Postscripts to the Voyage of the Merchant Ship United States

The journal of the Philadelphia-owned merchant ship United States, which was copiously kept by her surgeon, Dr. Thomas Redman, left unexplained one important question: Why a voyage which started for Canton, China, in 1784, wound up instead in the French colony of Pondicherry, India. When some twenty years ago, the journal was transcribed for this MAGAZINE from the original in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania the question was still unanswered. As the change of destination had its aftermath, including even the sale of the ship to pay off the crew, re-exploration of the story of the voyage of the United States reveals a number of interesting disclosures.

Quite definitely the owners had China in mind when Philip Moore, a Philadelphia merchant whose family had a half interest in ship and cargo, applied to the Continental Congress for a sea letter. At that time it was hoped that the United States would be the first vessel of American register to reach Canton, and Moore pointed out how much depended upon “the favourable or unfavourable Commencement of the Commerce.” Furthermore, as the Chinese emperor should be solicited to do business with a new entrant into the China trade only “by a Person who had a Publick Character given him,” Moore asked that his oldest son James, who was going out as super-cargo of the United States, be appointed consul or commercial agent at Canton.

Philip Moore’s memorial was read in Congress on December 18, 1783, and referred to a committee of three. The holiday season may

1 Samuel W. Woodhouse, Jr., ed., “Log and Journal of the Ship United States on a Voyage to China in 1784,” The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, LV (1931), 225–258. Hereafter this reference will be cited as Redman’s Journal, and will be quoted from the original manuscript.

have interfered with deliberations, or, perhaps, it took longer than might be expected to devise the amazing and superlative collection of adjectives and titles for the superscription of the proposed sea letter, which the committee laid before Congress on January 2, 1784. That superscription is worth perusing:

"Most Serene, Serene, Most Puissant, Puissant, High, Illustrious, Noble, Honorable, Venerable, Wise and Prudent Lords, Emperors, Kings, Republics, Princes, Dukes, Earls, Barons, Lords, Burgomasters, Schepens, Councillors, as also Judges, Officers, Justiciaries and Regents."

While the committee wished to see James Moore "prosper in his lawful affairs," it was unwilling to recommend his appointment as consul or commercial agent. It did, however, include a strong plea that the supercargo be received by all the above-mentioned dignitaries "with goodness," so that he could "transact his business where, and in what manner he shall judge proper."

Congress approved the committee report verbatim, and the first sea letter from the United States of America was issued the same day. It became the pattern for all subsequent ones, and was considered of sufficient significance to be printed a little later in the newspapers. Future sea letters, however, deleted the second reference to "Lords," and omitted "Schepens," probably because members of Congress had never heard of one.

The way was now paved for an early departure of the United States, but the elements interfered. Since the day after Christmas, all navigation in the Delaware had been halted by "one of the hardest winters that has been felt in this country these forty years," and before New Year's Day, the river "was froze over opposite this city." There had been a slight moderation on January 7, and several vessels were ready to take their departure, when a sudden return of cold weather again "bound up our navigation."

Icebound to her pier, the United States lost the opportunity to be first for "Far Cathay." The ship Empress of China, Captain John

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3 J. C. Fitzpatrick, ed., Journals of the Continental Congress, 1783-1785 (Washington, 1922-1933), XXV, 816; XXVI, 1, 2 (Dec. 18, 1783, and Jan. 2, 1784). This work is hereafter cited as Journal of Congress.

4 The Pennsylvania Packet and the Daily Advertiser, Mar. 6, 1784.


Green, whose sea letter had been issued by Congress on January 30, four weeks to the day after the one given the *United States*, had sailed from the port of New York on February 22, bound for Canton. Captain and crew of the *Empress of China*, according to a chronicler of the event, were, "with a becoming decency, elated on being considered the first instruments, in the hands of Providence, who have undertaken to extend the Commerce of the United States of America to that distant and to us unexplored country." 

