THE IMPACT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND NAPOLEON UPON THE UNITED STATES AS REVEALED BY THE FORTUNES OF THE CROWNINSHIELD FAMILY OF SALEM

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THE IMPACT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND NAPOLEON UPON THE UNITED STATES AS REVEALED BY THE FORTUNES OF THE CROWNINSHIELD FAMILY OF SALEM

AN ABSTRACT

By

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Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Michigan State College of Agricultural and Applied Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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The years between 1792 and 1815 were troubled years for Europe. The French Revolution had brought internal strife to France, which had spread rapidly until it involved the whole of Europe in revolution and war. Across the Atlantic the United States, enjoying the first fruits of independence, was in a position to be affected as a neutral power by conditions in Europe. The purpose of this study has been to trace the impact of those years in Europe upon the United States.

The vehicle for tracing this impact has been the Crowninshield family of Salem, Massachusetts. The Crowninshields were selected for this study because they were active and important in the two areas most apt to reflect European influences of that time - economics and politics. As major shipowners and merchant-captains they dealt directly with Europe throughout the years between 1793 and 1815. In the political field they provided a Jeffersonian Congressman and a Secretary of the Navy to the national scene and were also in the very center of the political hotbed of Salem.

Economically, the Crowninshields became significant as a result of commerce generated by European wars. Their commerce was regulated by European rulings. Decisions on neutral shipping from Paris and London made their shipping profitable or unprofitable, dangerous or safe, and even determined its destination. Crowninshield shipping closely parallels the general pattern shown by shipping statistics for the entire United States and therefore is illustrative of the impact of European events upon the commerce of the entire United States.

The Crowninshields prospered greatly during the war years between 1793 and 1801. This prosperity was interrupted by the Amiens peace, 1801-1803. With the renewal of war, American commercial prosperity again built up until the peak year was reached in 1807. The European powers began to enforce their restrictions on neutral shipping in the late summer of 1807, and with that enforcement, United States commerce quickly became too dangerous to continue. The American Embargo Act was passed in December, 1807.

Crowninshield experience places Jefferson's Embargo in a favorable light. The merchants of America had discovered the difficulty of coping with the European bans on commerce and had voluntarily restricted their shipping prior to the passage of the Embargo. When they rushed to sea after the lifting of the Embargo in 1809 they lost the wealth they had built up over the years.

This study further indicates that French measures and actions, which were less predictable and less honest in operation that those of the British, were the more harmful.

Politically, there is nothing to indicate any doctrinal influence of Europe on the Crowninshields or Salem. Names of French revolutionary groups provided terms used for vilification in Salem, but the Crowninshield papers do not indicate a doctrinal kinship between the "Jacobins" of Salem and their French namesakes. Those terms, however, served to intensify the differences between the two major political groups in Salem.

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Political differences were indigenous, based upon previous biases, rather than upon French Revolutionary doctrines.

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I wish to express my thanks to Professor John B. Harrison for his helpful suggestions and constructive criticism in both the research and writing done in the completion of this dissertation.

Chapter I

THE SETTING

In 1792 a series of wars which was to last twenty-three years broke out between France and Great Britain. This development of itself was not unique. The two powers had been rivals throughout their existence as national states. They had fought each other spasmodically for six hundred years. Philip Augustus and John, Joan of Arc and Henry VI, Louis XIV and William III, and Montcalm and Wolfe are representatives of other phases of this centuries-long struggle. The two had fought a series of world-wide wars throughout the hundred years prior to 1789, wars which had seen France lose her colonial empire to Great Britain and Great Britain lose her richest colony, the United States of America. The wars had been carried into the economic realm. They had aimed at beating down the markets, commerce, and internal economy of the enemy power.

This economic struggle was also renewed with the new military activity in 1792. From the outbreak of the war, shipping was subject to raids by enemy privateers, the commerce raiders of the eighteenth century. The British had their traditional naval superiority however, so the French were quickly reduced to dependence upon neutral shipping to supply their commercial needs. With this development, the effects of the

of the war spread. The position and rights of the neutral carrier became important in this clash of the European giants. Problems regarding neutral goods, continuous voyages, and what constituted contraband of war assumed new prominence as the war continued.

Napoleon Bonaparte came to power in France in late 1799. The war, interrupted by the peace of Amiens (1801-03), intensified in the following years. An intensification of the commercial war also occurred. Napoleon's naval defeat at Trafalgar in 1805 eliminated any hope he may have had for an active naval war. It coincided, however, with his victory at Austerlitz which gave him the key to domination over continental Europe. During the year that followed Napoleon decided upon the Continental System as a means of continuing the economic battle against Great Britain without substantial naval support.

The Continental System was initiated with the famous Berlin Decree.[1] This Decree, issued on November 21, 1806, stated that the British Isles were in a state of blockade and that all correspondence and commerce with them was prohibited. Any British property or British-produced goods was a fair prize of war. Neutrals who might try to run British goods onto the continent under false papers would be considered British. The Decree was to apply in territory of

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1. Correspondance de Napoléon Ier (Paris, 1858-1869), # 11283, Berlin, Nov. 21, 1806, XIII, 682-85.

Napoleon's allies. A year later, in his Milan Decree, Napoleon added to his Continental System by stating that any vessel which in any way dealt with Great Britain, voluntarily or otherwise, was denationalized and subject to confiscation as British property.[2]

Great Britain's retaliatory measures were not slow in coming. A series of Orders in Council which made Great Britain the monitor over neutral commerce was issued in early 1807. These Orders also included a blockade of the European continent and prohibitions against neutral handlers of French goods or French colonial goods, which roughly corresponded to Napoleon's decree against British goods. French certificates of origin found on a vessel made it subject to confiscation. Both nations gave every evidence that they intended to enforce their pronouncements.

The obvious target of much of this battle of regulations was the neutral carrier. Throughout the war the laws of the embattled giants had been modified without warning. As a result, neutral ships had been plagued with uncertainties. Their trade had been stimulated by the hostilities, but it also had become more and more subject to the jealous scrutiny of the warring powers. With these new statements of policy, which carried the threat of enforcement far beyond similar statements of the previous years, the neutrals became especially

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2. Ibid., # 13391, Milan, Dec. 17, 1807, XVI, 227-29.

fearful. Jefferson said, "These decrees and orders taken together, want little of amounting to a declaration that every neutral vessel found on the high seas, whatsoever her cargo, and whatsoever foreign port be that of her departure, or destination, shall be deemed lawful prize."[3] As the chief neutral carrier, the United States was bound to be profoundly affected by this struggle.

The United States had found its position radically different in 1792 from what it had been in the earlier wars. Those clashes had taken place while the United States was still a British colony. When those wars had extended to the American continent, the American colonies had been only a pawn in the game. During peaceful intervals these colonies had been integrated with and made subservient to the British economy by means of British mercantilist policies.[4] By 1792, however, an independent United States was in a position to take whatever her independence and neutrality could offer. The extension of the commercial rivalry that came with the war provided the first opportunity for the American state to advance

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3. Jefferson's message to Congress, Mar. 17, 1808, in State Papers and Publick Documents of the United States from the accession of George Washington to the Presidency exhibiting a complete view of our Foreign Relations since that time, Published under patronage of Congress (Boston, 1817), VI, 74. Hereafter cited as American State Papers.

4. Alfred T. Mahan, Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812 (London, 1905), I, 27-28. Hereafter cited as A. Mahan, War of 1812.

commercially after her separation from the British Empire. America gained stature too with the Jay Treaty (1796), which was a formal recognition on the part of Great Britain that the American state was entitled to some commercial consideration, however controversial the effects of that treaty may have been.

The course of the following twenty years projected the American state increasingly into the center of the European maelstrom. The late nineties found it involved in a near war with France. The acceleration of the commercial struggle after the Amiens truce also saw America profoundly affected; as the neutral state most involved in European commerce she stood to profit or lose most from the rivalry which was involving Europe more and more completely in its meshes. The story of America's increased involvement and eventual war against Great Britain is well known, as is the diplomatic finesse with which Napoleon steered her into that war.

The purpose of this study is to discover the effects the French Revolution and Napoleon had on America by tracing the commercial and political affairs of a prominent American merchant family which like many others was caught in the European storm. The account of the fortunes of a family which was significantly involved in both the commercial and political areas of American life should give a sampling of the effects of those two and one-half decades under consideration upon America.

The Crowninshield family of Salem, Massachusetts, has the qualifications necessary for such a study. Their location at Salem placed them in a key position economically and politically. Salem was the sixth city in population in the United States in 1790 and Salem's custom house provided five percent of the nation's revenue during the years under consideration.[5] Politically, Salem was a hotbed of passion and invective where "Jacobin" Jeffersonians and "Essex Junto" Federalists battled each other from pulpit and counting table, as well as in the press and at the social function. Salem was a spot where hot political feeling smouldered beneath the surface in mild times and erupted forth with volcanic heat and fury when elections approached or Jeffersonian Republicanism manifested itself.

The story of the Crowninshields is significant because they were owners of one of the largest merchant firms in America, and so their story reflects the effects of the European events on the American economy. Politically the Crowninshields were equally significant. They provided a Congressman and a Secretary of the Navy to the national political scene as well as influential persons in state and local government. Crowninshield money played a part in setting up one of the two newspapers which existed in Salem during those hectic years. As ardent Jeffersonians in a belligerently Federalist community the Crowninshields were a social as well as a political storm

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5. James Duncan Phillips, Salem and the Indies (Boston, 1947), p. 166.

center in those colorful and troublesome days of Salem's greatness and decline. It is strange that they are one of the few great shipping families of the Napoleonic-Jeffersonian era that have found no biographer. It is in the belief that their story will cast light on the effects of French affairs upon America during those highly significant years that this study is being made.

Chapter II

THE SPOIL OF THE INDIES - EUROPE CREATES THE CROWNINSHIELDS 1792 - 1803

Salem of 1792 was a bustling, growing little city. As an old city in a new country, Salem looked to the sea for her future. Those were days when "a Salem boy . . . was born to the music of a windlass chanty and caulker's maul; he drew in a taste for the sea with his mother's milk; wharves and shipyards were his playground; he shipped as boy on a coaster in his early teens, saw Demerara and St. Petersburg before he set foot in Boston, and if he had the right stuff in him, commanded an East Indiaman before he was twenty-five."[1] Salemites had learned early that agriculture was at best a hard and precarious method of making a living in the bleak New England territory; they had not yet come to realize the potential wealth that lay in the development of a manufacturing system, and the sea provided an obvious, natural avenue to fortune.

Although Salem was old, the merchants and shipmasters were not of the old stock of original settlers. By and large they were selfmade men, who had worked with their hands and

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1. Samuel Eliot Morison, The Maritime History of Massachusetts 1783-1860 (Boston, 1922), p. 80. Hereafter cited as S. E. Morison, Maritime History.

did not consider themselves above manual labor.[2] They had explored all possibilities for trade following the American Revolutionary War. As the vanguard of a developing merchant class they had pioneered in developing American sea routes to China and the East Indies. They had sought out markets in Russia and around the Cape of Good Hope.[3] When the war in Europe broke out in 1792, they were in the seeking and searching stage of commercial development, looking here and there for an outlet for their young enthusiasm.

The family of George Crowninshield was indicative of the bent of Salem in the 1790's. At the time of the outbreak of the European war the boys of the family had turned to the sea for their living. The five older sons, George, Jr., Jacob, John, Benjamin, and Richard had already commanded ships, while the youngest, Edward, had already been at sea. They ranged in age from 17 to 26. They were the third generation of Crowninshields who had turned to the salt water for their careers.

