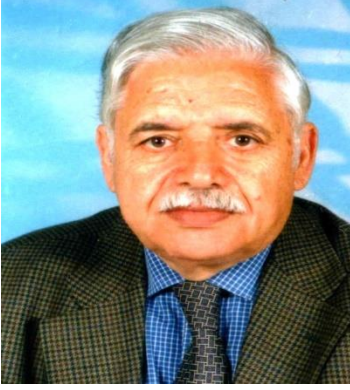


The First U.S. Peace Negotiator With Algiers:

Captain John Lamb: March 1786



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الملخص:

اعتبارا لمرور 224 سنة على اعتراف الجزائر باستقلال الولايات المتحدة (5 سبتمبر 1795) واليوم 5 سبتمبر 2019. ارتأيت تقديم هذا البحث الخاص بأول مبعوث أمريكي للبحث عن تحرير الأسرى الأمريكيين بالجزائر عام 1786، والذي كان عددهم 21 أسيرا، وعقد معاهدة سلام وصداقة بين البلدين غير أن الكونغرس لم يحسن الاختيار، صحيح أن المبعوث سبق له وأن عاش سنوات في المغرب وتعاطى تجارة البغال والحمير، أما هذه المرة فهو يتعامل مع البشر. أضف إلى ذلك أنه لا يعرف اللغتين الإسبانية والإيطالية ذات التخاطب في الجزائر والأدهى والأمر أنه كلف بدفع 200 دولار عن كل أسير وهو مبلغ غير معمول به في الجزائر أصلا مما صعب مهمته جدا. وتعتبر أمريكا منافس تجاري جديد للعالم القديم، خاصة في البحر المتوسط وهو ما جعل فرنسا وبريطانيا تقفان ضد التقارب الجزائري الأمريكي بل كانتا تحرضان الجزائر ضد أمريكا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: لامب، الكونغرس، جيفرسن، الجزائر، حسن باشا، الأسرى، أليكانت.

Abstract

The American captives in Algiers were unlikely participants in the Republic of Letters. Most were common seamen with little literary ability, and none had any experience in public affair. Furthermore, they were held in what they described as slavery, far from their homeland. Yet, despite confinement, distance, and lack of education, the Algerian captives manage to become active and, in some cases, shrew manipulators of public opinion .They wrote many letters home. More than ninety arrived in the United States or were delivered into the hands of Americans abroad, probably hundreds more were sent but subsequently lost .These letters and their authors did much to shape the way the American public thought about Algiers and their country's place in the world.

Key words :

Lamb, Congress, prisoners, Jefferson, Adams, Algiers, Hassan Pasha, ransom, Randall, Barbary, captives, Alicante.

(Lawrence A. Peskin , Captives and Countrymen: Barbary Slavery and the American Public.1785-1816. Pp. 24; 96-98.

There were two John Lambs of the Revolutionary Generation.

New Yorker John Lamb, a prominent member of the sons of Liberty, is well known to historians. However, another John Lamb, a sea captain from Connecticut, served as an American agent to Algiers in the 1780's. The existence of two public men with the same name has confused some of their contemporaries and most subsequent historians. Pauline Maier, for example, wrote that the New Yorker had been a sea captain; Frederick W. Marks III attributed the Algiers mission to him also. Indeed there are ample grounds for confusion. Both men were called captain at various times, for the son of Liberty had been a captain of artillery before his promotion during the Revolution.

To make matters worse, the New Yorker moved his family to Connecticut during the war years. This note will attempt to end the prevailing confusion by delineating the careers of the two John Lambs. It will also shed some overdue light on the public career of American diplomatic agent John Lamb who was stood too long in the shadow of his more famous namesake. **p301. Philip ranlet; William Kirk woolery, The Relations of Thomas Jefferson to American Foreign Policy: 1783-1793. Baltompo; The Johns Hopkins Press, 1927. IX, pp.25-28.**

American Negotiations with Algiers during the operation of the Articles of Confederation represent a peculiar and little known phase of American diplomatic history. Peculiar because of the strange method by which the American agents were appointed. Executive agents have been no novelty in American diplomacy- but rarely has an American agent carried on an important negotiation without credentials from his government. In 1785 The supreme power in the United States, relative to foreign affairs, was vested in the Congress. John Lamb held his commission not from that body, but from the American ministers in Europe.

In 1784 Congress authorized the American ministers in Europe to negotiate peace with North African States. A year later Congress placed eighty thousand dollars at their disposal (2) At first Franklin and his colleagues did little toward carrying out the resolution of Congress relative to Algiers. They were busy establishing peaceful and commercial relations with European Nations. However,

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in March, 1785, John Adams sought the advice of the French Court. He explained to the Comte de Vergennes, French Minister of foreign Affairs, that the American ministers had full powers to deal with the North African powers, but that they could not possibly come here in person.

He asked de Vergennes if they should invite Morocco to send a representative to Paris. De Vergennes advised against it. He told Adams that America would have to pay all the expenses of the voyage as well as the maintenance of the agent in Paris; it would be more costly than to send an American consul. (3)

While the American ministers were deliberating they received word from John Jay, Secretary for Foreign Affairs in New York, that Congress was sending them additional instructions and papers relative to North African States, John Lamb, who was to bring the documents across the Atlantic , did not arrive immediately. Adams feared he had been captured by the Algerians (4) In the meantime the situation relative to Algiers changed completely. Spain made tentative peace with the Dey of Algiers and Algerian war vessels were permitted to pass Gibraltar. William Carmichael wrote to Jefferson from Cadis, July 18, 1785, that “I am alarmed on account of the Algerians. Their peace with Spain has opened a large field to their piracies.”⁵ Carmichael had substantial cause for alarm, as was subsequently borne out: on July 25, 1785, an Algerian xebec captured the schooner “Maria” of Boston three miles southeast of Cape St. Vincent, off the coast of Portugal, and on July 30 the “Dauphin” of Philadelphia was captured. The crews were imprisoned in Algiers. Adams wrote to Jay apprising him of the new development: “There will be captives to redeem, as well as treaties to form.”⁶