Having lost the race, there is no indication from Dr. Redman's journal that the owners or Captain Thomas Bell, commander of the *United States*, showed any great desire to rush off in pursuit, hoping thus to overtake and pass the ship from New York. On March 13 the ice gave way, permitting a vessel from Amsterdam, which had laid at State Island through the winter, to come up to Philadelphia, and four days later navigation was proclaimed quite clear. The *United States*, however, was not entered at the Custom House as outward bound until March 22. Her owners specified her cargo in detail to Sharp Delany, collector of the port. It consisted, of course, of commodities desirable in a Far Eastern market: ginseng, to which the Oriental mind ascribed great medicinal qualities; claret, acceptable the world over; tobacco, equally in demand everywhere; and raisins, snuff, and sassafras, presumed to be much prized in the East Indies. Cordage, lead, and copper completed the shipment, all of which when stowed on board did not begin to fill the hold of the three-hundred-ton ship. Her destination on her clearance papers remained as before, "Canton in China." 

The Custom House entry gives but a partial list of her owners. Another document is more specific. The Moore family, consisting of Philip Moore, Sir George Moore, and James Moore, had a half interest. Mark Bird and James Wilson, prominent Philadelphians and listed as Bird and Wilson, held a quarter interest. The remaining

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quarter was divided equally among six men\textsuperscript{12}: Joshua Humphreys, Jr., the celebrated ship designer and builder; Dr. Joseph Redman, practicing physician in Market Street, between Fifth and Sixth, and either a brother or cousin of the ship's surgeon\textsuperscript{13}; John Redman, Philadelphia merchant, an uncle of the surgeon\textsuperscript{14}; James Hood, another merchant, who had held large shipping interests in the Revolutionary War just concluded\textsuperscript{15}; and Samuel Garrigues and Joseph Harrison, of whom the record is blank.

That these various owners left the handling of ship and cargo pretty much to Philip Moore is evident from Thomas Redman's journal. Of all of them, only Dr. Joseph Redman and Philip Moore visited the ship after Captain Bell took her down to Chester to avoid any further river freezes. Dr. Joseph Redman's visit can be attributed to kinship and a social farewell, rather than as an interested owner. Philip Moore came down with the supercargo, James Moore, on March 26, after the \textit{United States} had dropped below Chester to New Castle. Quite evidently his arrival on the eve of sailing was to issue last minute instructions. These must have included an order to stop at Funchal, on the Portuguese island of Madeira, for additional cargo. They could not, however, have contained any change in the destination, for Dr. Redman's journal, as he turned the page to enter their departure from Cape Henlopen on March 31, is inscribed across the top, "Ship United States Capt\textsuperscript{a} Thomas Bell Command\textsuperscript{b} Bound from Philad\textsuperscript{a} to China."\textsuperscript{16}

Of the Atlantic crossing, as related in the surgeon's journal, one event is worthy of additional comment. That is his and Midshipman Charles Willing's\textsuperscript{17} introduction to Neptunus Rex on April 17 at "the Sailors half way House." Neptune, who now comes aboard ship

\textsuperscript{12} Willing, Morris & Swanwick to Miers Fisher, June 19, 1786, Society Collection, HSP.

\textsuperscript{13} Francis White, \textit{The Philadelphia Directory} (Philadelphia, 1785), 59.

\textsuperscript{14} John Redman & Co. is listed as part owner of two letters-of-marque vessels in 1782. Papers of the Continental Congress, 196, ii, 64; xiii, 101. Relationship with Dr. Thomas Redman is indicated in the will of John Emery, Philadelphia merchant, Mar. 6, 1814, Will Book S, No. 69, Register of Wills Office, Philadelphia.

\textsuperscript{15} James Hood was part owner of five letters of marque, 1778 to 1782. Papers of the Continental Congress, 196, iii, 61; vi, 71; ix, 55, 62; xiii, 94.

\textsuperscript{16} Redman's Journal, Mar. 24, 26, and 28, 1784.

\textsuperscript{17} Charles Willing, born Apr. 7, 1766, was the oldest son of Thomas Willing, of Willing, Morris & Co. Bingham Papers, Miscellaneous, Genealogical Data, HSP.
to initiate landlubbers upon crossing the equator, or the international date line, was at that time a visitor when a vessel crossed the thirtieth parallel of longitude. These earlier ceremonies were of the roughest sort, and Redman and Willing, by buying their way across with a bottle of rum, apparently suffered no further indignity than "the usual Salts," a laxative being preferable to a wetting.\textsuperscript{18}

Madeira was discovered off in the southeast on the morning of April 27, and by evening the \textit{United States} had dropped anchor in Funchal roadstead. Within a half-hour the new American consul at Madeira, John Marston Pintard, came on board.\textsuperscript{19} Pintard, a nephew of a former president of the Continental Congress, Elias Boudinot of New Jersey,\textsuperscript{20} had been residing on the island for several years. His appointment as consul had been of recent date and under unusual circumstances. No commercial treaty as yet existed with Portugal, and Congress had been loath to appoint a consul until such a treaty was consummated.