The Crowninshields were not of the original stock of old Salem. Their first American ancestor of that name had been Dr. Kaspar von Richter von Kronensheldt (or Kronenschielt or Kroninsheldt). He had come to America from Upper Saxony in 1688.[4] Dr. Kroninsheldt had been a surgeon on a French

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2. Ibid., p. 122.

3. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, pp. 40-55.

4. The date given above is taken from a manuscript

privateer. He had settled in Salem during the 1690's and had married Elizabeth Allen of Lynn in 1694.

The oldest son of this marriage, John Crowninshield (1696-1761), had sailed for the Derbys and the Ornes, two of Salem's oldest merchant families.[5] John's sixth child and third son, George Crowninshield (1734-1815), was the founder of the firm of George Crowninshield & Sons. George's early work history had paralleled that of his father. He had sailed for the Derby firm. George had married Mary, daughter of Richard Derby, head of the Derby shipping interests, and so was very closely linked to that important and wealthy family.[6] George had continued to work for the Derbys until after the Revolutionary War, when he had branched out for himself.[7]

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genealogy of the Crowninshield family in the Essex Institute, Salem, Mass., entitled "Crowninshield Family." It shows the descendents of Dr. John Kaspar Richter von Kronensheldt. Another genealogy in the Essex Institute, typewritten "Genealogy of the Crowninshield Family," has Dr. Kronensheldt coming to Boston as early as 1666 or 1668. A third genealogy of the family places him in America in 1694. New England Historical and Genealogical Register, Vol. 104 (1950), pp. 285-87.

5. Ibid., Vol. 104, pp. 285-87.

6. George Crowninshield married a daughter of the head of the house of Derby, and Elias Hasket Derby, who became head of the shipping firm after the Revolutionary War, married Elizabeth Crowninshield, George's sister. The Crowninshield brothers were double cousins of their Derby contemporaries. William Bentley, Diary of Wm. Bentley (Salem, Mass., 1905-14), Aug. 15, 1811, IV, 41. Hereafter cited as Bentley, Diary.

7. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, p. 82.

Captain George Crowninshield was a stern, vitriolic, and stubborn man. For personal and political reasons, he fought and struggled with the Federalists of Salem throughout the years of his firm's existence. In the early years of the growth of his firm, he fought the mass of Salem's wealthy over his right to extend his wharf farther into the channel at Salem harbor. He broke with his brother-in-law, Elias Hasket Derby, during the midnineties, and when Mrs. Derby, George's sister, died, neither George nor any of his family attended the funeral.[8] Dr. Bentley, a friend of the family, said of him, "Mr C. was a son of Nature. He had powers employed only in seafaring concerns."[9] and more pointedly, "It is unhappy when a man has influence in any case from his wealth, who has it not from his virtues & his reputation. The industry & abilities of children may oblige a notice of parents which public opinion may otherwise refuse"[10]

Upon entering the lists of the Salem "merchants" after the Revolutionary War, George Crowninshield had as his primary asset a family of extremely capable sons. These boys had shown much ability directing ships for the Derbys in the early period when the Crowninshields were unable to supply ships for the entire family. In 1789 George Jr., had taken the Crowninshield

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8. Bentley, Diary, Apr. 23, 1799, II, 301.

9. Ibid., June 16, 1815, IV, 335.

10. Ibid., Dec. 19, 1806, III, 268.

schooner Richard and Edward to the Isle of France and returned with a cargo of coffee, tea, raisins and almonds, all to the account of George Crowninshield and Co.[11] Jacob had been around the Cape of Good Hope by 1787.[12] The sons, as they acquired manhood, were given authority on ships and George Crowninshield's sons demonstrated ample ability to handle authority. Around the nucleus formed by these men, George Crowninshield built his firm.

The Crowninshield brothers were an unusually active and, in their early shipping days, a closely united group. Jacob, the second son, early assumed the leadership over his brothers and gradually took over leadership in the firm itself after the middle 1790's. He was an excellent business man. Perhaps his most spectacular gamble was that of bringing the first elephant to be shown in America to this country. He estimated this beast to be worth between $5,000 and $10,000.[13] Jacob sailed

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11. J. D. Phillips, "East India Voyages of Salem Vessels," Essex Institute Historical Journal, Vol. 79 (1943), pp. 117-135.

12. Jacob Crowninshield to James Madison, Salem, Sept. 1, 1806, National Archives, Dept. of State, Miscellaneous Letters, Jan. - Dec., 1806.

13. Crowninshield Papers - Uncataloged Manuscript Collection in the Essex Institute, Salem, Mass. These papers are largely the letters exchanged among members of the Crowninshield family and between them and business associates. Jacob Crowninshield to George and John Crowninshield, Calcutta, Nov. 20, 1795. Hereafter cited as EI., Crowninshield Ms.

The Peabody Museum, Salem, Mass. has a collection similar to that in the Essex Institute, See Jacob Crowninshield to Dear Brothers, Calcutta, Nov. 26, 1795. Hereafter cited as PM., Crowninshield Ms.

longer for the Derbys than any of his brothers, but from 1797 to his death in 1808 he played a major role in directing the affairs of the family firm. The death of Jacob occurred only fifteen months before the Crowninshield firm split and two of the brothers went their separate paths. Probably the ability of Jacob as the cool counselor of the firm is indicated better in this bit of negative evidence than in any single concrete deed which he performed. Jacob's guiding hand was felt in areas other than the affairs of Crowninshield. He was elected to Congress in 1802 and served continuously until his death. Jefferson offered him the Secretary of the Navy post in 1805, but he declined because of the poor health of his wife.[14]

Benjamin, the fourth son, seems to have been second to Jacob among Crowninshield brothers. Like Jacob he was active in political affairs. Benjamin has been credited with being the "solid brains of the firm, rather than his aggressive and irascible father" and "much more of a merchant than Jacob".[15] He too sailed for the Derby firm during his early career. He

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14. Jefferson wrote Jacob Crowninshield asking him to become Secretary of the Navy. After several letters to his wife, Jacob declined. Nevertheless Jefferson sent his name to the Senate and he was confirmed for that office in March, 1805, although he never served. See Henry Adams, History of the United States, 1801-1817(New York, 1909), III, 11. Hereafter cited as H. Adams, United States. Also PM, Crowninshield Ms., copy, Jacob Crowninshield to Thomas Jefferson, Washington, Jan. 24, 1805, and Sally to Jacob Crowninshield, Salem, Feb. 9, 1805.

15. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, p. 330.

became Secretary of the Navy under James Madison in 1814 and served in that post for four years.

George Crowninshield Jr., the oldest of the brothers, was a successful ship captain and merchant, but lacked the balance of Jacob or Benjamin. He was of a spectacular nature and liked to travel about Salem in a gaudy carriage, wearing military boots. George owned the first pleasure yacht at Salem, having built the twenty-two-ton Jefferson in 1801.[16] He took a ship to Halifax during the War of 1812 to recover the bodies of Captain Lawrence (of "Don't give up the ship" fame) and Lieutenant Ludlow.[17] After a successful career as a privateer in the War of 1812, George built a luxurious yacht, the Cleopatra's Barge, and sailed it to Europe.[18] George never married, but when he died he scandalized Salem by leaving a trust fund for an illegitimate child.[19] Dr. Bentley commented on his generosity, but added, "what he did was known when done."[20] Despite his idiosyncracies, George

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16. Ship Registers of Salem and Beverly, 1789-1900 (Salem, 1906), "Jefferson". Hereafter cited as Salem Ship Registers.

17. Bentley, Diary, Aug. 10, 1813, IV, 187.

18. The yacht Cleopatra's Barge closed George's spectacular career. He sailed it to Europe amid rumors that he was going to rescue Bonaparte from St. Helena. See Francis B. Crowninshield, The Story of George Crowninshield's Yacht Cleopatra's Barge (Boston, 1913). Privately printed.

19. Bentley, Diary, Mar. 11, 1818, IV, 507.

20. Ibid., Jan. 29, 1818, IV, 499.

was a successful captain and merchant.

The two remaining sons who played a role in the firm, John and Richard, were merely less conspicuous members of an exceedingly able family. Both commanded ships in their early twenties. Both conducted business negotiations and travelled extensively for the Crowninshield firm. Neither achieved the acclamation of Jacob or Benjamin, and neither was as spectacular as their oldest brother. Both spent much time away from Salem during the years after they retired as sea-captains, John in New York and France, and Richard in New York. Edward, the youngest son of the family, died in early 1793.[21]

Commanding a merchant ship at this time required such a variety of talents that it is difficult to see how a youth in his early twenties could qualify for the position. First of all he had to know how to handle his ship at sea. He had to know navigation to direct the bantam craft across the seas to dots on the map. Normally the ship captain had to sell his cargoes and buy new ones. This was no small accomplishment, as it entailed changes of cargoes two or three times before returning to home port. Economic conditions had to be studied by the captains, for changing markets frequently required changing orders. A knowledge of foreign currencies and rates

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21. Ibid., Feb. 15, 1793, II, 4.

of exchange was required in the transacting of business in India and Bordeaux, or Sumatra and Naples. During the period of uncertainty, which lasted almost continuously between 1793 and 1815, the captain had to be aware of the vagaries of belligerent interpretations of international and maritime law. Some awareness of foreign politics certainly added to the qualifications of a captain. Communications were slow and uncertain, and the captain had to be able to report to his home firm what his activities had been, and estimate two or three ports ahead to his next mailing address so the owner could write to him. He was expected to send letters back to his ship owner by every possible means. The versatility required for competence in the task of commanding a merchant vessel during the late eighteenth century hardly merited the contempt revealed by John Randolph.[22]

The system of payment likewise added to the development of wise and independent captains. The captain was paid a wage and in addition was allowed a certain "adventure" - a private merchandizing venture of a specified weight or amount of space on the ship - plus a percentage of the net profits. As the wage payment was a minor part of the total, the incentive to sharp bargaining and careful investment was great indeed. It was through this hard school of training that the

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22. See page 216n.

Crowninshield brothers rose to prominence.

Despite the relative independence of the Crowninshield sons as ship captains, George, Sr., advised them as closely as possible and they regarded him in an almost patriarchal sense. In the letters among themselves they always referred to their father as "Sir". George gave his advise to his sons in no uncertain terms. "Now John I will give you some directions & if you do not follow them I will sell your Schooner when she comes home. Vz My orders is you are to write me by every opportunity & by every Vessel bound for Philadelphia ...."[23] In other letters he advised his sons on prices of goods in Salem and suggested purchases they were to make.[24] During the early 1790's, however, there were not enough Crowninshield ships to supply the entire family and George was limited to controlling those who were in the three small Crowninshield craft.

When the war broke out between France and Great Britain in 1793, the Crowninshields owned three schooners, all rated under 100 tons.[25] They were being sailed by John, Richard and George Jr., while Jacob and Benjamin were still working

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23. EI, Crowninshield Ms., George Crowninshield Sr., to John Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 18, 1790.

24. EI, Crowninshield Ms., George Crowninshield Sr., to John Crowninshield, Salem, June 16, 1791.

25. Salem Ship Registers.

for their uncle, Elias Hasket Derby. Richard was trading to Europe and to the West Indies, but the other brothers were all trading around the Cape of Good Hope to the coast of India and to the Isle of France.[26]

The first direct effects of the war on America were not long in arriving. In November of 1793 the British ordered the seizure of all neutral vessels carrying goods from French colonies to France, under the prohibition by the rule of 1756 of carrying on a trade during wartime which was not allowed in time of peace.[27] Enforcement of the regulation was necessarily left to the discretion of the ship captains on the scene, and seizures came thick and fast during the early months of 1794. Several hundred American ships were seized by the British during this period,[28] among them the Charming Sally belonging to the Crowninshields,[29] although the schooner carried

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26. The Isle of France, now called Mauritius, is located due east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. It was controlled by France until the British seized it in 1810. Its products, with those of the sister island of Bourbon (Reunion), were coffee, cloves, cotton, sugar, indigo and ebony. Jacob described it as half-way between the Cape of Good Hope and India, and as such it served as a stopping point and depot for India trade vessels.

