catholic Church of St. Mary, Philadelphia, c. 1830-1839.

supplied foreign colonies in the New World with an expanded list of re-exports from Europe as well. New York, Baltimore, Boston, and a number of smaller ports benefited from this new role, although well-established traders with Spanish America in the rival ports often cooperated with rather than competed against each other. Philadelphians, however, still enjoyed unparalleled opportunities for profit. John Leamy was involved in the transfer of well over \$100,000 of specie from Havana to Philadelphia in 1794 alone, while John Craig became spectacularly wealthy as a participant in the Ouvrard scheme, a multinational venture to move millions of pesos across the Atlantic. None other than Stephen Girard, whose activities extended all over the Atlantic world, turned his attention to Havana at the turn of the 19th century, and not just as a ready market for his exports. Girard's resident correspondent reported backlogs so severe that some traders had buried specie in the ground as they waited to be able to transport it off the island!

Dramatic increases in the sheer volume of trade meant that a larger number of mainland traders would try their hand in Cuba. Yet trade with the Spanish Caribbean was a

risky business for the inexperienced and the unconnected. The Boone Family Papers at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania offer sobering testimony to the requirements for success in the burgeoning Cuba trade. Jeremiah Boone regularly shipped flour and other provisions to most ports in the Caribbean for several decades after the American Revolution.

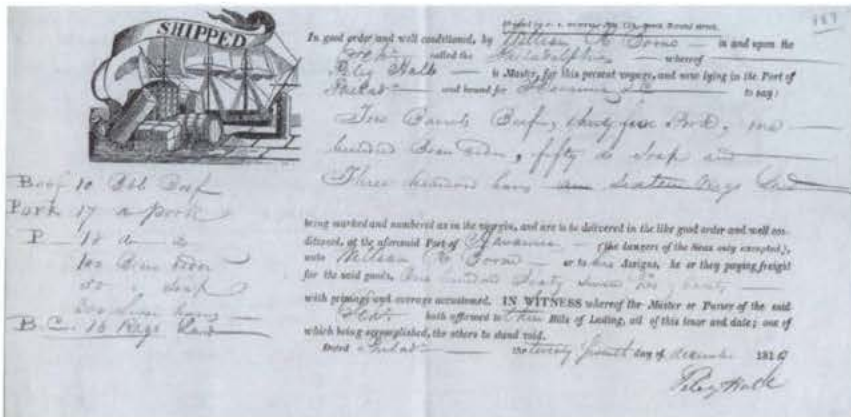
Like Leamy, Boone had arrived in Philadelphia, albeit from Berks County, in 1781; both labored to build up their respective businesses, but their methods of operation differed greatly. Leamy never lost sight of the need to cultivate his Bourbon imperial contacts, while Boone seems merely to have dispatched his merchandise to various Spanish and non-Spanish islands. His son William occasionally traveled as supercargo to Havana. While there, the younger Boone was not particularly effective. He openly

...trade with the Spanish Caribbean was a risky business for the inexperienced and the unconnected.

despised life in the lively port and complained about bureaucratic corruption in letters back to his father. There is no evidence that William was fluent in Spanish. More to the point, perhaps, the Boones were Quakers and Jeremiah was the author of an antislavery tract, making the slave society of Cuba an uncongenial environment. Without the cultural, family, and religious connections of the Philadelphians described above, father and son did

1822: An expedition to join Puerto Rican revolutionaries preparing to invade Puerto Rico is outfitted in Philadelphia

1823: Monroe Doctrine proclaims the United States' "sphere of influence" in the Americas



Bill of lading for schooner Philadelphia, bound from Philadelphia to Havana. Jeremiah Boone Papers.

much-enlarged group of Philadelphia merchants proved adept at exploiting opportunities in Cuba. But perhaps they collectively focused too much upon this market, while ignoring possibilities elsewhere. In the end, Cuba could not help but attract the vigorous attention of competitors in New York and other ports. New York, with its rapidly expanding hinterland and its regular ties to Great Britain and Europe, was particularly well positioned to displace Philadelphia as Cuba's predominant mainland trading partner as the mid-century approached. It appears that shifting predominance in the Cuba trade is a vital part of the story of Philadelphia's decline and New York's ascendancy. Yet we should also appreciate the fact that without the early activities of some Bourbon bureaucrats and a few Philadelphia merchants, the course of Cuban economic history and the history of the Atlantic world might have been very different indeed. ♦

first, Philadelphia maintained a strong presence in the U.S.-Cuba trade.

not fare well in the Havana market. In fact, the Boone merchant house went bankrupt three times.

The year 1807 marked the beginning of significant changes in the Philadelphia-Cuba trade. Jefferson's embargo curtailed the American neutral or carrying trade. More specifically, in a striking set of coincidences, John Craig died, John Leamy turned much of his attention to domestic business opportunities, and the Marqués de Casa Irujo was summoned home to Madrid. Valentín Foronda remained on the scene in Philadelphia a bit longer, but the feisty Basque could not function in the suave, if not self-serving, manner of his predecessors. He was convinced that the recent tidal wave of American shipments to Cuba, so carefully recorded in his correspondence, was inimical to the interests of Spain. He thus devoted himself to policing the trade rather than facilitating it. Foronda proved more irascible than charming and thus was ultimately ineffective in controlling the flow of goods southward and the profits of exchange northward. In any event, other factors negated the influence of one man's personality. By the end of the 1810s, Spain formally opened Cuba to free trade.

The "sugar revolution" in Cuba, which made it the richest colony in the world in the first half of the 19th century, worked to change once more the scope and substance of its trade with the United States. At

After 1815, flour prices in Philadelphia and Havana rose and fell together, suggesting for the first time an integrated market after years of war-induced fluctuations. Well into the 1820s, Havana often ranked as the leading Caribbean and sometimes top foreign destination overall for ships departing from Philadelphia; Santiago de Cuba often ranked within the top five as well. Ships laden with Pennsylvania produce also arrived in expanding outports, such as Matanzas, Nuevitas, Trinidad, and Baracoa. A

ON THE TRANSATLANTIC TRAIL OF JOHN LEAMY

He was the most prominent American trader with the Spanish Empire of his generation, but John Leamy's significance has eluded students of Philadelphia's postrevolutionary commerce. While his business records remain to be found in Pennsylvania archives, the scope of Leamy's activities emerges from dozens of documents preserved in Spain and Cuba. His numerous requests for trading licenses can be found at the Archivo General de Indias in Seville, while evidence of his extensive interactions with imperial bureaucrats is preserved at the Archivo Histórico Nacional in Madrid. References to his brother's final days in Havana come from the Archivo

Nacional de Cuba. Back in Philadelphia, the archives of the Insurance Company of North America yield useful information about Leamy's activities as a founding director of that company as well as his substantial shipping ventures. From the Ryan Archives of the Catholic Historical Society comes the amazing story of his bitter feud with Bishop Hogan in the 1820s; Leamy's will, which shows the scope of his domestic investments, is on file at the Philadelphia City Archives. Collections of Stoughton Papers at the New York Historical Society and the Baker Library of the Harvard University Business School shed additional light on his trading activities.

1823: Exiled Cuban priest settles in Philadelphia and founds *El Habanero*, Philadelphia's first Spanish-language newspaper

1825: Bolivia declares independence