At the close of the Revolutionary War, trade had been resumed with the island, but, under Portuguese regulations, no vessel could be cleared without a visa of an agent or consul. The governor of the island adopted the temporary expedient of sending for Pintard and giving him a commission to act in the character of agent for the United States of America. This appointment, however, could not solve a condition which today would come under the category of a racket. Madeira's greatest item of export, of course, was wine, and the British factory on the island regulated its price and attached a duty to be paid to the British consul for all shipments in British bottoms. The Portuguese governor received annually a certain sum from this duty. However, as a Congressional committee had learned, "under this pretext every merchant who ships in American bottoms charges the same duty and puts the money in his own pocket."

The only way to correct this was to appoint a consul, despite the lack of a treaty, and the committee recommending such an appointment further pointed out to an economy-minded Congress that "it

\textsuperscript{18} Redman's Journal, Apr. 17, 1784. For the origin and development of the Neptune ceremonies, see Leland P. Lovette, \textit{Naval Customs, Traditions and Usages} (Annapolis, 1939), 42-47.

\textsuperscript{19} Redman's Journal, Apr. 27, 1784.

\textsuperscript{20} Elias Boudinot to Benjamin Franklin, Aug. 23, 1783, Franklin Papers, XXIX, 97, American Philosophical Society (APS); Journal of Congress, Nov. 4, 1782.
can be done without expence or inconvenience." As Pintard was the man on the spot and already had the favor of the governor, his appointment was duly approved on October 31, 1783. While not expressed in the committee report in so many words, it can be inferred that the duty, which amounted to four hundred and sixty reis on each pipe of wine, would thereafter be paid to the new consul, who could reimburse the governor as did the British, and consider the balance as salary for services rendered.21

Captain Bell, Supercargo Moore, and Surgeon Redman went ashore on the morning following the consul's visit. Pintard steered them through customs, introduced them to the governor, and finally took them to his own residence, which was also the house of John Searle & Co., the island's foremost merchant.22 John Searle, the senior member of the firm, had recently died. Pintard had advised Benjamin Franklin of this demise, assuring the American Minister Plenipotentiary in France that the business would be continued as usual, and that he could strongly recommend the house to any French company "doing trade with the East."23 The consul introduced the three Americans to a Mr. Clark, who had succeeded the deceased John Searle as senior partner. The affable Mr. Clark, to quote Dr. Redman, "very politely made us an offer of their House & requested that we would look on ourselves at home during our stay on the Island, which we accordingly comply'd with, & were treated with the greatest attention."24

While this acceptance of the hospitality of John Searle & Co. would seem to commit the United States to that mercantile house for any additional cargo taken in at Funchal, it is most probable that this company had been recommended to both Captain Bell and the supercargo before the ship left Philadelphia. Its reputation was high in the United States because of the extreme attention it had paid to American prisoners carried into Madeira during the American Revolution.25 Also, it had, upon one occasion, stepped in and handled

22 Redman's Journal, Apr. 28, 1784.
23 John Marsden Pintard to Benjamin Franklin, May 16, 1784, Franklin Papers, XXXI, 177, APS.
24 Redman's Journal, Apr. 28, 1784.
25 Elias Boudinot to Benjamin Franklin, Aug. 23, 1783, Franklin Papers, XXIX, 97, APS.
most intelligently and sensibly the affairs of an American brig driven on shore near the island during a storm in 1780.26

Of the negotiations for a cargo, Dr. Redman is silent. After all, the mercantile aspects of the voyage were not in his province. His journal during the stay in Madeira, therefore, is filled rather with observations upon the customs of the country, along with a description of the palatial estate of the British consul, into which, more than a century in advance of the times, had been introduced an elaborate plumbing system, providing “both a Hot & cold Bath & a very fine Water Closet all in the same Room.” 27 So, while the young doctor explored the island, Captain Bell and the supercargo got down to business with Mr. Clark and John Marsden Pintard. The firm of John Searle & Co. could provide ample pipes of wine to complete the cargo of the United States, but had little confidence in its commanding its best price at Canton. Mr. Clark recommended instead the French colony of Pondicherry, where there would be a better appreciation of choice Madeira, and where, as that settlement had just been restored to France, there would be a dearth of the other items contained in the hold of the ship.