27. A. T. Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire 1793-1812 (Boston, 1893), II, 234-35. Hereafter cited as A. T. Mahan, Sea Power and French Revolution.

28. Ibid., II, 234-35 and Bentley, Diary, Mar. 9, 11, 12, 1794, II, 83-4.

29. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, pp. 106-7.

no French property. The loss was apparently not serious. The Crowninshield papers do not refer to it directly, although Richard's losses are mentioned from time to time. At this point the Crowninshields bought Richard a new ship, the Minerva and sent him to India. This same year, they had the new ship, Belisarius built for them in Salem and set her out on the India trade.[30]

The shift away from the West Indies trade was a wise move. Richard, the only one of the brothers engaged in this area, reported consistent losses until he shifted to the Indian Ocean trade, while all the others had done well in India. His loss of the Charming Sally merely was a culmination of many financial setbacks in that trade, and by late 1796, when he had completed his first Indian run, he also reported success in his ventures.[31]

For the Crowninshields the beginning of the war had two results. They expanded with the general prosperity that had been created by the war, and their trade with the West Indies was cut in favor of total emphasis on the trade with the East Indies and Indian Ocean area. The Belisarius was a 209 ton ship as she was built, and was remodeled the following year

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30. Salem Ship Registers, Belisarius.

31. See pages 21-22.

into a 261 ton vessel.[32] The Minerva was rated at 266 ton.[33] These figures compare with the small schooners that were owned by the family at the beginning of the war, the Richard and Edward at 64 tons, the Polly and Sally at 67 tons, and the Charming Sally at 86 tons.[34] The Belisarius and the Minerva represented the shift of the Crowninshields from the small ship to the big ship class, and marked a sharp rise in the family fortunes.

The letters among the brothers tell the story of constantly rising income from their shipping ventures. In 1792 Jacob wrote to John of the result of his voyage in the Derby ship Henry on which Mr. Derby had made $20,000 profit while Jacob had made $4,000 besides, but he added that "we cant always expect to do as well".[35] The implication from this letter, describing a voyage which occurred before the war in Europe had had any effect on America, was that this profit was unusually great for one voyage. Such profits were beyond expectations. Following the outbreak of war the Crowninshields "did" even better. By 1794 four of the brothers

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32. Salem Ship Registers, Belisarius.

33. Ibid., Minerva.

34. Ibid., Richard and Edward, Polly and Sally, Charming Sally.

35. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to John Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 11, 1792.

were sailing in ships owned by the family. Richard, whose business ventures to Europe and the West Indies had been consistently bad[36] had come over on the profit side of the ledger with his transfer to the India trade.[37] Benjamin wrote in late 1795 of how well the three, George Jr., John, and himself, had done in the India trade.[38] In 1796 Richard congratulated George and John on their making 10,000 £ on a voyage, which he thought was "great indeed".[39] Jacob spoke of his making $40,000 or perhaps more on a voyage he made for the Derbys in 1795,[40] while in 1797 John's profits on a run to Bordeaux carrying coffee brought in $30,000.[41] By 1797 the Henry[42] and the Brutus[43] had been added to the fleet of the Crowninshields, and all of the brothers were working for the

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36. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to John Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 11, 1792.

37. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard Crowninshield to Brothers, Altona, River Elb, Nov. 7, 1796.

38. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Benjamin to George and John Crowninshield, Calcutta, Nov. 17, 1795.

39. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to George or John Crowninshield, no sending address, Mar. 15, 1796.

40. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to George and John Crowninshield, Isle of France, Jan. 11, 1796.

41. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Feb. 17, 1797.

42. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Jan. 18, 1795.

43. Salem Ship Registers, Brutus.

family firm of George Crowninshield and Sons. Although profits are difficult to determine on a careful statistical basis, the general tone of these letters indicated that the Crowninshields were making bigger and bigger profits throughout the early years of the war in Europe.

This expansion fits in well with the national and international picture for the time. The British were allowing more and more of their increasing tonnage to be carried by neutral carriers. In 1792, before the war could affect her shipping, 479,630 tons of British commerce was carried in foreign bottoms and 3,151,389 tons in domestic bottoms. By 1796 the figures were 998,427 foreign and 2,629,575 domestic, while by 1800 1,448,287 tons of British goods were carried in foreign ships and 2,825,078 in British ships. While total British shipping increased, the total amount of goods carried by British ships decreased, and percentage-wise the amount of foreign carried British goods went from 13 per cent in 1792 to almost 34 per cent in 1800.[44]

Other figures indicate similar tendencies. The total exports of the United States increased regularly between 1792 and 1796, going from $20,753,098 in the year ending September 30, 1792, to $67,064,097 in the year ending September 30, 1796. Of the latter figure, $26,30,000 represented foreign goods which was being re-exported, contrasted with $540,000 of

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44. A.T. Mahan, Sea Power and French Revolution, II, 229.

re-exports in 1790. By 1799 the yearly export figure was $76,665,522 of which over $45,523,000 was re-exported.[45]

France had added to American trade in this period. In February, 1793, the National Convention opened her colonial trade to American vessels. Goods carried to or from French colonies in foreign vessels were to pay no higher duties than if carried in French vessels. The measure was to apply also to ports in the East Indies and the Isle of France and Bourbon. Later Senegal was also opened.[46]

Turning to specific articles of trade the same rise in American shipping volume is indicated. "In 1792, before the war, the United States exported to Europe 1,122,000 pounds of sugar, and 2,136,742 of coffee; in 1796, 35,000,000 of sugar and 47,000,000 of coffee; in 1800, 82,000,000 of sugar and 47,000,000 of coffee."[47] Much of this trade was that of

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45. Eli F. Heckscher, The Continental System An Economic Interpretation (Oxford, 1922), p. 103. Hereafter cited as E. F. Heckscher, Continental System. Also see Adam Seybert, Statistical Annals: Embracing Views of the Population, Commerce, Navigation, Fisheries, Public Lands, Post Office Establishment, Revenues, Mint, Military and Naval Establishments, Expenditures, Public Debt and Sinking Fund, of the United States of America: founded on official documents: commencing on the Fourth of March seventeen hundred and eighty-nine and ending on the twentieth of April eighteen hundred and eighteen (Philadelphia, 1818), p. 93. Hereafter cited as A. Seybert, Statistical Annals.

46. Anna C. Clauder, American Commerce as Affected by the Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, 1793-1812 (Philadelphia, 1932), p. 28. Hereafter cited as A. C. Clauder, American Commerce.

47. A. T. Mahan, Sea Power and French Revolution, II, 267.

the French and the Dutch which had been interrupted by the British after the outbreak of the war.[48] The implication inherent in all these figures is that the increase represented the trade which had been prohibited during time of peace, but which had been opened to the neutral carrier as soon as the war broke out.

In the Far East, American ships were beginning to make an appearance. Trade with the open port of Canton in China had started shortly after the end of the American Revolutionary War and increased rapidly following the beginning of the war in Europe. In 1792-93 six United States ships exported 1,538,000 pounds of tea from that port. By 1798-99, thirteen ships exported 5,674,000 pounds of tea from Canton.[49] It is in this setting that the Crowninshield firm began its rise to commercial prominence.

This stimulation to American shipping, in which the Crowninshields shared, marked the major effects upon the firm of the opening years of the Wars of the French Revolution. With increased prosperity came the split from the old Derby firm, a split which was described as a "deep, longitudinal

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48. Ibid., II, 267.

49. William Milburn, Oriental Commerce; containing a Geographical description of the Principle Places in The East Indies, China, and Japan, with their Produce, Manufacture, and Trade, including the Coasting or Country Trade from Port to Port (London, 1813), II, 486. Hereafter cited as W. Milburn, Oriental Commerce.

chasm, across which the rival clans of Derby and Crowninshield glared defiance."[50] This chasm represented the lines along which Salem divided, and its beginnings might well be traced.

The first evidence of Derby-Crowninshield antipathy appeared in a disagreement over accounts given to E. H. Derby by Jacob Crowninshield in 1795. They had been working on a friendly basis; Jacob and Benjamin had sailed Derby ships and early in 1795 Derby had sold a ship to the Crowninshields at advantageous terms.[51] When Jacob and E. H. Derby disagreed, a group of merchants was called in to act as umpires and Jacob was awarded $59.59 by the group.[52] Jacob refused to be mollified. He wrote to Richard, " [You know of] old Derby's conduct to me; --- if you do not, suffice it to say that it was everything that was detestable. our a/c's were finally settled by Mr. Gray, Mr. Norris & Captn Orne in my favor."[53]

The following year the difference approached the stature of a feud. The Crowninshields, to handle their increasing business, extended their wharf to a point where the Derbys

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50. S. E. Morison, Maritime History, p. 123.

51. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Jan. 18, 1795.

52. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, p. 183.

53. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Ship America, Dec., 1795.

said it blocked the harbor channel. The matter was taken to court and the Derbys won. Dr. Bentley, who throughout the years admired and saw eye to eye with the Crowninshields, noted: "The affair of Derby & Crowninshield was determined against Crowninshield. He is to lose the last addition of 12 feet to his wharf. Capt. Jno. Collins was foreman of the Jury. The Judges were full against C. Mess. Derby, W. Gray, Jno Hodges, & the most respectable citizens were witnesses against C. that the channel actually did run under the wharf, or where it is now built."[54] The Derbys had won round two of the disputes between the families.

The day before this decision was reached Jacob wrote to his brothers that he had purchased the ship America from the Derbys.[55] This transaction was the last friendly relationship between the two families. The chasm mentioned earlier developed rapidly from this point and Salemites, pro-Derby and pro-Crowninshield, aligned themselves on their respective sides of it. When Mrs. Derby, George Crowninshield's sister, died, the "Crowninshield family would not attend [the funeral] because of a disaffection of long standing."[56] And, as Dr.

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54. Bentley, Diary, Nov. 11, 1796, II, 205.

55. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Brothers, Salem, Nov. 10, 1796. Jacob had bought the ship for Derby at the Isle of France (Mauritius) in 1795. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to George and John Crowninshield, Ship America, Sept. 16, 1795.

56. Bentley, Diary, Apr. 23, 1799, II, 301.

Bentley remarked concerning the wharf case, the "most respectable citizens" were against the Crowninshields. Throughout the twenty years under consideration, this antagonism was constantly apparent. In politics the Crowninshields became staunch Jeffersonians and the Derbys became more "respectable" Federalists; in social activities Hamilton Hall became the site of Federalist functions and Washington Hall the location for Republican functions; even on the sea the Crowninshield letters, ordinarily interested in nothing but business, refer with pleasure to their craft outsailing Federalist boats.[57]

The Crowninshield brothers were all sailing in the East India trade routes by late 1795. The hazards of the trade were great. They included the problem of dealing with belligerent ships, embargoes that were proclaimed without warning, the problem of finding trustworthy negotiators with whom one could transact business, in addition to the natural dangers of sea and storm. Naturally the profits were commensurate with the risk involved. The pattern for shipping was not clear-cut, but aside from an occasional trip, such as was made by Richard and another by John in 1796 the family kept their boats out of European waters and concentrated on making the run to the Indian Ocean and back to the United States and letting

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57. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 30, 1799, says, "The Belisarius sailed with the Essex today & outsailed her - whatever the Federalists say to the contrary on Sunday last."

others reship the goods to the continent of Europe.