By 1785, even before the first captures, American negotiators were making their way to both Morocco and Algiers in an effort to keep the Mediterranean trade open to the new nation. Unfortunately, the agent to Algiers, Captain John Lamb, did not arrive until after the captures. Thus he was faced with an unexpected double task: negotiating a peace treaty and redeeming the prisoners. Still, newspapers expressed some hope. A correspondent in Madrid wrote that Lamb and his secretary, Paul R. Randall, had arrived there in March and had succeeded in gaining strong Spanish backing before making their way across the Mediterranean to Algiers. Similarly, a correspondent from New York conveyed news from Morocco, which, he believed, “gives reason to hope that the negotiations with Morocco and Algiers will issue successfully for the United States.”¹ (303) **The**

Lessons

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While negotiations in Morocco did proceed successfully, hopes for Algiers were short-lived. The same day that it printed the optimistic New Yorker's report, the *Boston Gazette* also published the disquieting rumor that redemption of the twenty-one Americans in Algiers would cost more than \$27,528, over a third of the total sum allocated by Congress to negotiate peace treaties with all three North African Powers. Attaining peace with Algiers would cost a great deal more in the form of tribute. Adams and Jefferson instructed Lamb to ransom the prisoners if he could do so without paying more than two hundred dollars per man (i) **Despatches, Algiers, III, Richard O'Brien to Wm. Carmichael, July 11, 1785**) He was not to conclude this transactions without the approval of the prisoners, each one of whom was required to make himself "answerable for his own redemption" in case Congress should require it. (2) **Corr. of J. L. Cathcart to Jefferson to O'Brien, Nov. 4, 1785.; Ray W. Irwin, The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with the Barbary Powers: 1776-1816. Chpel Hill, the University of North Carolina Press, 1931. Pp.37-40.; H.G. Barnby, The Prisoners of Algiers, London, Oxford University Press, 1966. Pp. 71-76, 79-83, 93-96.; Allison, Robert J., The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815. Harvard university, 1992.p.93.**

In diplomatic circles the situation looked even worse. Early success in Morocco did engender some enthusiasm, which occasionally found its way into the newspapers. Lamb himself confidently wrote foreign secretary John Jay, "I do not believe that the Algerians will refuse a treaty, but I cannot say at what price until I am there."

Even before this fiasco there had been questions about Lamb's fitness. His qualifications for the job were unclear, beyond the fact that this Connecticut Yankee apparently had spent several years in Morocco, where he may have been a horse and mule trader. **P.304 According** to James Monroe, the committee on foreign affairs had recommended against Lamb's appointment despite support for his candidacy from Jay and Samuel Huntington, former president of Congress. Congress ignored the committee's recommendation, much to Monroe's dismay. Lamb was, Monroe wrote Jefferson soon after the appointment, "from his station in life and probable talents, by no means worthy of such a trust."

Many Americans blamed Congress for this disaster. In early 1786 a Charlestonian speculated: "Perhaps Congress had not been as alert in this business as they should: for certain it is, that a long period has now elapse and nothing been

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done.” In a widely published newspaper article, a New Yorker complained that problems in the Mediterranean resulted from Congress’s feebleness. “The union of thirteen states is much too weak, even to combat the machinations of any petty Prince, however contemptible, who shall chuse to insult the American flag.” Not only was Congress physically weak, it was also fiscal frail. This impecuniousness made a resolution of the Mediterranean issue impossible, according to one New Yorker who wrote, “There is not in my opinion, any possibility of peace with the Barbary powers. Congress are destitute of that which alone can obtain it.” **(Evening Gazette, 15 Feb.1786,2. Lawrence A. Peskin, The Lessons of Independence.p.306**

When Jefferson and Adams assigned Barclay a representative to Morocco in 1787, John Lamb was sent to negotiate with the Dey of Algiers, Lamb over many years. He proved a poor ambassador. Handicapped by his inability to speak either Spanish or Italian, his mission was a complete failure. The anti-American policies of France and Great Britain, which were concerned over American trade competition in the Mediterranean, were an important contributing factor. Through their encouragement the De set received the post because of his commercial relations with North Africa the price for the ransom of the prisoners at \$2,800 per man, while Lamb had been authorized to offer only \$200 by the Congress

Neither Jefferson nor Adams considered Lamb as a proper emissary and they were not surprised at his failure. The exorbitant demands of the Dey, however, gave cause for concern. The sum stipulated was much higher than that usually demanded and the American ministers were especially fearful that, if paid, it would set a precedent which would be detrimental to American interests. **(James G. Lydon , Thomas Jefferson and Mathurins. In Catholic Historical Review, Vol. 49(April 1963):p.193**

Because Congress did not provide strong leadership to guide the peace commissioners in their efforts to secure peace with the North African powers, Adams and Jefferson had to act alone. After they received word that been captured. **(Gary E. Wilson, The First American Hostages in Moslem Nations , in the American Neptune. 41, 1981, pp.218; Ray W. Irwin, The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with the Barbary Powers: 1776-1816.Chapel Hill; The university of North Carolina Press,1931. pp.37-40.**

“It has been a fixed principle with the Congress to establish the rate of ransom of American captives with the Barbary States at as low a point as possible,

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that it may not be the interest of those States to go in quest of our Citizens in preference to those of other countries.”(Ibid. p. 193-94.