James Moore thought it over. With the Empress of China certain to reach Canton months in advance of them, there was no longer the opportunity of pioneering in the opening of the China trade. Also, since the Congress had not seen fit to appoint him consul, that incentive was gone. The final decision, therefore, was to accept the proposal of John Searle & Co., change their destination to Pondicherry, and take advantage of Mr. Clark’s offer to ship the wine on credit, and draw bills of exchange for £2,544.14 sterling on Philip Moore & Co., payable to Lewis Pintard of New York, at eighteen months’ sight. 28 The appearance of Lewis Pintard, a brother of John Marsden Pintard, as recipient for the draft payments would indicate that the American consul at Madeira had had his fingers in the transaction. 29

26 John de Neufville to Christopher Champion, Feb. 24, 1780, in Rhode Island Commerce, 1726–1800 (Boston, 1915), II, 86, a publication of the Massachusetts Historical Society.
27 Redman’s Journal, Apr. 29–May 11, 1784.
28 Willing, Morris & Swanwick to Miers Fisher, June 19, 1786, Society Collection, HSP.
29 Lewis Pintard served through the Revolutionary War in the unenviable and difficult position of agent for American prisoners in New York City.
That Dr. Redman was fully aware of the negotiations, even though his journal was silent on the subject, is apparent by his bold notation across the top of the page on May 11, when they cleared the port of Funchal: "Ship United States Cap' Tho Bell command' From Madeira bound to Pondicherry."  

From Madeira southward until they rounded Cape Agulhas at the southernmost tip of Africa, the weather, according to the surgeon, was favorable and the progress good. Redman states that "Our Passage thus far from Madeira has been vastly pleasant, so as to exceed our most sanguine expectations." Yet it had consumed seventy days. That was a considerable period of time when compared to the record made by the Empress of China over the same course two months earlier. From the crossing of the equator to off Cape Agulhas, the latter ship had required but thirty-three days; the United States took forty-one days to do it.

This was but the beginning. Once into the southernmost reaches of the Indian Ocean, Captain Bell showed an indecision, which is apparent from Redman's journal. They had intended, upon rounding Africa, to proceed northward through the Mozambique Channel between the east coast of Africa and the island of Madagascar, stopping to water at the island of Johanna, in the Comoro Islands, lying athwart the northern end of this inner channel. However, as the surgeon wrote on August 18, "since our turning the Cape the Wind being almost constantly a head & beating for 23 D (successively) to the Northward without any Effect, Cap Bell resolves to leave all Idea of going the inner passage but steers the Ship for the Isle of France."

Three days on this course, and, says Redman, "the Wind still proving unpropitious & being so far to the N. & E. Capn Bell determines to decline all thought of going to the Isle of France, tho we were short both of fresh Stock & Water, The Ship Steers direct for

30 Redman's Journal, May 11, 1784.
31 Ibid., July 21, 1784.
33 Redman's Journal, June 8-July 21, 1784.
34 Ibid., Aug. 18, 1784. The Isle of France is present-day Mauritius, lying some ten degrees east of Madagascar.
the E. Indies as the Season is Now far advanc’d & we must push to get into good Quarters before the Change of the Moon.”

In other words, altering the destination to Pondicherry had resulted in battling against head winds, uncertainty whether to take the inner or outer passage past Madagascar, and, finally, pursuit of the course which would have been largely theirs if the original intention for Canton had not been changed. Much time, consequently, had been lost.

So faulty was the navigation that instead of picking up the northern point of Sumatra, as had been hoped, the United States, on September 28, sighted that island just above the Strait of Sunda, which separates Sumatra from Java to the southward—a little matter of a thousand miles away from their objective! Redman’s explanation was that “having met with several strong currents lately we found ourselves further to the E.ward on making the Land than we expected.”