A typical voyage of this India trade was begun by George and John Crowninshield on the Crowninshield ship Belisarius in late 1795. They sailed as joint captains. Their orders read

> . . . you are to put to sea the first fair wind and proceed to Calcutta in India making all hast possible you may either stop at St. Helena Bencoolen or Madras & sell the articles that will best answer those markets & than go for Calcutta in order to finish your sales & than to purches a return cargo for this country which consist of sugar pepper beeswax calicoes & all kinds of conton cloth Bandano handkerchiefs & such goods as you think best for our market you being upon the spot & having been that way before must judge of all those kind of goods & like wise the proportion of each.[58]

Privateers or belligerent vessels made little impression upon the Crowninshields at this time, although the latent danger was recognized in the naive-sounding orders.

> You have the usual necessary papers & clearances from this country which you will of course produce to any Ship of War or privateers belonging to any powers at War & have no doubt but they will treat you well & let you pass without any molestation or henderance & you have our full liberties to act & do as you think most advantageous in the above or any other matters . . . minding always you break no rule of trade.[59]

The Belisarius sailed from Salem loaded with brandy, wine, rum, iron bars, lead, soaps, portor (a limestone) and $15,000 in cash. By March 15, 1796 she had reached Calcutta. John Crowninshield wrote his brother Richard of delays they had had in arranging for an Indian intermediary called a Banyan. John remarked that they were invariably deceitful

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58. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Belisarius orders, Nov. 17, 1795.

59. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Belisarius orders, Nov. 17, 1795.

and dishonest.[60] By June 1 the Belisarius was caught in an embargo at the Isle of France, and John complained of the tremendous amount of shipping located at that base. At this time he listed his cargo as 3250 bags of coffee plus nutmegs and Lijourney.[61] The Belisarius returned to Salem with this cargo, arriving there in September of 1796. On December 1, 1796, John Crowninshield was in France attempting to sell the coffee.

By 1796 the international situation had become much more unsettled and each rumor was of vital concern to the traders. When John Crowninshield left for France to sell coffee in late 1796 the family bombarded him with letters advising him in accord with the latest talk they had heard. George, Sr. told him that there had been an increase in dangers to neutral shipping and to keep his papers in order. He thought the French were about to invade England and warned John of trouble.[62]

Two days later Jacob wrote to John at Bordeaux and told him of the rising price of coffee and suggested that John go

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60. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John to Richard Crowninshield, Calcutta, Mar. 15, 1796. The function of the banyan was similar to that of a Chinese Co-hong. He arranged for the handling of the cargo and served as an intermediary between merchant and native populations. Like all interpretors, he had tremendous possibilities for subterfuge. Dealing with un-loved foreigners, the banyan had little incentive for honesty.

61. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John to George Crowninshield, Sr., Isle of France, June 1, 1796.

62. EI, Crowninshield Ms., George, Sr., to John Crowninshield, Salem, Oct. 24, 1796.

directly to Bengal from France.[63] On December 1, 1796, John wrote from Bordeaux that his coffee would sell very slowly and at a much lower price than he had originally supposed because of rumors of a cessation of hostilities. Another rumor which contributed to the general gloom of this letter said that the tariff was to be lowered and that none of the prospective buyers wished to buy in large lots for fear of being caught with high priced goods on hand.[64] In February of 1797, Jacob wrote that John had realized much higher profits on his coffee than he had originally thought possible and that he probably would make between $25,000 and $30,000 on the trip. Likewise, heavier duties were expected to develop in France within the forseeable future; as a result Jacob advised John to take his profits, buy a new ship, and take her with the Belisarius on the run to India.[65]

One month later Jacob wrote Richard of the uncertainties of the foreign trade situation. He complained that he did not know from day to day which ships were safe and which would be lost. Markets were so uncertain that he did not know what to do. Sugar, which Richard had reported as being in demand

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63. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to John Crowninshield, Salem, Oct. 26, 1796.

64. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John to George Crowninshield, and Sons, Bordeaux, Dec. 1, 1796.

65. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Feb. 17, 1797.

on the continent, was selling very low.[66]

Despite these drawbacks, the Crowninshields were profiting a great deal from the war trade. Any letters that reported actual sales of goods rather than specualtion on what would be made on goods spoke of sizeable profits. Crowninshield expansion continued. Jacob bought the ship America in the fall of 1796[67] and constantly advised in favor of continued expansion by the other brothers as far as purchasing new ships was concerned. Despite the worries over the war situation, John headed for the Isle of France with the Belisarius early in February of 1797 without bothering to return home, because he "Knew the market at I France & knew the market was high there.[68]

Worries to the contrary, Crowninshield shipping was getting through. They prided themselves on the speed of the Belisarius, which could outsail trouble from other ships.[69] In spite of the concern that Jacob undoubtedly had over the state of their shipping, no significant Crowninshield losses due to action of the British or the French occurred during this time.

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66. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Mar. 16, 1797.

67. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob Crowninshield to Brothers, Salem, Nov. 10, 1796.

68. PM, Crowninshield Ms., George, Sr., to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 2, 1797.

69. PM, Crowninshield Ms., George, Sr., to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 2, 1797.

The actions of those two powers meanwhile had changed, following the negotiation of the Jay Treaty between Great Britain and the United States. The United States had signed the Jay Treaty with Great Britain in late 1794. After modification by the American government to allow the shipment of colonial products to foreign states in American ships the treaty had been ratified by the American Senate. British violence toward American shipping, which had cost "hundreds" of American vessels, eased with the Jay Treaty.[70] At the same time this irritated the French and made them enact legislation which would limit British control of or advantage from this shipping wherever possible.[71]

The French opposition to the Jay Treaty developed from two provisions. The treaty extended greatly the list of contraband goods that had been drawn up in the Franco-American treaty of Amity and Commerce. It directly contradicted that treaty in the placing of "timber for ship-building, tar or rosin, copper, in sheets, sails, hemp, and cordage, and generally whatever may serve directly to the equipment of vessels, unwrought iron and firs planks only excepted"[72] on the

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70. Edward Channing, A History of the United States, New York (1935), IV (Federalists and Republicans), 135. Also see above p.18.

71. A. T. Mahan, Sea Power and French Revolution, II, 239, 242.

72. United States Senate Document #357, 61st Congress,

contraband list. It also acknowledged the British denial of the "free ships, free goods" concept despite the fact that most European powers had refused to do so.[73] These two sections of the treaty were so opposed by the French that the Foreign Minister, Delacroix, told Monroe that the Directory considered the Jay Treaty "a derogation of the Friendship which unites the United States and the Republic, and in those stipulations which concern the neutrality of the flag, an abandon of the tacit engagement which existed between the two countries on this point since the Treaty of Commerce of 1778."[74]

The American Minister who was negotiating a treaty with Spain, Thomas Pinckney, thought that the Spanish feared a joint declaration of war against France and Spain by United States and Great Britain as a result of the Jay Treaty. The implication of alliance was more than just a French thought from all

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2nd Session, Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols and Agreements Between the United States of America and Other Powers 1778-1909, Compiled by Wm. M. Malloy (Washington, 1910), I, 601. For the entire Jay Treaty I, 590-609. Hereafter cited as U. S. Treaties. For the French American Treaty of Amity and Commerce see Ibid., I, 468-479. The article on contraband is #XXIV, pp. 476-77.

73. S. F. Bemis, Jay's Treaty, A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy (New York, 1923), p. 152. Hereafter cited as Bemis, Jay's Treaty.

74. Requoted from E. Wilson Lyon, "The Directory & the United States," American Historical Review, Vol. 43 (1938), p. 515. Hereafter cited as E. W. Lyon, "Directory and U. S.," A.H.R.

appearances.[75] The statement that the Jay Treaty represented a "submission for the period of the war to all British claims" was held to be accurate in the standard American monograph on the treaty.[76]

The French began with a policy which retaliated against the British attitude opposing "free ships, free goods" and victimized the neutral carrier. In November, 1794, the Directory ruled that enemy goods on neutral ships were subject to seizure so long as French property on a neutral ship made those goods subject to seizure by the British. This law lasted only six weeks when it was withdrawn.[77] In July 1796 the Directory made a ruling that enemy goods on a neutral ship made those ships subject to confiscation, search or detention as long as the British regulations subjected them to the same treatment. A little later French agents in the West Indies began to seize all American vessels bound to or from British ports or those carrying contraband.[78]

In 1797 the Directory again tried to coerce the Americans to break from the provisions of the Jay Treaty. Working through

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75. G. L. Rives, "Spain and the United States in 1795," American Historical Review, IV (Oct., 1898), pp. 62-79, pp. 77-78.

76. S. F. Bemis, Jay's Treaty, p. 267.

77. A. T. Mahan, Sea Power and French Revolution, II, 243.

78. Ibid., II, 243-44.

the puppet Dutch government, France issued a statement that Dutch trade carried in American vessels should be protected by the Americans.[79] Quite naturally a neutral government in the United States did not see eye to eye with this policy especially as it opposed the recently ratified Jay Treaty.

Likewise, the French issued a decree in 1797 which made enemy goods subject to seizure, and branded as pirates Americans who served on foreign vessels. American vessels were required to carry a list of the crew, or the ship was to be considered a legal prize. These measures, aimed at British policies on goods and impressment, placed the neutral Americans in a precarious position.[80]

In January of 1798 the French strengthened their previous rulings when they said that any vessel found to contain British merchandize as her cargo, whether in part or in its entirety, was subject to capture as a prize of war.[81] The undeclared Quasi-War between the French and the United States was under way.

This period of tension between France and the United States found the Crowninshields unwilling to go to war with France as long as the situation did not deteriorate noticeably.

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79. Ibid., II, 247.

80. E. W. Lyon, "Directory and U. S.", A.H.R., Vol. 43, p. 517.

81. A. T. Mahan, Sea Power and French Revolution, II, 250.

They revealed Francophile tendencies early in the period and their letters showed a constant desire to maintain peace between the two countries. They considered the Jay Treaty as chiefly responsible for the troubles between the two countries and explained French action in that light. Jacob, by this time the leader of the family, wrote, "A war we must not have, but agree to almost anything the French may demand, tho' I would not subscribe to humiliating terms. We need not look beyound the d'md British treaty for the cause of all these difficulties - - -."[82] Later in March he mentioned that American opinion concerning France had been too derogatory, and that the French were not as bad as they were pictured.[83] John, from France, and George Sr. from Salem voiced similar feeling at this time.[84] A little later Jacob mentioned that the French did not want war with America and that America would have to bear the blame if war broke out between the two countries.[85]

Another factor in the desire of the Crowninshields for peace was the presence of a great deal of American shipping in

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82. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Mar. 20, 1797.

83. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 22, 1797.

84. PM, Crowninshield Ms., George Sr. to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 2, 1797.

85. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 4, 1797.