John Lamb was a sea captain of Norwich , Connecticut .7 On 9 February , 1785, he had sent a petition to Congress offering his services in the negotiations with North African Powers, with which states he had had an”intercourse of five years.”8 He presented Congress with substantial recommendations from Samuel Huntington, former President of Congress, and from Matthew Griswold, Governor of Connecticut.9 Secretary Jay reported to Congress on February 10, 1785, that because of Lamb’s recommendations” there is Reason to entertain a very advantageous opinion of his character.”10 Jay’s report was accepted and Congress authorized the American ministers in Europe to delegate their powers to negotiate with North African states, if unable to attend to the matter in person.”11 Congress obviously thought Lamb suitable for such an appointment, but issued no commission, as Jefferson wrote to Adams, because “they apprehend might interfere with measures actually taken by us.” 12

Upon Lamb’s arrival in Paris on September 18, 1785, Jefferson talked with him and read his recommendations. Because of the strength of these and the fact that Lamb had followed the North African trade for many years, Jefferson proposed to Adams Lamb’s appointment to Algiers. “He seems not deficient, as for as I can see, and the footing on which he comes, must furnish a presumption for what we do not see. We must say the same as to his integrityas it is impossible for us to judge of it ourselves. Yet it will be our duty to use such reasonable cautions as are in our power.” Two such precautions occurred to Jefferson: First, to send with Lamb a trusted clerk, known them, who would be “capable of assisting and attending to his proceedings, and who, in case he thought anything was going amiss, might give us information.” Second, not to give Lamb credit with the customary American financial agents in Europe, but to instruct lamb to draw all drafts upon Adams ay London, which would enable Adams “to check them, If you are sensible of any abuse.” 13

Adams agreed to Jefferson’s suggestions. Paul R. Randall was designated to attend Lamb as his clerk. October 5, 1785, Adams made out commissions, which he sealed and signed, and forwarded them to Jefferson for his seal and signature. 14 The two ministers also issued detailed instructions for guidance of the agents. The whole expense of the treaty with Algiers was not to exceed forty thousand dollars. Supplementary instructions were provided Lamb for redeeming the

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American hostages in Algiers. Since news of the captures had not reached Congress before Lamb's departure from America, Adams and Jefferson had no word to guide them. On their own responsibility, however, they authorized Lamb to offer \$200 a head for the captives. In negotiating for such release Lamb was instructed to consider yourself as acting for the masters of the vessels, as well as for the United States, and you will agree to no terms which they shall not approve. You will take from them their obligations , each for his crew separately, binding themselves and their owners to indemnify the United States for the moneys which shall be paid for their redemption, subsistence , transportation to their own country , and other charges incurred, if the Congress shall be of opinion that such indemnification shall be required.”¹⁶

Thus equipped, Lamb proceeded to Spain, where he lingered many long months. Soon Adams began to fume at the delay, and to share Jefferson's distrust of Lamb. “This Gentleman's motions are slow,” he wrote to Jay, February 16, 1786. “What can have detained him so long, I know not. . . . since the appointment was made, and became irrevocable , I heard such opinions and reports of him as have astonished me.” The reports of the clerk did not allay Adams' fears. From Barcelona Randall wrote, February 17, 1786, to express a similar lack of confidence in Lamb.¹⁷ In addition Adam shad other reasons for anticipating failure for the mission. It was customary for the European powers to send armed vessels to North African powers with their agents. “Mr. Barclay and Mr. Lamb are armed only with their innocence and the olive branch.”¹⁸

Lamb reached Barcelona on February 17, 1786. Unable to procure passage across the Mediterranean, he purchased a vessel of about fifty tons, and sailed for Algiers on March 11, using the Spanish flag for protection. When he arrived at Algiers, March 25, the Dey granted permission to land only upon the request of the Spanish representative .¹⁹

“On the 25th of March 1786 John Lamb, Esq., Ambassador Plenipotentiary from the United States of America, and Mr. Randall, secretary, arrived at Algiers in a Spanish Brig commanded by the Capt. Basilini. He was recommended by the Count Expilley, his Catholic Majesty's Ambassador and Monsieur du Kersey, his Christian Majesty's Consul General, and Mr. John Woulfe a British Merchant, who had long been in Barbary and was perfectly acquainted with the manner of conducting business in those Regencies. It is worthy of remark that this Cosmopolitan Ambassador was recommended to the agents of the nations whose

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interests were exactly opposite, and probably did not combine in any one article except preventing the United States of America from obtaining a peace with the (piratical) states of Barbary; France had for a number of years monopolized the whole trade of the Barbary states, and had established several factories on their coasts, and, by the intrigues of the African Company and Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles, and her agents, had, in a great measure, impeded the success of the different Armados sent against Algiers by the Spaniards and their confederates. So sensible were they of the advantages arising from an undivided commerce that exclusive of the stipulation paid for the monopoly of several important articles of trade **the captive, p.33.** and occasional presents made by that government to the Dey and grandees, that of their own free will and accord, they presented annually considerable presents of sweetmeats, dried and preserved fruits, comfits, marmalades, pickles, anchovies, olives, catsup, liquor, capilier, orgeat, chestnuts, apples, pears and every other nick-nack that Frenchman can invent or procure to tender himself acceptable. This present generally arrived in December, and latterly custom had so established their expectations that if it did not come in time they demanded it as a right, and annoyed the Consuls continually until it was distributed. This may serve to show how pernicious any innovations are on established customs, and how much to blame the Consuls are to make presents. In order to obtain permission to load a cargo of wheat when they deliver their consular or be-annual presents. If they give a more valuable watch or snuff box than usual the next presents must be as good at least..." **the captives, pp. 33-34.**

Even before he had an audience with the Dey, Lamb became convinced that peace and redemption of the captives would require more money than his instructions permitted. Wishing to be rid of his too watchful clerk, Lamb sent Randall back to Spain on the pretext of carrying dispatches. To Jefferson, Lamb wrote, March 29, 1786, that "It is my duty to advice to abandon the undertaking, as it will be entirely in vain to persevere." 20 Randall left Algiers with reluctance within a week after arriving here. From Madrid he wrote to Jay, May 4, 1786, that Lamb had sent him away "repugnant to my inclinations." 21

Freed of his guardian clerk, Lamb his negotiations, in the course of which he had three audiences with the Dey. The latter refused to consider a treaty of peace, but expressed his willingness to accept ransom for the captives. For three captains the Dey asked \$6,000 apiece, for the two mates and two passengers, \$4,000 each,

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and for the fourteen sailors, \$1,400 each; with eleven per cent, added, according to custom, making a total of 59,496 Spanish milled dollars, a much greater ransom than the Dey had demanded from European nations. At the third audience the Dey lowered his demands to 48,300 Spanish milled dollars, but that sum was far beyond what Lamb could offer. 22