As a result, they had to work their way northwesterly off the Sumatra shore, having several narrow escapes from disaster amid the numerous smaller islands that dotted their course upon “this most perplexing coast,” as the surgeon termed it. From September 28 to November 16, they felt their way along. Then, “having been at Sea for 6 Months & several of our People lay’d up with the Scurvy all our fore mast men drooping,” Captain Bell decided to put into Achen, the present port of Koeta Radja, at the northwestern tip of Sumatra, for fresh stock and vegetables, and to “recruit our people.”

They lay in Achen roadstead from November 17 to December 9, and then cleared for Pondicherry. Running west by north across the Bay of Bengal, they reached their destination on the day after Christmas, 1784, “being exactly 9 Months & 1 Day from the Day we join’d the Ship at Chester until we cast anchor at Pondicherry.”

By contrast, the Empress of China had made the much longer voyage from Philadelphia to Canton in six months and eighteen days.

35 Redman’s Journal, Aug. 21, 1784.
36 Ibid., Sept. 28, 1784.
37 Ibid., Oct. 30, 1784.
38 Ibid., Nov. 7, 1784.
39 Ibid., Dec. 26, 1784.
The poor performance of the *United States*, even considering the season of the year, seems to reflect greatly upon the abilities of Thomas Bell, yet his previous reputation as a skilled mariner had been good. During the Revolution he had commanded a number of armed vessels, although three times he had been captured, which may or may not indicate a lack of seamanship in his inability to elude or outmaneuver the enemy. He actually opened and closed his war record as a British prisoner. The American Commissioners in France had given him a Continental commission in 1777, but it had never been certified by Congress. In fact, a recommendation to that body from the Agent of Marine, just about six months before he secured his berth as master of the *United States*, that Bell be formally commissioned, was rejected on July 16, 1783.

Perhaps much of his trouble lay with his first and second officers. The first mate, as we know from Redman’s journal, had several times been “much intoxicated with Liquors when on Duty.” The captain had reprimanded him repeatedly, and finally had sent him forward to do duty as a seaman. On arrival at Achen he was dismissed from the ship. The second officer was discharged at Pondicherry for reasons not given. The third mate, James McCall, had been advanced at Achen to second mate, and an able seaman, Thomas Hays, promoted to third mate. At Pondicherry, McCall moved up to chief officer, Hays became second mate, and another seaman, Henry Higgins, had been picked for third mate. The captain, therefore, had been handicapped, first, by inefficient officers, and, later, by inexperienced ones.

Surgeon Redman tells of the cordial reception at Pondicherry, which had just been restored to the French by the British, some two years after the treaty of peace which marked the close of the American Revolution. He speaks of “the greatest Demonstrations of Pleasure & satisfaction” expressed by the French governor, the Marquis de Bussy, at the arrival of the first American ship. He describes the appearance of the colony and relates its history. He

41 Thomas Bell was taken in the ship *Speedwell*, in December, 1776; in the ship *Luzerne*, in April, 1781; and in the ship *Rennet*, in November, 1782.
43 Redman’s Journal, Dec. 9, 1784.
44 “A List of Officers & Seamen on Board Ship United States, &c.,” *ibid.*
marvels at that beast of burden, the camel, commenting that, "except the Elephant, it is the ugliest animal in the World." But he says not a word about the discharge of the cargo of the United States, nor of what was shipped for the return voyage. 45

Pondicherry produced little for export except the lowly groundnut. The French, however, had established the settlement originally as a factory to tap the rich produce of India, so that its merchants could provide plenty in the way of articles desirable for the American trade —spices, Assam teas, and such delicate textiles as the famous shawls and linens of Cashmere. 46 Which of these commodities found their way into the hold, or in what quantities, is not evident, but a cargo was procured, and apparently a rich one. 47

Several weeks before the ship sailed for home, her crew witnessed the hoisting of the French flag at Pondicherry, a ceremony that had been delayed by a misunderstanding between the Marquis de Bussy and Lord George Macartney, governor of Madras. The unfortunate de Bussy, who, Redman tells us, could scarcely await the order to raise the lilies of France, died "with the Gout in his Stomach," five days before the event. The flag was flown at noon on February 1, 1785, and the United States saluted it with thirteen guns. Then, on February 22, the ship weighed anchor and proceeded homeward. 48