France during this period, which would have been subject to seizure had war broken out. John, who was in France during the spring of 1797, a time when relations between the two nations was rapidly deteriorating, commented that there was $300,000 in Salem property in Bordeaux alone. The French could reap a great profit by "exchanging seizures" with the United States -- that is, sacrifice what few French vessels were in American harbors for the vast quantity of American ships in French harbors.[86]

As a result of this strained relationship between France and the United States, American commerce became a very risky enterprise. Insurance rates, an adequate index of the risk involved in commerce, became prohibitively high by the spring of 1797. Jacob wrote of insurance rates being 20 per cent to Europe and India in March of 1797.[87] A year later the rates were 40 per cent out and home on a ship headed for the Indian Ocean and 30 per cent on the home voyage for a ship already in

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86. PM, Crowninshield Ms., George, Sr. to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 2, 1797. A recent scholar takes issue with this view of John Crowninshield that France stood to gain by war. He said that "France had everything to lose and nothing to gain from a war with the United States." Her commerce was carried in American ships. In June, 1798, when commerce between the United States and the French West Indies was broken off by Congress, the sugar colonies there suffered a serious blow. E. W. Lyon, "Directory and U. S.", A.H.R., Vol. 43, p. 525.

87. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Mar. 4, 1797.

that area.[88] Consequently the Crowninshields took no insurance.

Dangers for the individual ship ran high, and the Crowninshields were faced with the dilemma which confronted all neutral shippers at this time. Their letters revealed the increasing menace of the warring powers to their shipping. In October of 1796, John was warned to keep his papers in order in case he had to establish his conformity with the regulations of the belligerents.[89] In March of 1797, Jacob wrote that he momentarily expected news that one or more of the Crowninshield ships had been taken.[90] In April of 1798, Jacob told Richard of losing an "adventure" on "Pell's schooner" which was taken on the grounds that the Sumatran pepper on board belonged to the British. Two days later he wrote again to Richard, to trust no vessel, not even near a port.[91] He also told Richard, who was in the Brutus on the Coromandel coast of India, "You must take the greatest precautions coming home, run from every vessel, speak none & trust no one. The lighter your ship the

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88. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 22, 1798.

89. EI, Crowninshield Ms., George, Sr. to John Crowninshield, Salem, Oct. 24, 1796.

90. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Mar. 16, 1797.

91. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Apr. 22, 1798.

better that is for heaven sake do not get her deeper nor so deep as when you went away. & should you find you are about being taken you could contrive to have an officer & men concealed below to retake the ship at all hazards afterwds twould be a good scheme & may be done effectively."[92] The French were condemning vessels on the strength of their having British handkerchiefs on board. "Ships are captured for a bale of English goods, a p iece of cloth, a hhd sugar without clear Certificates sworn to with seals in due form that the goods are not of English growth produce or manufacture or of her colonies."[93]

French seizures during this period were considerable. Mahan said that between July 1796 and October 1797 over three hundred vessels and more than $15,000,000 in produce was seized by France.[94] Another writer said, "No less than three hundred and sixteen American ships had been seized principally in the Caribbean, by the French between July, 1796, and June, 1797."[95] There were a total of 1853 French spoliation claims between 1793 and 1800, of which the majority came in the 1796 - 1800 period. They averaged three claims per vessel, which would mean that

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92. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 24, 1798.

93. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 22, 1798.

94. A. T. Mahan, Sea Power and French Revolution, II, 244-45.

95. A. C. Clauder, American Commerce, p. 44.

about 617 vessels were affected.[96]

Despite the high number of French captures during this period the Crowninshields were able to escape the commerce raiders and reap the higher profits that were the reward for those who did escape. The Belisarius arrived safely from the Isle of France in July of 1798, and was pronounced by Bentley "one of the richest ships of our port."[97] The only sea encounter of the Belisarius had resulted in one of her seamen being impressed by the British.[98] She had avoided the greater menace of the French privateers successfully. The Brutus, the other Crowninshield ship in the Indian Ocean during this time arrived safely in Salem in January of 1799.[99]

During the spring of 1798 the federal government under President John Adams made plans for defending the United States' shipping against French seizures. Upon hearing of the government plans the Crowninshields quickly offered to loan their largest vessel, the America, to the government and to accept

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96. S. F. Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States (New York, 1936), pp. 114-15. Hereafter cited as S. F. Bemis, Diplomatic History.

97. Bentley, Diary, July 26, 1798, II, 277.

98. United States Government, Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War Between the United States and France, prepared under direction of Hon. Claude A. Swanson (Washington, 1935-38), II, 321. Hereafter cited as Quasi-War.

99. J. D. Phillips, "East India Voyages of Salem Vessels," Essex Institute Historical Collections, Vol. 79, pp. 331-65.

6 per cent stock[100] in payment for the loan. In the summer, when the Belisarius arrived back in Salem, she was also offered to the government on the same terms.[101] A misunderstanding resulted. The Secretary of the Navy sent a letter to the Crowninshield firm acknowledging their offer to sell their vessels. He stated, however, that the government could only buy ships then under construction or yet to be constructed.[102]

The Crowninshields saw fit to be irritated at this modified refusal. In a letter to President Adams they said that they had no intention of offering their ships for sale, but only desired to loan them to the government at a fee. If the vessels were not needed a quick answer would be appreciated so the ships could be sent out again to the lucrative, but dangerous, India market.[103]

The loan was never completed. On September 13, 1798 a clearance was made for the Belisarius to the port of Copenhagen. She carried four guns and sixteen men.[104] The America was armed

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100. The letter does not explain the transaction beyond this statement. Possibly the Crowninshields were to receive U. S. government bonds at 6% for the value of their ship.

101. Quasi-War, II, 149. Also, Ibid., George Crowninshield and Sons to President Adams, Sept. 1, 1798, I, 369-70.

102. Ibid., Sec'y of Navy to George Crowninshield and Sons, Aug. 25, 1798, I, 339.

103. Ibid., George Crowninshield and Sons to President Adams, Sept. 1, 1798, I, 369-70.

104. Ibid., II, 153.

and sent to the East Indies by way of Europe in February of 1799.[105] The Brutus was likewise armed following the return from the Indian Ocean.[106] The Belisarius was commissioned a privateer by the United States government in May of 1799 and was armed with sixteen guns.[107]

American exports, which had increased in value each year except 1796-97 since the beginning of the French Revolution Wars, dropped in the French - American tension years of 1799-1800.[108] Crowninshield activity slackened with the decline in exports. They found more and more difficulty in shipping their goods to Europe during the latter part of the 1790's and built up a huge stock in American warehouses as a result of their successful voyages to the Indian Ocean and the East Indies. In a letter discussing the foreign situation in May of 1799 Jacob concluded that the wise thing for the firm would be to drop out of "all trade excepting that to the East Indies."[109] During 1799 the first reference by the Crowninshields of their handling cargoes which had come from the Russian market occurred. When normal trade deteriorated, the Crowninshields began

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105. Ibid., II, 379.

106. Ibid., II, 385.

107. Ibid., II, 383.

108. E. F. Heckscher, Continental System, p. 103.

109. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to John Crowninshield, Salem, May 16, 1799.

casting about for new trading areas. Russian hemp, duck and iron bars became the topics for Crowninshield letters. The American market proved difficult; Russian goods were one of the few areas in which the Crowninshields were unsuccessful. One load of Russian duck was sent to Philadelphia late in 1799.[110] When no market was available there it was sent on to Baltimore, where the situation proved to be no better. Their agent in Baltimore reported that there was no hope of selling it at a profit.[111] Although these goods could be acquired without incurring the wrath of either of the major belligerent powers, their availability apparently made demand so small that no profits could be made.

By late 1799 the Crowninshields talked in terms of what they should do with tremendous supplies of goods they had stored in America. They recognized the dangers inherent in the European trade, although Richard did talk of sending a ship to Gibralter loaded with native American products, or Havana sugars.[112] George Jr. spoke of shipping sugar and small

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110. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Thomas Phippen to John Crowninshield, Philadelphia, Nov. 29, 1799. Also Thomas Phippen to John Crowninshield, Philadelphia, Dec. 5. 1799.

111. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Henry Payson to John Crowninshield, Baltimore, Dec. 10, 1799. Also Henry Payson to John Crowninshield, Baltimore, Dec. 27, 1799.

112. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 13, 1799.

arms and avoiding risks.[113] George Sr., fretted that they had overexpanded, they had too many ships and he worried about a note due in New York.[114] The underwriting business, in which Richard was interested, was also dull.[115]

Whether from luck or good judgment in the dangerous shipping trade of the three previous years, the Crowninshield family at the turn of the century was in a position where it could weather the hard times caused by the Quasi-War with France. It had large supplies of goods on hand which would serve to continue its progress on the road to wealth and prominence in American commerce once the American-French troubles were solved. With the signing of the treaty between the two countries in 1800, the Crowninshield fortunes were such that they could enter a new surge of prosperity.

Considerable change had been made in the activities of the Crowninshield brothers during the last three years of the century, and the tone of the later letters revealed this. The change was the result of added wealth and the strengthened position that came with it. Between 1792 and 1799 the correspondence among the family members was continuously on

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113. EI, Crowninshield Ms., George, Jr., to John Crowninshield, Salem, Nov. 14, 1799.

114. EI, Crowninshield Ms., George, Sr., to John Crowninshield, Salem, Nov. 30, 1799.

115. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 30, 1799.

business matters, but in the latter year the eagerness and anticipation of the early period had been replaced by a consciousness of power and position. In 1792 they talked of cash profits on individual ventures. By 1799 their comments were limited to cautious statements about the care they need take to guard their "considerable property" and avoid overexpansion. In 1792 they acknowledged the hostility of Salem's better class and talked of Salem's surprise that they were doing so well; in 1799 they were not concerned with proving their success, although they still received pleasure in excelling Federalist vessels.

By 1799 the Crowninshield brothers had retired from active sailing. Jacob, George, and Benjamin were in Salem handling the family's merchandizing affairs there. Richard was involved in the insurance underwriting business and traveled a great deal between Salem and New York. John handled Crowninshield affairs from the office of the New York merchant firm of Bailey and Bogert. When the Belisarius put to sea in late 1799, she went under a Captain Skerry rather than under one of the brothers. No longer was there talk among the brothers of pride in "privet adventures." They talked in terms of sending a load of sugar or hides or meat or fish to this or that market. They still worked long and hard at the business of running a commercial enterprise, but their work was done from the counting table rather than from the deck of their ships.

Too they had branched out into new areas of endeavor, from Richard's interest in insurance to Jacob's advancing part of the money to found a Jeffersonian paper, the Impartial Register in Federalist Salem.[116] The brothers were all young. George, Jr., the oldest, was 34 in 1800, while Jacob was 30, John, 29, Benjamin, 28, and Richard, 26. Their success was one built on outstanding ability and skill, but it was also built on the base of a war-induced prosperity which caused American exports by 1799 to rise to 350 per cent of what they had been in 1792.

This increase of shipping, interrupted by the Quasi-War situation 1798-1800, built up again during the year 1800-01. The treaty that had been worked out with the French and which was signed on September 30, 1801, aided in this development. The treaty stipulated that "commerce between the parties shall be free."[117] Any ships which had been seized but not yet condemned were to be returned. As for general shipping, the treaty left little to be desired so far as the United States was concerned:

It shall be lawful for the citizens of either country to sail with their ships and merchandise (contraband goods always excepted) from any port whatever to any port of the enemy of the other, and to sail and trade with their ships and merchandise, with perfect security and liberty, from the countries, ports,

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116. Harriet Silvester Tapley, Salem Imprints 1768-1825 A History of the First Fifty Years of Printing in Salem, Massachusetts (Salem, 1927), p. 113. Hereafter cited as Tapley, Salem Imprints.