The American captives all said afterwards that it was generally understood in Algiers that Lamb had orally agreed to accept the Dey's final offer.²³ Whether true or not, there was certainly no written agreement to that effect. Cathcart, one of the captives, said that no one could have accomplished very much at that time, but that Lamb "was extremely illiterate and vulgar" and made a poor impression on Algerian officials and American captives alike.²⁴

The attitude of the European consuls toward the Lamb mission is somewhat conflicting. Lamb said that the Count d'Espilley, the Spanish agent, refused to aid him in the negotiations, beyond obtaining permission for him to land. Lamb found the French consul polite, and the British consul "received me as an old friend." The latter told him that he had no orders from London to interfere with the American attempt to make peace with Algiers.²⁵ Later d'Espilley told Carmichael in Madrid that after Lamb left Algiers the British consul had tried to persuade the Dey to seize Lamb's vessel, which had been loaned to d' Espilley. The Dey suggested that the consul attend to his own affairs. Carmichael thought that "the conduct of the British consul must arise from the Court, for their private characters are good, and they are men of liberal and humane principles."²⁶ Richard O'Brien, Captain of the "Dauphin." Wrote to Carmichael, June 24, 1790, that the Algerian foreign minister had told him the British, French and Spanish had all opposed granting peace to America.²⁷

Unable to make headway with the Dey, Lamb saw the principal minister, who told him nothing could be done until Spain had made a definitive peace with Algiers. He advised Lamb to go to Spain and wait there, and gave him a free pass to return to Algiers later.²⁸ Lamb thought the advice sound and acted upon it.

Jefferson promptly suggested to Adams, May 11, 1786, that instead of remaining in Spain, Lamb be sent to New York to report to Congress. That body could then determine their policy and if they wished to negotiate they could reappoint Lamb, or appoint a new agent, "according to the opinion they shall form on their examination."²⁹ Adams agreed to the plan and Jefferson wrote to Lamb, June 20, 1786, instructing him to report to Jefferson in Paris and then proceed to

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New York. It was necessary, he said, to refer the whole matter back to Congress, so they could decide “whether they will choose to buy a peace, to force one, or to do nothing.”³⁰ a few days later Adams and Jefferson addressed a joint letter to Lamb, June 29, 1786, reiterating Jefferson’s instructions, and informing Lamb that “we have “we have no further occasion for your services in Europe.”³¹

Lamb, however, remained in Spain. To Carmichael he reported that he had resigned his commission.³² He pleaded ill health for not obeying the instructions from Adams and Jefferson, whom he informed that it would take some time to collect his accounts.³³ Jefferson, becoming alarmed, wrote to Monroe that Lamb,” under the pretext of ill health, declines returning to Congress. Mr. Adams, or myself. This circumstance makes me fear some malversation.” ³⁴ Adams and Jefferson expressed their regrets to Lamb because of his poor health, but advised him firmly that it was “for your own interest, and that of the United States, that you should return to Congress for their further instructions as soon as possible.” If he would transmit his accounts, however, they would “adjust it, as far as lies in us, subject to the revision of Congress.” ³⁵ Lamb replied from Alicante, Spain, October 10, 1786, that “I am not able to take passage by sea or land; I have been confined these three months.”³⁶ Jefferson reported to Jay, December 31, 1786, that “I am not without fear that some misapplication of the public money, may enter into the causes of his declining to return. The moment that I saw a symptom of this in his conduct I wrote to Mr. Carmichael to stop any moneys, which he might have in the hands of his banker. I am still unable to judge whether he is guilty of this or not.”³⁷

As early as September 26, 1786, Congress had resolved that the commission and instructions issued to Lamb be “vacated and annulled.” Jay was instructed to direct Lamb “immediately to repair to New York.”³⁸ Adams and Jefferson forwarded the resolution to Lamb, and informed Jay that Lamb was responsible to Congress for £3,212 and 12 shillings of public money that he had drawn. ³⁹

Thomas Barclay, who had a general commission to settle the accounts of all American agents in Europe, read Lamb’s letters, and “on the perusal,” he reported, “it struck me that an interview with him might be attended with some desirable consequences.” Lamb had refused to go to Madrid to meet Barclay, pleading the state of his health. Desiring to avoid confusion and insure a meeting with Lamb, Barclay asked Jefferson to “point out to Mr. Lamb how convenient the opportunity will be for an adjustment of the accounts.”⁴⁰ Both Adams and Jefferson agreed to

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instruct Lamb to settle his accounts with Barclay. 41 In due time Barclay journeyed to Alicante for the day of reckoning with the ailing diplomat. He found that Lamb had gone to Minorca !42 Some months later Lamb wrote to Jefferson , from on board a vessel anchored in Alicante Bay , May 20, 1787, that “ I am exceedingly sorry that Mr. Barclay missed me , he writes me that he had authority to settle my accounts.”43 Lamb then sailed for America to make belated peace with Congress.

Although Jefferson had a deep and presumably well-founded distrust of Lamb’s abilities and of Lamb as a man, he did recognize that there existed a proper cause for the failure of the mission: “I am persuaded, “he wrote to Monroe, August 11, 1786, “that an angel sent on this business, and so much limited in his terms, could have done nothing.” Nevertheless, “should Congress propose to try the line of negotiation again, I think they will perceive that Lamb is not a proper agent.” 44 Both Jefferson and Adams agreed “ that Congress must begin by getting money.”45 In New York, Jay had also reached a diagnosis : “ I am not surprised , “ he wrote to Jefferson , July 14, 1786; “that our negotiations with Britain and Barbary are unpromising. To be respectable abroad, it is necessary to be so at home, and that will not be the case until our public faith acquires more confidence, and our Government more strength.”46

Little is known of diplomat Lamb’s early life. Judging from the poor grammar of several of his surviving letters, he apparently was not well educated. (4)