Crossing the Indian Ocean and rounding the southern end of Africa required fifteen weeks and two days. They sighted the Cape of Good Hope on May 26, but Captain Bell "did not mean to stop at the Cape." Perhaps they would have been better off if he had, for they were so beset by gales followed by head winds that they did not double the Cape until June 10. Even then, according to Redman, the captain was resolved to "push on either for the W. Indies or fore Philade," despite lack of fresh provisions and only six gallons of rum remaining. At that time, the "People all very hearty," the surgeon added. 49

46 "India, Economics," and "India, French," Encyclopaedia Britannica (Chicago, 1947), XII, 203A–204.
47 Willing, Morris & Swanwick to Miers Fisher, June 19, 1786, Society Collection, HSP.
48 Redman's Journal, Dec. 27, 1784-Feb. 3, 1785. Redman placed the departure from Pondicherry on Feb. 3; Captain Bell gave Feb. 22. By the surgeon's own later calculations, it is evident that the captain was right.
49 Redman's Journal, June 8-10, 1785.
Shortly thereafter, scurvy made its appearance and two seamen soon succumbed, one on June 15, and the second on July 6. In another week the last of the wine on board was served, the rum also having been expended. On July 15, when they crossed the equator, Redman reported that Captain Bell “means steering for the Island of Barbadoes as his People are almost all down with the Scurvy.” By the beginning of August another seamen had died, and on August 8 they sustained their greatest loss in the death of the boatswain, Charles Turner, who had been sickening under the disease for two months. To Bell, with all of his crew down with scurvy and all but one man incapable of duty, reaching Barbados became imperative. Fortunately, they were nearing that goal, and, on August 12, at noon, arrived before Bridgetown, the island’s capital, and entered Carlisle Bay, “our Ensign in the mizen Shrouds with the Union down as a mark of our Distress.”

They were two months and two days from the Cape of Good Hope, and five months and fifteen days from Pondicherry. Again the record, compared with that of the Empress of China, is not impressive. The latter ship had sailed from Canton to Philadelphia, including a five-day layover at Cape Town for refreshments, in four months and nineteen days. The United States had taken about a month longer, from the much nearer port of Pondicherry, to get only as far as Barbados.

A number of merchants and other inhabitants of Bridgetown, along with the collector of customs and the captain of a guard boat, came on board soon after the United States entered the bay. The merchants, knowing the temper of the British governor, were dubious whether the ship would be allowed to anchor. The officials, however, were of the opinion that she could stay in the harbor until the pleasure of the governor was obtained. So Captain Bell went ashore and called upon “his Excellency David Parry, Esq; Captain General, Governor and Commander in Chief of this Island, Chancellor Ordinary and Vice Admiral of the same.” Some courtesy might certainly be expected from one holding so many titles. Not so, with Parry!

50 Ibid., June 8 and 15; July 6, 13, and 15; Aug. 2, 8, and 12, 1785.
51 The Pennsylvania Packet and the Daily Advertiser, May 16, 1785; Samuel Shaw to John Jay, May 19, 1785, in Josiah Quincy, ed., The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw (Boston, 1847), 337-341.
52 Redman’s Journal, Aug. 12, 1785.
Instead of greeting the American shipmaster in person, he sent a Negro boy to demand the ship’s papers. Captain Bell complied, and the boy returned shortly with the governor’s orders for the ship to proceed immediately to sea. But the captain was not to be cowed. He demanded an audience, which Parry granted, but only after letting him kick his heels in idleness in the outer chamber for some time. When the governor entered, it was with a curt and cavalier:

“ Well, Sir, what do you want?”

Captain Bell explained courteously that he had put into Barbados in distress and desired protection for a few days to procure refreshments and a little water. Parry’s response was that unless the United States was under way by sundown, he would seize her. The captain kept his temper, pointing out how impossible it was to get to sea with hands not well enough to weigh anchor.

“Why didn’t you go to your friends the French?” Parry sneered. “You have thrown off the English and now you come to us for succor.”