117. U. S. Treaties, I, 498.

and places of those who are enemies of both, or of either party, without any opposition or disturbance whatsoever, and to pass not only directly from the places and ports of the enemy aforementioned to neutral ports and places, but also from one place belonging to an enemy to another place belonging to an enemy, whether they be under the jurisdiction of the same Power or under the several, unless such ports or places shall be actually blockaded, besieged, or invested.[118]

The treaty provided most favored nation status concerning duties and treatment of the other's vessels in the other's harbors, and worked out procedures for handling meetings and exchanges of papers at sea.[119]

The effects of the treaty on American shipping in general and specifically on the Crowninshields shipping were stimulating. American exports, which had dropped from $78,670,000 in 1798-99 to $70,970,000 in 1799-1800, rose to $94,120,000 in 1800-01.[120] The Crowninshields proceeded to sell their goods that they had on hand and send out more shipping bound for the Indies. By this time the pepper trade had attracted the eyes of the Crowninshields, and with this trade new highs were reached in profits for each voyage. The Belisarius was sent out to the island of Sumatra after pepper in November of 1800,[121]

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118. Ibid., I, 500.

119. The entire Treaty may be found in Ibid., I, 496-505. For a discussion of the negotiations which preceded this convention see E. W. Lyon, "The Franco-American Convention of 1800", Journal of Modern History, XII (June, 1940), pp. 305-33.

120. E. F. Heckscher, Continental System, p. 103.

121. EI, Crowninshield Ms., George Crowninshield & Co. to T. K. Jones, Salem, July 28, 1801.

and the largest of the Crowninshield boats, the America, followed her out early in 1801.[122] The flurry of pepper trading continued through 1801, the America being sent out again late in that year after returning with 840,000 pounds of the spice in November.[123] Under the leadership of Jacob Crowninshield the firm of George Crowninshield and Sons arranged to ship their pepper to European markets on other ships, paying the captain a cash price and a percentage on sales for the trip. The extent to which the French treaty had eliminated sea dangers is shown by the fact that insurance on a November, 1801, cargo to Europe was 3 per cent.[124]

The year 1801 ended on a prosperous but cautious note for the Crowninshields. Jacob wrote of profits received from stock held in the Salem Marine Indies Company. The dividend paid for the six months ending at that time amounted to 16 per cent, although they "proposed .20 which could have been done, but it was thought best not to go too fast, however they plan to divide upward of 20 % for the ensueing half year."[125] The caution came from the news in Salem in November of 1801 that peace had

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122. EI, Crowninshield Ms., George Crowninshield & Sons to T. K. Jones, Salem, July 28, 1801.

123. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, p. 246.

124. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Nov. 13, 1801.

125. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob Crowninshield to N. Silsbee, Salem, Dec. 8, 1801.

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come on the continent.

The Peace of Amiens was not a satisfactory peace in the eyes of Great Britain. She had restored the colonial possessions which she had taken from France and her allies, Ceylon and Trinidad excepted, while the major French concession had been the abandonment of Naples. France also was to evacuate Taranto and the Papal States. A major aim of Great Britain, trade with French-controlled or French territory, was not accorded in the pact. British merchandise was not to be imported or sold throughout the territory of the French Republic, and British merchants were displeased with the refusal of France to change this policy.

As for Napoleon, his boundless ambition probably made any peace other than an absolute surrender a temporary thing. He continued to extend his influence throughout the countries not yet under his wing, and, especially in Spain and Portugal, to force British goods and British influence from those countries. Napoleon's contempt for Amiens was continuous and complete. During the time of negotiation and in the peace that followed he sent an expedition to India which aimed at destroying British control there.[126] The rupture of the peace of Amiens was termed "inevitable" by Linglebach in his article

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126. W. M Sloane, "Napoleon's Plans for a Colonial System," American Historical Review, IV (1899), 439-55.

discussing commercial aspects of the Anglo-French struggle.[127] Amiens remained an uneasy truce during the fourteen months that elapsed between the exchange of ratifications and the outbreak of the new war in 1803.[128]

In America the peace implied the ending of the war-brought shipping boom. Recognizing this, Jacob Crowninshield took a practical view of the peace. He wrote his brother Richard:

> we repub' heartily rejoice at it, many how'r will suffer, It now behoves us to look about us, sell all we can to good men, buy as little as possible in order to lessen our payments for money will soon become scarce. The banks will check & many speculators will be ruined Look out in N Y; it will bear hard on most people there; take care who you trust & demd endorsers or cash. We hope you have not bo[ugh]t the schooner. if you have, send her to Salem & we will fit her out to Europe to carry our goods as we expect now to be obliged to export more pepper Freights will fall; Russia goods, ship, beef, pork flour but we hope Pepper will not. Get all the hard dollars possible; if you can secure 50,000$ so much the better, Take all they'll give you. We shall want them. Hope you have got the notes discounted there; draw on us for as little as possible & at as long a sight as you conveniently can. It is a very important crisis in the commercial & political world We are safe, altho I could wish we had sold more. Buy no more vessels, for they ll fall greatly. We'll let the America go to Sumatra one more voyage if we can get Dollars - - - As the America is the largest ship she ought to go first.[129]

Later Jacob wrote to Richard that many individuals faced ruin because of the peace, especially those who had speculated in

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127. W. E. Linglebach, "Historical Investigation and the Commercial History of the Napoleonic Era," American Historical Review, XIX (1914), 259.

128. Ward, Leathes, Prothero, eds., The Cambridge Modern History, IX (Napoleon), 75-80. This chapter is by Anton Guilland. Hereafter cited as Ward, etc., Cambridge History.

129. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Nov. 16, 1801.

beef and flour and also those who had bought large quantities of Russian goods. Shipbuilders who had new ships for sale saw the price of these ships cut drastically almost overnight.[130]

As for the prospects of peace harming the Crowninshields, they were not too despondent, at least so far as a letter apparently sent to one of their selling houses would indicate. They commented that the peace would not cut the price of pepper, and so "we would not have you sell it except for approved endorsed notes or for cash which in these uncertain times we should preffer to any notes." However great care should be taken by the dealer to select dependable merchants to buy Crowninshield goods on credit.[131] A letter written two weeks later indicated more clearly the dependence of American commerce on the continuation of the war in Europe. The Crowninshields questioned Thomas K. Jones, their Boston merchant, as to the sale of some silk handkerchiefs, and wanted information about whether there was any demand for pepper; "can you dispose of any greater quantity to safe men."[132] Upon receiving a negative answer to these questions, they decided to ship five boxes of handkerchiefs

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130. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Nov. 17, 1801.

131. EI, Crowninshield Ms., George Crowninshield and Sons to - - -, Salem, Nov. 20, 1801.

132. EI, Crowninshield Ms., George Crowninshield and Sons to T. K. Jones, Salem, Dec. 2, 1801.

south on an American coaster, to check prices along the American markets; if no better price could be obtained they would keep the handkerchiefs.

While writing to each other, the Crowninshields were less optimistic about their prospects, although there was no indication of panic or fear for their firm's stability. Richard had bought a ship in New York just before the news of the war arrived, and Jacob wrote that he foresaw a loss of $2,000 on this transaction as the price of ships had fallen that much, or would shortly do so.[133] Later he told of the several failures which had occurred in Boston, and that many more would undoubtedly follow. He told of a cargo of gum which sold at 8.15 ₤ in Liverpool that would have brought 14 ₤ before the peace, but then added. "The Peace effected it as I expected nearly one half, but this we must keep to ourselves." He went on to comment that flour sales were dull in Salem and that wages were remaining high.[134] Early in January of 1802, the Ship Ulysses arrived at Salem from Muscat, carrying coffee,

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133. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Nov. 21, 1801. This vessel was originally called the John Jay. That name was an anathema to the Crowninshield family and in the renaming of the boat Jacob said they could call her anything other than the John Jay. He once suggested Jefferson but finally settled on Telemachus; the source of the Crowninshield's interest in things Greek and Roman indicated by the names Telemachus, Belisarius, Ulysses and Brutus in not evident from their writings.

134. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 11, 1801.

gum arabic, senna leaf, aloes, salt petre, elephants "teath" (tusks?) and several types of medicine. Jacob thought the profits on the ship's cargo would run as high as $30,000, although rumors in Salem had the firm making $100,000 on the trip. Some of the articles would yield a profit of 600 to 800 per cent.[135]

In late February of 1802 the Crowninshield firm experienced one of those misfortunes which made sea commerce dangerous. Two of their ships, the Brutus and the Ulysses went aground and broke up off Cape Cod in a storm.[136] Both ships were insured and the cargoes were partially saved. Crowninshield merchandizing ability is indicated in their handling of the sale of salvaged goods from these wrecked ships. At an auction held in Salem, Jacob told John, if their damaged goods sold over the expected prices they helped them along; if they sold under expectations, they bought them.[137]

Although United States exports dropped from $94,120,000 to $72,480,000[138] in the year following the peace at Amiens, there is little indication of actual discomfort or even loss

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135. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Jan. 5, 1802.

136. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Unsigned to Dear Brothers, No address, Mar. 1802.

137. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to John Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 3, 1802.

138. E. F. Heckscher, Continental System, p. 103.

on the part of the Crowninshields. Despite their loss on the two wrecked ships, they continued to report heavy profits - Benjamin Crowninshield (a cousin) in one of their ships at the Isle of France was reported as making $17,000 profit on his voyage.[139] A pepper ship brought in "6 or 7000 [dollars] " more than they expected.[140] Other letters by the brothers told of profits made on goods from the area of the East Indies.[141] In May of 1802, Jacob spoke of pepper returning 200 per cent profit,[142] and sizeable cargoes of pepper were coming from the Indian Ocean area. When the Belisarius arrived in Salem in July of 1802 with a load of pepper, Jacob reckoned the profit to the Crowninshields at $25,000.[143]

Cheapened insurance rates tended to make shipping a more acceptable occupation during the times of peace. Contrasted with the 20 to 40 per cent that had been charged during the Quasi-War period, the Crowninshields in May of 1802 insured their ships that traveled to the East Indies at from 7½ to 9 per cent and their one ship that was in the European trade

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139. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Mar. 3, 1802.

140. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 21, 1802.

141. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 22, 1802.

142. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to John Crowninshield, Salem, May 14, 1802.

143. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, July 13, 1802.

at 5 per cent.[144] The policies were more lenient also. Whereas during more dangerous times the vessels had been carefully restricted as to what ports were to be visited, the 1802 policies read, "From Salem (& New York) to one or more ports Islands & places situated to the Eastward of the Cape of Good Hope one or more times & at & from them or other of them to the port of discharge in the U. States, with full liberty to touch & trade at any ports on the outward & home voyage."[145] Arguments which frequently cropped up concerning deviations from expected routes were avoided in this sort of contract. Insurance rates continued to drop during the year 1802, and by December of that year Jacob wrote of buying $22,000 insurance at 3 per cent and said that they had been offered $20,000 more (on cargoes valued at $60,000) at 4 per cent. Here as later the Crowninshields were inclined to insure as little as possible, and hope for the best.[146]

During the late summer and autumn of 1802 the full impact of peace seemed to hit the Crowninshields. A falling off of the pepper trade was indicated in a letter received from a Newport merchant in August of 1802, which said that "prospects

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144. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to John Crowninshield, Salem, May 5, 1802.

145. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to John Crowninshield, Salem, May 5, 1802.

146. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 4, 1802 and Salem, Jan. 13, 1803.

to Sumatra, are certainly dull but am in hopes, it will terminate better. than we at present expect -- at any rate the Bay of Benjou & Arabian Sea is before us -- So there we can seek our fortunes."[147] December 1802 brought the news from Gibralter that "coffee, sugar & pepper have fallen considerably in both Italy & France owing to the large quantity sent from your Quarter."[148] Likewise, pepper prices in Holland were reported as being very low.[149] Despite these reports, the Crowninshields continued to send boats into the Indian Ocean for cargoes, preferring to emphacize the sinking Indies trade to that with a Europe no longer engaged in war.