According to the records of the Stonington (Conn.) Historical Society, Lamb was born in 1740 and died in 1804 “in consequence of a wound received in a shipwreck off the coast of Spain.” He probably went to sea at an early age and, judging by his writings, was poorly educate. Huntington’s phrase “suffered much” may refer to Lamb’s having been captured by the British while captain of a privateer in 1778. He and the crew were sent to Halifax and may have been held there as POWs . Before that, Lamb had engaged in gunrunning for the colonists. He had sailed for Gibraltar in 1774 and arrived back in Boston in December 1777, after a three year absence, on a brig called the *IRISH GIMLET* with a cargo that included “17 brass cannon with other warlike stores for the Congress” that he had political connections is evident by Huntington’s letter and by his correspondence with

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William Samuel Johnson, a wealthy statesman and jurist from Connecticut who was a member of Congress. Parker, p. 246

Before the Revolution, he sailed several times to the Barbary Coast of Africa and lived here for a time. By 1774 he was commanding the merchant vessel *AMERICA*. In December of that year, Captain Lamb sailed to Gibraltar, only to be detained here after the start of hostilities at Lexington. Returning to America in December 1777 as captain of the merchant ship *IRISH GIMBLET*, Lamb brought seventeen cannon and military supplies for the patriots from the French island of Martinique. He probably continued such work throughout the war.

With the return of peace, Lamb decided to undertake a trading voyage to the Barbary Coast. Needing some form of protection for the trip. Lamb had to apply to the Continental Congress. He obtained recommendations from General Samuel Parsons, Samuel Huntington,(5) a former president of the Congress, and Benjamin Huntington, all of Connecticut, as well as Matthew Griswold, Governor of the state. Early in January 1785, however, Lamb learned that the United States wished to negotiate a 'treaty of amity and Commerce with the States of Barbary.' Therefore, on 9 February 1785 he volunteered his services in a petition to the Congress. Captain Lamb wrote that he could 'offer no other inducements to this trust than his zeal for the Service of the United States and his knowledge of the Country to which he desires to be sent....' He also presented his earlier recommendations from the Huntingtons and Griswold; they all praised Lamb's character and his trading abilities.⁶

On the strength of these letters and support from the Connecticut delegation, the Congress referred Lamb's petition to John Jay, the secretary for foreign affairs. Jay endorsed the appointment on 10 February and sent to the Congress a letter from Samuel Huntington to himself. In this letter, the only recommendation that specifically mentioned Lamb's intended diplomacy, Huntington again praised Lamb, calling him 'an enterprising Genius' who possessed an 'intrepid Spirit.' On 14 February the Congress referred the matter to Robert R. Livingston, James Monroe, and William Samuel Johnson of Connecticut, who also must have approved as the Congress accepted Lamb's petition the following day. ⁸

Only after Lamb's departure for Europe did Johnson learn anything negative about him. In April Jeremiah Wadsworth of Connecticut informed Johnson that 'some of the Gentlemen who wrote say it was only to recommend him for such a passport as Congress give to any of their subjects commanding American Vessels,

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and affect to ridicule (sic) Congress for spending a thought on Capt. Lamb as an ambassador... if there has been anything ridiculous in the transactions, it should light on the authors of it.

Captain John Lamb's foray into diplomacy failed abysmally.¹⁰ Although he left America in March 1785, he did not reach Paris until months after he was expected. This long delay caused John Adams to fear that Lamb had been captured by the Algerians. Upon his eventual arrival on 18 September, Adams and Jefferson ordered him to Algiers despite Adams's belief that only force could produce an Algerian peace treaty and the release of captured American sailors.¹¹

After landing at Algiers on 25 March 1786, Lamb's hopes were quickly dashed. The Dey, refusing to even consider a peace treaty with the United States, received Lamb only to discuss the ransom of twenty-one American prisoners. But the Dey, the best price Lamb could obtain for the Americans was \$59, 496, far beyond America's ability to pay. He had no choice but to write Adams and Jefferson, 'It is my Duty to advice to abandon the undertaking as it will be entirely in vain to parsivear.'¹² Adams and Jefferson considered the ransom 'infinitely beyond our powers.'¹³

Lamb faced a host of critics after his failure.¹⁴ Congressman Nathaniel Gorham of Massachusetts wrote that the Congress should have appointed 'a person of Reputation and Character directly from' Congress. Thomas Pinckney of South Carolina declared 'that Mr. Lamb ... is not sober man but of a Loose Character' (sic) unfit for 'diplomacy'.¹⁶ Even Stephen Mix Mitchell, a Congressman from Connecticut, referred to 'the blundering Talents of our Connecticut Man Mr. Lamb, and we have the mortification to see now and then a Shrug and Sneer at his Expense. I hope he will convince the world he is a Ram or at least an Old Sheep. The world speaks of him in a very contemptible Light.'

Inexperienced Captain Lamb had no success as a diplomat. The fault, however, was not entirely his. As John Adams observed "If Congress thought the original appointment of Lamb censurable they had reason".

Conclusion Trade from North America to southern Europe played an important role in the colonial economy in the period before 1775. With the blessing of Britain's mercantilist policy makers the Americans carried on a brisk business here, exchanging fish, grain, and rice for the wines and salt of Iberia and the Mediterranean. Following the War for Independence, the new United States

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became involved in a series of tortuous negotiations with the North African Powers in an attempt to reopen this area to American shipping.

Shortly after the signing of the peace treaty of Paris 1783, Jefferson was accredited as American Minister to France. His duties were complex and complicated. He and his associate, John Adams, who served in a like capacity at the court of St. James,' were responsible for the over-all direction of American relations with European states. In this, the era before the trans-Atlantic cable, their services were of immeasurable importance. The encouragement of trade and commerce were among innumerable duties they performed. Jefferson, more particularly, had the assignment of re-establishing the commercial connections with southern Europe. Trade to the Mediterranean area, so important in the pre-war era, now faced the threat of the attacks of the North African powers. The need to negotiate treaties of peace and amity with the rulers of this area was early recognized. Because of its constant financial embarrassments, however, the Confederation government moved slowly.