Upon that unsatisfactory note the interview ended, and the captain returned on board to relate the situation to his officers. He then composed a petition which was delivered to the governor next morning. It set forth the reason he had come to Barbados, and humbly prayed his Excellency “to grant him leave to supply his said vessel with such necessaries as she may want, and to permit him to stay here with his said vessel some short time for that purpose, and for the purpose of recruiting his people who are now on board.”

That same morning Bell sent for an island notary, one Valentine Jones, who came on board to take a formal protest signed by the captain, his first officer, and Dr. Redman—a protest not against the governor for his treatment of them, but against the insurers and owners of the ship! From the text of this document, it is quite apparent that Bell was building his defense against any charges of mishandling the United States during the long voyage. It set forth that on August 5, having lost several of the crew and with the rest too sick to work the ship, and with water and provisions about gone, they were obliged, “for the preservation of their lives, and the safety of the vessel and cargo,” to bear away for Barbados. For these reasons, and at their request, Mr. Valentine Jones did “publicly and solemnly protest, as well against the circumstances aforesaid, as
against the insurers and owners of the said ship United States and the shippers of her cargo and all persons with them concerned, for all costs, losses, dangers, hurts, detriments, prejudices and inconveniences whatsoever arising to these appearers or any others with them concerned, for reason or means of the misfortune herein before mentioned." Surgeon Redman's journal makes no mention of this remarkable protest, although he does comment that Captain Bell petitioned the governor to remain longer in port.\textsuperscript{54}

Governor Parry's answer to the petition was not returned until five o'clock on the evening of August 13. It granted them forty-eight hours from the hour of their entering the port—twenty-nine of which had elapsed by then—and agreed that they could secure American seamen of which "there are, no doubt, sufficient to be found here." The reply was brought by the collector, who had been directed by the governor to examine the crew and take out all British subjects.\textsuperscript{55} Examination disclosed but one British seaman, who was removed. Bell, in the meanwhile, found and shipped five American hands.\textsuperscript{56} Fortunately, too, he had located a mercantile house, Hall & Oldton, which accepted his drafts on the owners and supplied the needed provisions. On Monday morning, August 15, having slightly over-stayed the time limit set by the governor and escorted until outside Carlisle Bay by an armed brig, the United States, as Redman sarcastically remarked, "left this hospitable Shore."\textsuperscript{57}

Even on the last lap from Barbados, they had their difficulties—a storm off Hatteras and constant northeasterly winds, which they bucked from Cape Charles to Cape Henlopen. By September 13, they were again short of water and the crew was put on allowance. To everyone's relief, however, a pilot boat found them that same day, and by midnight they were abreast of the lighthouse, rounding into Delaware Bay. At that point Surgeon Redman's journal ends, but not the story of the United States.\textsuperscript{58}

When the ship came up as far as Reedy Island, on September 14, Redman went ashore at Port Penn, Delaware, and posted up to

\textsuperscript{53} The Pennsylvania Packet and the Daily Advertiser, Sept. 28, 1785.
\textsuperscript{54} Redman's Journal, Aug. 13, 1785.
\textsuperscript{55} The Pennsylvania Packet and the Daily Advertiser, Sept. 28, 1785.
\textsuperscript{56} "A List of Officers & Seamen on Board Ship United States, &c.," Redman's Journal.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., Aug. 13-15, 1785.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., Sept. 1, 5, and 13, 1785.
Philadelphia. A newspaper editor interviewed him and printed a version of the affair at Barbados, which did not quite agree with the facts. According to this story, the governor, instead of granting the request to remain for a few days, "ordered the fort to fire on the ship, if Captain Bell did not proceed to sea in 48 hours," and, at the same time, "all the British subjects were ordered under arms." Redman disclaimed authorship in a card to the editor about ten days later, stating that "the circumstances there related are entirely different to those mentioned by me." Examination of the surgeons' journal, however, indicates that, in the first flush of excitement, Redman's story to the editor must have been pretty much as the latter told it. In the journal, the doctor stated that at one time in the conversation with Captain Bell, Governor Parry said he "had sent orders to the fort to fire on us if we were not under way before Sun down." Reference to the British subjects was probably a misunderstanding on the part of the editor. Redman no doubt had said that the British subjects were ordered under arrest, meaning, of course, the subjects on board the ship. Garbled interviews happened in those days, too.