Less tangible, but none the less effective, indications that American shipping was no longer holding its favored position as a much needed neutral carrier appeared during this time. William Fairfield, a Crowninshield captain, reported back that American vessels stopping at Cadiz had to undergo a forty day period of quarantine, except those from Philadelphia which were not admitted.[150] A similar situation

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147. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John Bort to John Crowninshield, Newport, Aug. 23, 1802.

148. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Anderson & Co to George Crowninshield & Sons, Gibralter, Dec. 4, 1802.

149. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 16, 1802.

150. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Jan. 22, 1803 and Wm. Fairfield to George Crowninshield & Sons, Gibralter, Dec. 5, 1802.

prevailed at Bordeaux, except the period of quarantine was only thirty days. John Crowninshield's influence in Bordeaux at this time resulted in the quarantine there being reduced to twelve[151] and then to eight days,[152] but the principle of rather extended quarantine persisted.

During the month of February of 1803, two Crowninshield cargoes in European harbors were reported as being of such inferior quality that they had to be dumped or sold at considerable loss. A shipment of gum arabic and "assafaetida" sent to Havre on the Four Sisters was reported to John at Bordeaux as being of such poor quality that heavy losses occurred.[153] A cargo of pepper sent to Holland was reported as damaged by having the bags broken open, yet the firm handling the goods for the Crowninshields did not bother to send proofs to Salem so they could collect their insurance.[154] Likewise, in February of 1803, Captain Fairfield, having sold a cargo at Gibraltar, was ordered to load his ship with ballast for the return trip to the United States, rather than

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151. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Stroebel & Martini to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Feb. 1, 1803.

152. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Stroebel & Martini to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Feb. 1, 1803.

153. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Hotinger & Co. to John Crowninshield, Havre, Feb. 28, 1803.

154. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Feb. 24, 1803.

pick up a cargo.[155] While this could have been an isolated occurrence, and if so of no significance, in the picture of the times it indicates unfavorable trading conditions. The Crowninshields had not become moderately wealthy during the ten years prior to 1803 by carrying ballast, and ballast has never been noteworthy as a money-making cargo. Similarly, during the scarcities of war years, the continental merchants did not indicate such fussiness over cargo quality as these episodes evidence.

The Peace of Amiens was a brief interruption of hostilities rather than a full-fledged peace in the general sense of the word. Relations between France and Great Britain were strained throughout the eighteen months of peace, and the tension increased noticeably during the spring of 1803, just before the renewal of the war. The markets of Europe in March, April and May of 1803 reflected this uneasiness. An Amsterdam connection wrote John Crowninshield in March that "Owing to the late news from England colonial produce are kept on hand or at least only disposed of at very high prices."[156] In April a French firm (Havre) refused to make any advance to John Crowninshield for goods "unless the objects . . . were in our hands." They feared the outbreak of war and unless the

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155. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Feb. 3, 1803.

156. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wid E. Croeses to John Crowninshield, Amsterdam, Mar. 17, 1803.

goods were delivered they could not risk payment as their port would be closed in short order by the British in the event of war. The same trouble was hinted at as existing in Bordeaux.[157] In April John, in France, saw war as a probable occurrence and although he hoped that it would not come he did acknowledge that "should it be war here in Europe . . . & all our ships that are after pepper get loaded we shall I think make good voyages."[158] With that prospect, merchants tended to hold goods to wait for price increases which seemed sure to come with the renewal of the conflict.

John Crowninshield had gone to France, sailing December 23, 1802, to take care of the firm's business there. He had taken the huge ship America to that country with rather indefinite plans, which included selling her if he could acquire a price he considered acceptable, although Jacob did not think that probable.[159] From the tone of the letters that passed between John and other firm members they expected him to return

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157. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Hotinger & Co. to John Crowninshield, Havre, Apr. 2, 1803.

158. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John to George Crowninshield & Sons, Bordeaux, Apr. 21, 1803.

159. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 4, 1802, and Dec. 23, 1802. The America, rated at 654 tons, was too large for colonial trade and too large for Salem harbor; according to J. D. Phillips, she may have been bought to sell to the government in 1798. Hence, if a good market appeared, the Crowninshields were willing to sell. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, p. 134 and p. 252.

to America shortly. First because of illness and later because of an inclination of his own to do so, John stayed on in France until June of 1805, providing the Crowninshields with the advantage of having a representative at the source of continental commercial problems. This advantage was somewhat nullified, once war broke out. John's French residence caused Great Britain to be suspicious of Crowninshield shipping.

John's major problem consisted of selling Crowninshield goods that were located in France and then in getting the money for those goods out of the country. He was successful beyond the highest hopes of the family in the projected sale of the America. This ship was over 550 tons burden as compared with the ordinary 300 to 400 tons. John thought he might possibly receive between $7,000 and $15,000 for her; he got $27,000 or $28,000. He thought the French wanted to make a privateer of her.[160]

While in France John saw some firsthand evidence of the type of activity the French were to practice so effectively later. He received a note from a William Savage of Bordeaux telling of a fracas which had occurred at sea between a French ketch and the American brig Nancy. The French ship had taken ivory and gold dust from the brig. Savage informed John that

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160. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, May 7, 1803.

if he wanted to contact the owners of the cargo they should be advised that a friend of Savage's could recover one-half the value of it for them. Savage, acting as a go-between, would only require 5 per cent commission on the 50 per cent recovered by the owners. John wrote the owners that he would advise them to comply with the request as their only hope of recovering any of the cargo, valued at 30,000 £ to 40,000 £.[161] Ill-disguised blackmail combined with robbery similar to this appeared often during the trying period of 1809 to 1811, when the operation of the Continental System was at its height. It was indicative of the tension that existed during the Amiens truce when action of this type was so acknowledged by a ship owner as to provide liaison for the robbers.

A second problem that arose for John revealed the unhealthy international situation (resulting from the impending renewal of war) that existed between France and England, as well as a problem for neutrals. John had inquired of his London representative of the possibility of British seizure if he should purchase a condemned British prize while in France. He figured that this sort of action was necessary to get the money he had acquired from the sale of goods out of France. He received the following answer.

As you have friends in France I see no difficulty in your purchasing Prize Ships in order to get your money out of that

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161. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Savage to John Crowninshield, London, Mar. 1803.

Country. Prize English ships bought with your own funds, with an authentic copy of condemnation, Bill of Sale, & such a certificate of property as the American Council can give you on board, may be sent from France to America, thru neutral ports, or England, with little or no risk. With such papers only it would not be prudent to think to perform more than one voyage. From France to either of those countries they might be insured at 5 to 7 pct. Our vessels with French property on board are you know liable to detention & the French goods to confiscation.[162]

During times of 'peace', the two antagonistic powers persisted in detaining neutral vessels for carrying the goods of the other and even confiscating the vessels of the other.

For the neutral carrier during these times of 'peace' the problems were great. Strict regulations governed removal of money from belligerently peaceful France. Vessels for sale in France, at prices favorable to the "neutral", might well be taken by Great Britain as illegally seized British property. British vessels were being seized in France; it seems highly unlikely that British property would be welcomed where British ships were confiscated. The Amiens break in the war between the two Goliaths of Europe saw the American "neutral" in a position where he had most of the competition and controls of peacetime shipping with few of the compensation safety factors. The war which broke out again on May 16, 1803, could hardly be looked upon by the Americans as anything other than a blessing, howevermuch they acknowledged the attending evils the war would bring to Europe.

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162. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Samuel Williams to John Crowninshield, London, Mar. 1803.

The ten years between 1793 and 1803 had seen tremendous changes in the position of the Crowninshields. In 1793 they had owned three small schooners engaged primarily in West Indies trade; in 1803 they owned several large ships that travelled wherever traders went and were in a position to embark on an expansion period that would eclipse any of their previous accomplishments. In 1793 they appeared to be no more significant in the United States than other families of capable ship captains may have been; in 1803 they were recognized leaders of the Jeffersonian element of Salem and one of the brothers, Jacob, was a member of the national House of Representatives. Their commercial prosperity was no hollow thing. They had lost, by shipwreck, in one storm considerably more shipping (in tonnage) than they had possessed in 1793, and had emerged damaged, but with no threat of bankruptcy. The Crowninshields had become rich and influential in those ten years.

The acquisition of such wealth and influence naturally required conditions conducive to such activity. The conditions developed from the spur given to American trade by European affairs. At the beginning of the Wars of the French Revolution American traders took over the major portion of the French and Dutch colonial trade. Gradually this extension of American trade included much of the British carrying trade as well. Under these circumstances, the increase of Crowninshield fortunes coincided with an increase in American mercantile activity. In

the area of re-exported goods especially, American trade climbed to new highs by the year 1801. The overall increase, too, was remarkable.

As this commercial activity was brought on by affairs in Europe, they continued to exert a dominant influence on it. When French seizures mounted in the Quasi-War period as the Directory tried to retaliate against Great Britain through the American trader, American trade slowed its increase and finally showed a decrease in tonnage. Ending of hostilities at Amiens had a like influence, and in early 1803 the pinch of the cutting down of continental trade occasioned by that peace was being felt in America. Under the capable leadership of Jacob Crowninshield, the family merchant firm watched Europe expectantly in the first months of 1803 to see if the continent would renew the stimulation it had afforded American commerce for most of the previous decade.

EXPORT TRADE OF THE UNITED STATES - 1790-1817
(in dollars)

	Domestic exports	Foreign exports (re-exports)	Total exports
1790	19,670,000	540,000	20,210,000
1791	18,500,000	510,000	19,010,000
1792	19,000,000	1,750,000	20,750,000
1793	24,000,000	2,110,000	26,110,000
1794	26,500,000	6,530,000	33,030,000
1795	39,500,000	8,490,000	47,990,000
1796	40,760,000	26,300,000	67,060,000
1797	29,850,000	27,000,000	56,850,000
1798	28,530,000	33,000,000	61,530,000
1799	33,140,000	45,520,000	78,670,000
1800	31,840,000	39,130,000	70,970,000
1801	47,470,000	46,640,000	94,120,000
1802	36,710,000	35,700,000	72,480,000
1803	42,210,000	13,590,000	55,800,000
1804	41,470,000	36,230,000	77,700,000
1805	42,390,000	53,180,000	95,570,000
1806	41,250,000	60,280,000	101,540,000
1807	48,700,000	59,640,000	108,340,000
1808	9,430,000	13,000,000	22,430,000
1809	31,410,000	20,800,000	52,200,000
1810	42,370,000	24,390,000	66,760,000
1811	45,290,000	16,020,000	61,320,000
1812	30,030,000	8,500,000	38,530,000
1813	25,010,000	2,850,000	27,860,000
1814	6,780,000	150,000	6,930,000
1815	45,970,000	6,580,000	52,560,000
1816	64,780,000	17,140,000	81,920,000
1817	68,310,000	19,360,000	87,670,000

These figures are taken from E. F. Heckscher, Continental System, pp. 103 and 146.

IMPORT TRADE OF THE UNITED STATES - 1790-1817
(in dollars)

	Home-used Imports	Total Imports
1790	22,460,000	23,000,000
1791	28,690,000	29,200,000
1792	29,750,000	31,500,000
1793	28,990,000	31,100,000
1794	28,070,000	34,600,000
1795	61,270,000	69,760,000
1796	55,140,000	81,440,000
1797	48,380,000	75,380,000
1798	35,550,000	68,550,000
1799	33,550,000	69,070,000
1800	52,120,000	91,250,000
1801	64,720,000	111,360,000
1802	40,560,000	76,330,000
1803	51,070,000	64,670,000
1804	48,770,000	85,000,000
1805	67,420,000	120,600,000
1806	69,130,000	129,410,000
1807	78,860,000	138,500,000
1808	43,990,000	56,990,000
1809	38,600,000	59,400,000
1810	61,010,000	85,400,000
1811	37,380,000	53,400,000
1812	68,540,000	77,030,000
1813	19,160,000	22,010,000
1814	12,820,000	12,970,000
1815	106,460,000	113,040,000
1816	129,960,000	147,100,000
1817	79,890,000	99,250,000

These figures are taken from E. F. Heckscher, Continental System, pp. 103 and 146.

