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United States, Department of State, War of 1812 Papers 1789-1815.

Finding Aid No. 692

(This was copied from the National Archives description at the beginning of the first reel M-1574).

In time of war the duties of the Department of State have always been expanded. During the War of 1812 an act of Congress (2 Stat. 759) authorized the Secretary of State to issue commissions of letters of marque and reprisal to private armed vessels permitting them to "cruise against the enemies of the United States". Owners of merchant vessels filed applications for the commissions with the State Department or with collectors of customs. Many collectors were allowed to issue to privateers commissions received in blank from the Department of State. The collectors often sent on to the Department the original applications and forwarded periodically abstracts of the commissions they had granted. During the war the Department also issued permits for aliens to leave the United States; and it received reports from U.S. marshals on aliens and prisoners of war in their districts, from collectors of customs and State Department agents on the impressment of seamen, and from the Department's "Secret Agent" on the movements of the British in the Chesapeake Bay area. The Department also had responsibility for negotiating the treaty at the end of the war. In this microcopy are reproduced the following series relating to these activities:

Reel M-1574 Letters Received Concerning Letters of Marque 1812-1814.

These letters were chiefly from collectors of customs, requesting blanks for commissions of letter of marque and acknowledging receipt of the blanks. Inclosed with many of the collectors' letters are the applications by privateers for the commissions and abstracts of the commissions issued. There are also applications for letters of marque made directly to the Secretary of State and a "strictly confidential" notice issued by Secretary of State James Monroe "by command of the President" establishing signals by which the U.S. privateers might "be able to know each other".

M-1574 Letters Received Regarding Enemy Aliens 1812-1814.

These letters were received by the Department of State from U.S. marshals, enemy aliens, and others regarding the status of aliens in the United States and the consideration of their cases by U.S. authorities. Many of the letters contain evidence, pleas or recommendations for the exemption of certain aliens from the regulations applicable to them.

M-1575-1576 Marshals' Returns of Enemy Aliens and Prisoners of War 1812-15.

These returns were made to the Department by U.S. marshals. The lists usually show for each alien his name, age, and occupation; the length and places of his residence in the United States; the names of members of his family; and the date of his application for naturalization.

Included are some receipts from the British Consul in Boston for prisoners turned over to him, some lists of prisoners of war delivered to marshals from U.S. ships, and a printed copy of The Case of Enemy Aliens 1813.

M-1577 Requests for Permission to Sail from the United States 1812-14.

These letters request permission for ships to sail from the United States with cargo and passengers.

M-1577 Passenger Lists of Vessels, 1812-14.

The lists are of persons authorized to sail from the United States. They show the name and nationality of each person and (in some cases) his occupation, age, date of arrival in the United States, complexion, and colour of hair and eyes. Most of the lists are for the port of Philadelphia and were received from U.S. marshals.

M-1578 Correspondence Regarding Passports. 1812-14.

This correspondence concerns the issuance of passports to permit departure from the United States.

M-1579 Agreements for the Exchange of Prisoners of War. 1812, 1813.

A copy of an agreement made at Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 28, 1812, between Great Britain and the United States for the exchange of naval prisoners; and a copy of the agreement as revised May 12, 1813.

M-1579 Miscellaneous Letters Received Concerning the Release of Prisoners 1812-15.

These letters were received by the President, the Secretary of State, and others from several sources--including the British Admiralty, private citizens and impressed seamen--concerning the release of the seamen and the exchange of prisoners of war.

M-1579 Reports of William Lambert, Secret Agent, 1813.

His reports to the Secretary of State concerned movements of the enemy in Maryland between Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River.

M-1579 Memorandum Regarding Proper Dress for a U.S. Minister.

The memorandum is a typed copy of a memorandum on dress, as fixed by the U.S. Mission to Ghent in November 1817.

M-1580 Miscellaneous Intercepted Correspondence 1789-1814.

This correspondence comprises (1) intercepted British military correspondence, July 16, 1812-September 10, 1813, with a list of papers; (2) correspondence of British military officers relating principally to Indian affairs on the U.S.-Canadian frontier, October 1789-October 1807; (3) intercepted correspondence of the British Foreign Office, July-November 1812; and (4) intercepted private letters, August 26, 1812-July 20, 1814. Within each of the four sections the letters are arranged chronologically.