When Jefferson and Adams assigned Barclay as representative to Morocco in 1787, a certain John Lamb was sent to negotiate with the Dey of Algiers. Lamb received the post because of his commercial relations with North African over many years. He proved a poor ambassador. Handicapped by his inability to speak either Spanish or Italian, his mission was a complete failure. The anti-American policies of France and Great Britain, which were concerned over American trade competition in the Mediterranean, were an important contributing factor. Through their encouragement the Dey set the price for the ransom of the prisoners at \$2,800 per man, while Lamb had been authorized to offer only \$200 by the Congress. (James G. Lydon, Thomas Jefferson and Mathurins, in Catholic Historical Review, Vol. 49, (April 1963): 192-193.

NOTES:

- 1- Lawrence A. Peskin, Captives and Countrymen: Barbary slavery and the American Public 1785-1816. Pp.24, 96-98.
- 2- Philip Ranlet, The Two John Lambs of the Revolutionary Generation, Americana Neptune.42. 1982.P. 301.
- 3-Frank E. Ross, The Mission of John Lamb to Algiers 1785-1786. Americana , July 1934.

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4- Journals of the Continental Congress, May 7, 1784; February 14, 1785.

5- Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States of America, 1783-89.

Edition of 1833. II, 285, 288. Hereafter cited as “Diplomatic Correspondence”

6- C. F. Adams, “The Works of John Adams” vol. VIII (1833), pp. 253, 301.

7- “Diplomatic Correspondence.” II, 379.

8- The Works of John Adams,” VIII . 321.

9- Lawrence A. Peskin, The Lessons of Independence: How the Algerian Crisis Shaped Early American Identity. Diplomatic History, vol. 28, N°.3 (June 2004), p. 303.

10- Dispatches, Algiers, III, Richard O’Brien to William Carmichael, July 11, 1785.

11- Correspondence of James Leander Cathcart, to Jefferson to O’Brien, November 4, 1785. ; R. W. Irwin, The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with the Barbary Powers: 1776-1816. Chapel Hill, the University of North Carolina Press, 1931, pp. 37-40. H. G. Barnby, The Prisoners of Algiers, London , Oxford University Press, 1966. Pp.71-76, 79-83, 93-96.; Allison, Robert J., The United States and the Muslim World , 1776-1815. Harvard University, 1992, p.93.

12- Lawrence, p. 304.

13- Ibid., p.306, ; Evening Gazette , 15 February 1786, p. 2.

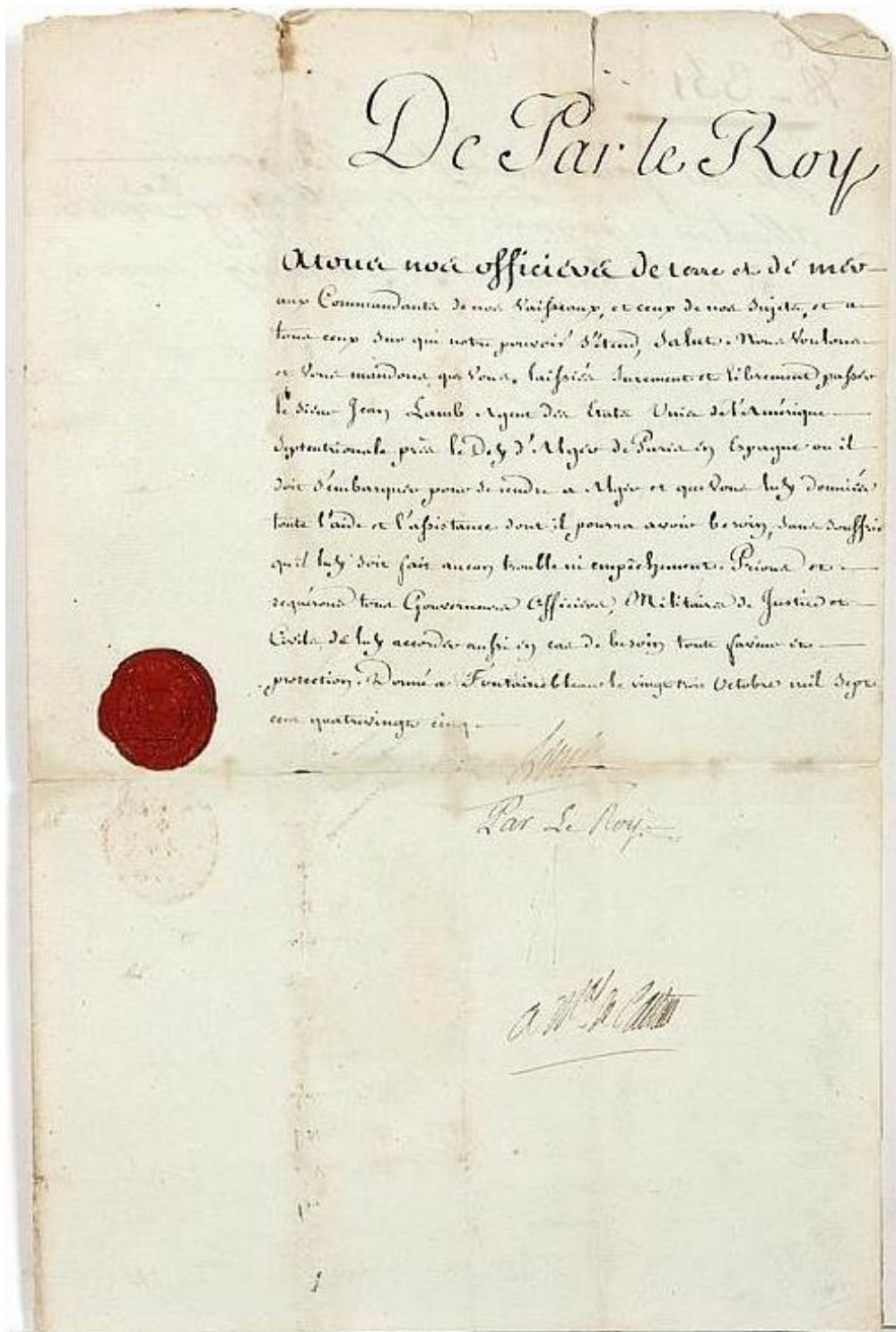
14- James G. Lydon, Thomas Jefferson and Mathurins. Catholic Historical Review, vol.