Under an agreement among all the owners the cargo from Pondicherry was placed in the hands of the big mercantile house of Willing, Morris & Swanwick to be sold on commission, and the United States, upon arrival off the city, was moored to that firm's wharf for unloading. At that time it becomes evident that Philip Moore & Co. was in financial difficulties. Its interests were being handled by an attorney, and it was reported that an informal attachment had been laid by a creditor upon the portion of the cargo consigned to the Moore family.

Meanwhile, the crew of the United States found no one who would be responsible for the wages due after a voyage of about a year and seven months. Being unable to collect from individuals holding small shares in the venture, and with the Moores seemingly insolvent, Captain Bell libled against the ship in Admiralty Court. A writ was issued on October 1 by Francis Hopkinson, judge of the court, directing that the United States be sold by public auction at the


60 The Pennsylvania Packet and the Daily Advertiser, Sept. 28, 1785.

61 Redman's Journal, Aug. 12, 1785.

62 Willing, Morris & Swanwick to Miers Fisher, June 19, 1786, Society Collection, HSP.
Coffee House, on Wednesday noon, October 12. The writ specified that the ship was “being sold to pay the wages due to the seamen and marines thereof.” The sale was advertised, the *United States* being described as a ship of about three hundred tons burden, built in Philadelphia two years before, and well found in sails and materials.\(^{63}\)

The ship went under the hammer as advertised, but the sale failed to produce enough money to liquidate all the wages. Whereupon Captain Bell got in touch with seven of the owners, exclusive of the Moores, and obtained signatures to an order on Willing, Morris & Swanwick to pay the balance out of proceeds from the cargo. The signatories were James Wilson, for himself and Mark Bird, these two having a quarter interest jointly, and all but Dr. Joseph Redman of the six who held another quarter. Willing, Morris & Swanwick honored the order and paid the balance, believing that the cargo was just as liable as the ship “for the Captain’s and Seamen’s Wages.”

That concluded the interest of Captain Bell, Surgeon Redman, and all officers and men in the affairs of the *United States*, without recourse to the protest entered at Barbados, and without the necessity of defending their conduct in the prosecution of the voyage. The Barbados episode served as a red herring, so overshadowing all other phases of the venture that apparently no one thought to question why the voyage to Pondicherry had taken such an unconscionably long time and, therefore, had run up such large expenditures for wages and provisions.

The affairs of the *United States*, even then, were not terminated. More complications arose. The bills of exchange drawn by John Searle & Co., at Madeira, on Philip Moore & Co. became due in December, 1785, and Lewis Pintard presented them for payment. Such of the owners who were in Philadelphia at the time promptly signed an order on Willing, Morris & Swanwick to pay the bills out of receipts from cargo sales. The signatories were the ones who previously had endorsed Captain Bell’s order for wages.

After paying £500 sterling on the order—about one fifth of the total amount of the bills of exchange—Willing, Morris & Swanwick began to have qualms. Could the debt to John Searle & Co. be considered a proper deduction out of the proceeds of the cargo? And if they paid in full, would all the owners be liable jointly and severally

to them if the amount should not be considered a proper deduction? If John Searle & Co. and Lewis Pintard endorsed over to them the bills of exchange, would that be a sufficient pledge to secure Willing, Morris & Swanwick in paying the money out of cargo receipts?

All these queries arose because of the informal attachment laid by a Captain Craig upon the Moore family’s interest in the cargo. This might well be a cause for suspending the payment of the Searle order. It was too complex for lay minds. The harassed firm, which had accepted the sale on commission with no thought of the involvements which might ensue, hoped “that the debts of the Owners generally should be paid before any Individual can draw out his share and of Course before that Share can be attached.”

But since they could not be sure, they asked the opinion of their attorney. It was indeed a case for a Philadelphia lawyer, and it all grew out of that one change of destination—to Pondicherry instead of Canton.64 What finally happened is not disclosed. The disposition of the case of the cargo of the United States seems lost in the lapse of years.

64 Willing, Morris & Swanwick to Miers Fisher, June 19, 1786, Society Collection, HSP.