49(April 1963), p. 193.

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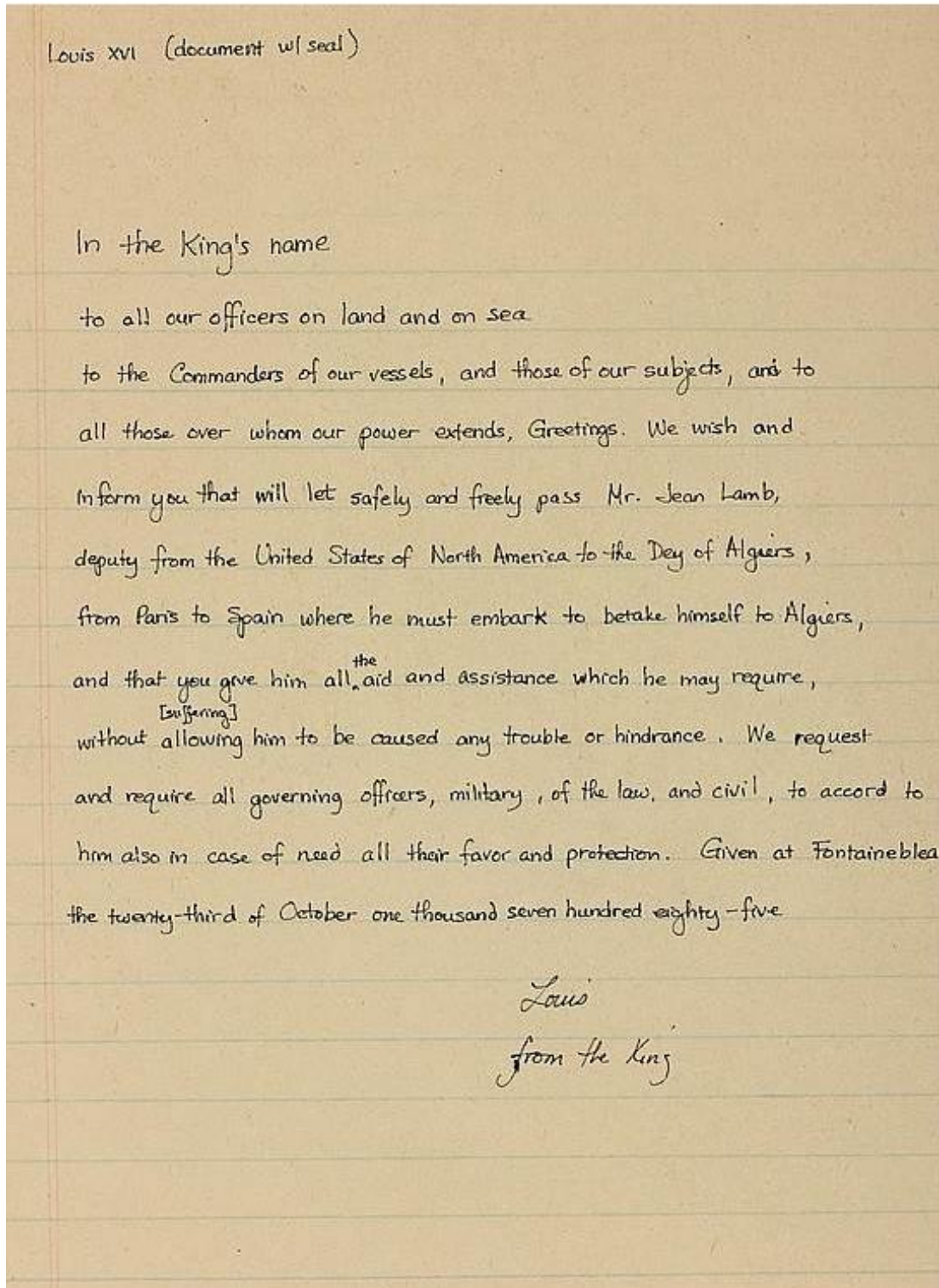
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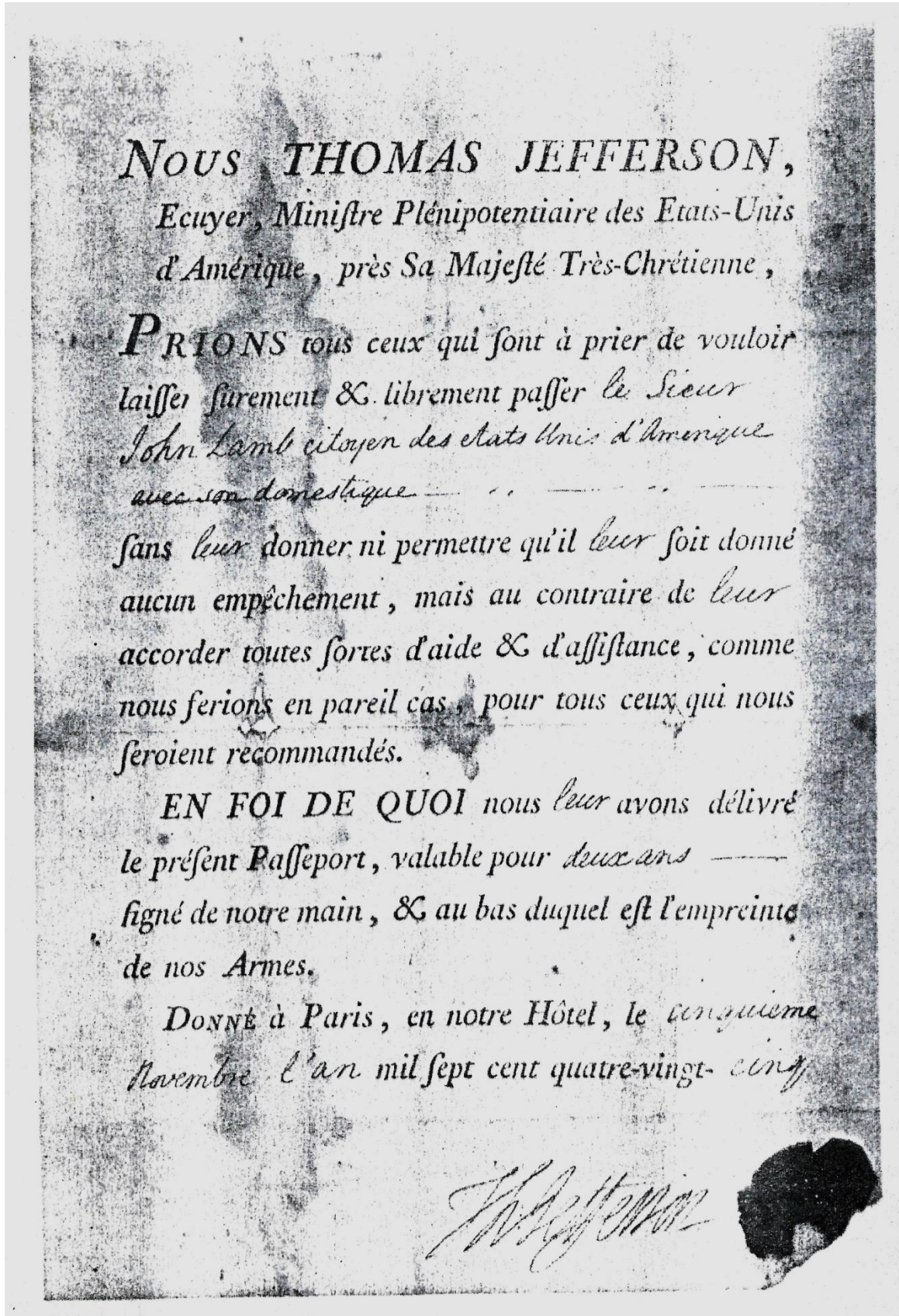
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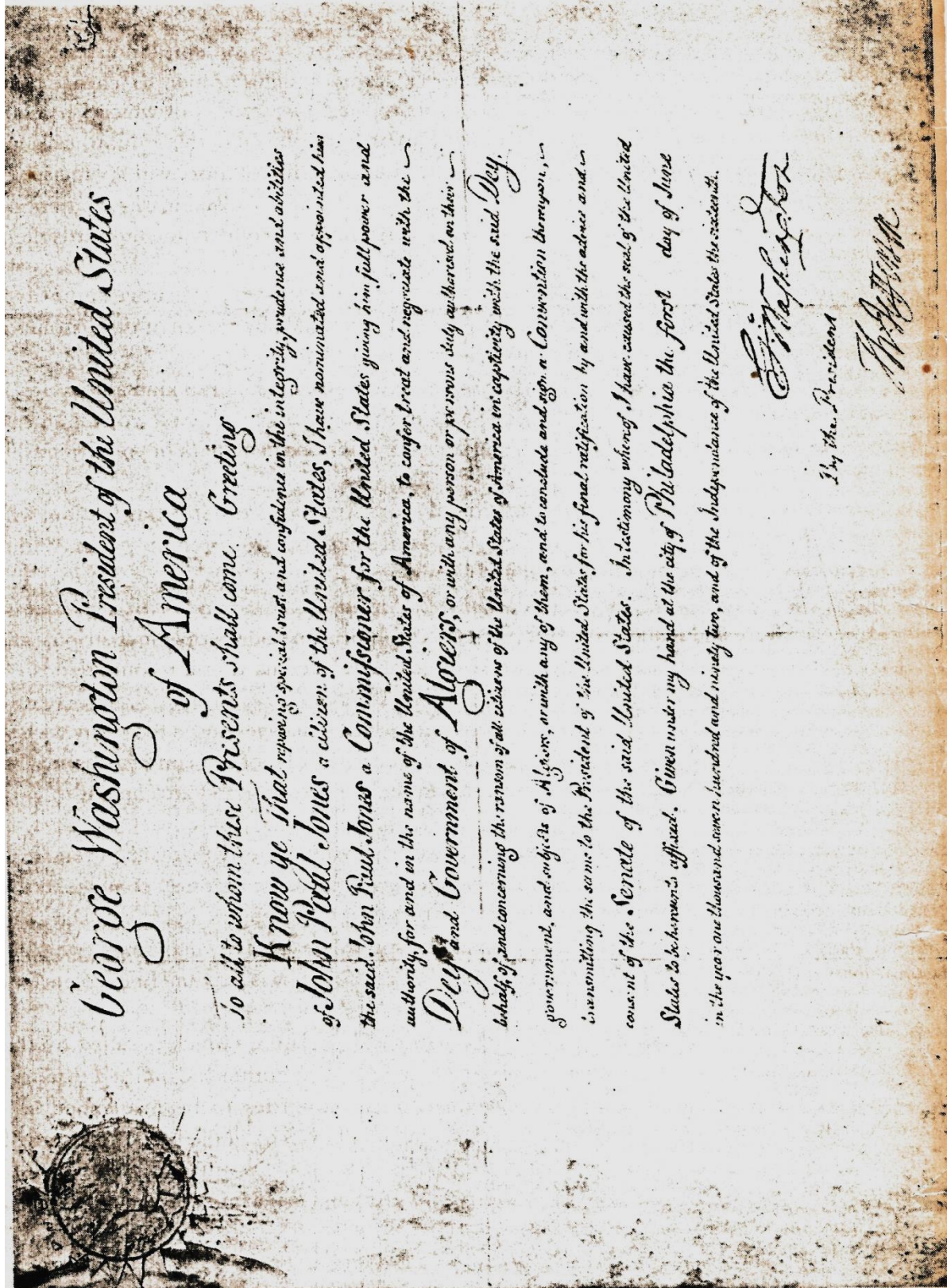
This passport was delivered by the French government to Captain John Lamb to come Algiers from Paris by Spain then Algiers, given at Fontainebleau on October 23, 1785. Signed by Louis xvi.

Passport for John Lamb. Paris, November 5th, 1785.

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3. John Paul Jones' Commission to the Dey of Algiers, June 1, 1792. Jones, who died in Paris on July 18, never received the Commission. Courtesy of the US Naval Academy Museum.

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