Chapter III

THE SPOIL OF BATTLE - EUROPE NOURISHES THE CROWNINSHIELDS 1803 - 1807

The opening month of the new war in Europe, May 1803, found the home firm of George Crowninshield and Sons carrying on its usual activities, and expanding its fleet on the prospects of war arriving. The Telemachus came to Salem in early May with a cargo of gum arabic, and although Jacob saw small profits on that he wanted her unloaded in a hurry and sent back to the virgin island she had stumbled on by accident for more of the same.[1] At the same time he warned Richard that the outbreak of war would probably break some New York merchants and that Richard should be careful with whom he dealt.[2] Richard had become convinced that the Arabian trade was valuable and thought it advisable for the firm to send the gum arabic to Europe on one vessel and send the others out to Arabia and Sumatra.[3] Another letter complained of losses sustained on some pepper sold without the firm's consent at

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1. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, May 2, 1803.

2. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, May 6, 1803.

3. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, May 8, 1803.

Amsterdam.[4]

An indication of the problems of American shipping also is evidenced by the presence of Russian goods in the plans and problems of the Crowninshields. As in 1799, Russian goods seem to have been handled by the firm only during periods when other markets failed, because of excessive dangers or else the excessive competition of peace. In May of 1803, Jacob indicated that the Russian duck was much in demand, probably because of the expansion brought by prospective war in Europe.[5]

Jacob continued to regard the outbreak of war as a favorable business factor. He wrote Richard in this light, "The affair of Peace or war will be determined in a day or two, all are anxious. many however dread it. for my part I shall regret its taking place, still as individuals I think we may turn it to our advantage, but its effects will be dreadful upon Europe."[6] On May 24 the Crowninshields bought the ship Margaret at a Salem auction for $12,750.[7] The Telemachus was loaded for

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4. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Richard Crowninshield to S. Williams, New York, May 15, 1803.

5. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, May 20,1803 and May 23, 1803.

6. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, May 11, 1803.

7. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, May. 24, 1803. The antipathy between Salemites and the Crowninshields is fully indicated by the account of their purchasing the Margaret. Jacob wrote, "The ship Margaret was sold

the Isle of France at the end of May and sent out with orders to procure coffee. However if the price were favorable, the Captain, Fairfield, had permission to sell the vessel at the island. Likewise Jacob made plans for possible sale of the Margaret at the Isle of France "if 25 or 35,000$ is offered for her." This money, in turn, could then be used to buy a larger vessel.[8] The Crowninshields did not want war, but were not averse to using it to their own profit, and their expansion in the spring pointed toward their being able to do just that.

The renewal of the European conflict on May 16, 1803 did not catch the Crowninshield firm by surprise; its members had been expecting a break for so long that it came as a sort of anti-climax. They had been conducting their affairs throughout the month of May as though the war had actually been declared, and their actions were not groundless. With the ending of the Amiens peace, the family began pushing its economic activity to an even greater extent. John sent a note from Bordeaux to "any Crowninshield captain at Havre" directing him

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at auction this forenoon for 12750 dolls 3 & 6 months Credit, and we were the purchasers. she is a fine vessel & extremely well found. the copper is good & she has nearly two suits of sails. we got Cpt. White to bid for us & only George attended the sale, taking care to go late. I believe none thought we were the buyers, till the sale was over, or we might have paid a thousand dollars more. we had limited Cpt. White to 13,500 & George had orders to make a private signal for 500 more.

8. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, May 30, 1803.

to not sell any cargo, especially gums and pepper, until they heard from him, as prices were climbing steadily in Bordeaux.[9] A report to John from his Amsterdam merchant indicated that coffee and pepper prices were soaring there, with "demand increasing every day." At the same time, however, the merchant reported rumors of vessels being captured. He said that insurance rates had gone up to between 8 and 10 per cent, although he thought they would drop to 6 or 7 per cent with time.[10]

The prestige of the Crowninshields had been improved by the election of Jacob to the House of Representatives in the November elections of the year of 1802. Jacob had run against former Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, and in a hotly contested election had defeated that prominent Federalist.[11] From 1803 until his death in 1808 Jacob sat in the United States Congress as a Salem Republican, and with time became a prominent adviser to Jefferson and Madison on naval and especially merchant marine affairs. Throughout this time, he continued to dominate the activities of the Crowninshield firm.

John's letters to Salem from France give further the tenor of the family firm's feeling regarding their business. He wrote for them to rush trade to India and to the African

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9. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to any Crowninshield Captain at Havre, Bordeaux, June 11, 1803.

10. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wid E. Croese to John Crowninshield, Amsterdam, June 16, 1803.

11. Salem Gazette, Nov. 2, 1802.

coffee producing areas along the Red Sea. He said that they should have bought the Margaret (which they had bought) and the Java (which they had not), and urged constant increases in business ventures.[12] Later letters continued in that same vein, "Remember you cannot make too much money this war -- drive the India trade hard."[13] and "Remember that gums sold in France last war at 60s".[14]

Activity in Salem followed the pattern that John suggested. Jacob had already sent out $100,000 worth of property by the time John had sent these bits of advice. Jacob correctly estimated the sentiment of the belligerents also by sending out all Crowninshield ships in the early period without the high priced insurance. He reasoned this way. "I do not think the belligerent nations will at first capture out vessels. our flag will be more respected than last war, & if it is not we must [make]it so & a great deal will depend upon our Gov't assuming [a] decided tone upon the first attack of our neutral rights.[15] The gamble paid off and all of the Crowninshield

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12. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John to George Crowninshield & Co., Bordeaux, June 29, 1803.

13. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John to George Crowninshield & Co., Paris, July 13, 1803.

14. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John to George Crowninshield & Co., Paris, July 21, 1803.

15. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, June 18, 1803.

ships completed their voyages successfully, and avoided the increased insurance rates that had resulted from the declaration of war. Jacob's appraisal of the situation proved to be remarkably accurate. Eli F. Heckscher, probably the most renowned student of the Continental System, observes that "Especially during the first years after the new outbreak of war in 1803 the treatment of the neutrals, both Americans and Danes, was unusually mild and their shipping was little disturbed."[16] However, profitable commerce for the optimistic American merchants was to be by no means easy and smooth.

In the enthusiasm of looking for new profits with the outbreak of the war, the Crowninshields expanded considerably. John inquired again shortly after the declaration of war of the possibilities of British action against a ship purchased from France. He received this qualified negative answer.

> The purchase of an Enemy's Vessel in time of War is liable to great suspicion. Should the Vessel be sent in for trial you would most probably be called upon to show whence arose the funds to purchase the Vessel & Cargo. If it appeared that they were advanced by S & M [Strobel and Martini, the French merchants through whom the Crowninshields dealt] & that you had furnished the business which brought you to France, the Court might, I apprehend, consider it as a French transaction; but if they arose from the Proceeds of the America cargo which you were withdrawing from France, there would be little doubt of restitution.[17]

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16. E. F. Heckscher, Continental System, p. 106.

17. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Samuel Williams to John Crowninshield, London, June 17, 1803.

The letter closed by warning John that his presence in France would make any transactions negotiated by him appear suspicious to an English court; the possibility of his property being captured and condemned was much greater under the circumstances. As a result of this warning, John avoided purchasing any ships while in France following the outbreak of the war.

Expansion at home was the keynote of the family activity during the twenty-four month period after the declaration of war. Under the stimulus of new profit possibilities the Crowninshields expanded at the highest rate they were to assume during the meteoric career of the firm. Seven vessels, the Two Sons, the Margaret, the John, the America, the Union, the Hind, and the Traveller were registered in the name of one or more members of the family during that period.[18] Richard advised John to buy a ship in Bordeaux and head her himself on the voyage back to America, but John apparently thought better of the warning from England and decided not to do so. The Crowninshields bought additional wharf space in Salem at the same time they contracted to have the ship America built.[19] They added a new store to their Salem holdings.[20] The reopening

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18. Salem Ship Registers.

19. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, July 14, 1803.

20. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, Nov. 13, 1803.

of the war in Europe found the Crowninshields willing and able to expand. They recognized that the renewal of the European struggle was bound to cause an acceleration of neutral commerce, and their expansion came so they could take advantage of it.

The early results of the war, however, did not indicate that the Crowninshields had been wise in their gambles on bigger and better profits from the expanded commerce. On the continent of Europe, John Crowninshield found cash difficult to obtain; his request for an advance on cargoes from an Amsterdam house met the same cool reception that a similar request had received during the unstable days of the Amiens truce.[21] Richard Crowninshield in New York reported that "stores are shutting up - indeed business is bad since the War commenced in Europe."[22] Strobel and Martini, the Crowninshield merchant representative in Bordeaux, reported that business was slow for them and complained of a dearth of American shipping in the harbor.[23] Even as late as December of 1803, George Sr., complained[24] from Salem of the lack of ready cash available for the trade to

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21. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wid E. Croese to John Crowninshield, Amsterdam, July 26, 1803.

22. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to George Crowninshield & Sons, New York, Aug. 2, 1803.

23. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Strobel and Martini to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Sept. 30, 1803.

24. PM, Crowninshield Ms., George, Sr., to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 3, 1803.

the Indian area, and from New York Richard wrote that "business is at a stand here nothing doing 6 or 700 vessels in port. the regular ships for E- - -d dont sail, owing to the uncertain state of affairs in Europe, and if the present state should not change soon it wi [11] be attended with serious consequences to some of our large commercial houses who cannot bear to stand still."[25] The barren outlook indicated by these comments were temporary however.

A glimmer of the prosperity to come was indicated by reports from Copenhagen in October of 1803 that the cargo of the Hind had been sold at high prices, and that prices had gone still higher there. Gum that the Crowninshields had bought for speculation purposes had risen in price and "coffee & sugar stand very high, we made no doubt of the prices keeping up."[26] John notified their Copenhagen house the following month that the firm had had two ships arrive at Salem loaded with pepper and gums and that some of the cargo would be sent there.[27] The favorable position of the neutral was further indicated by a notice from the Crowninshield's English agent relative to British action as far as goods entering the continent of Europe.

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25. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, Dec. 25, 1803.

26. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Riberg & Co. to John Crowninshield, Copenhagen, Oct. 25, 1803.

27. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Riberg & Co., Paris, Nov. 26, 1803.

It said, "Pepper from Sumatra may come to Europe in the Same Ship. - - Pepper or other goods from the enemies colonies in E. or W. Indies may come from the U. S. here or to any neutral port in Europe, in the same ship but to an enemy's port in Europe, it would be prudent to reship the goods in another, to avoid all suspicion of collusion."[28] Under those circumstances, the prospects looked bright indeed to the industrious neutral carrier. Trade to the continent promised to become much better in the winter of 1803-04.

France itself remained the major exception to the unrestrained continental bull market which developed. Despite the arrival of several American ships in France in November of 1803[29] prospects did not appear as good as elsewhere. The reason for this was that the French were reluctant to allow cash to be taken from the country. The fact that merchants were forced to take French brandy or wine or glassware for their produce from the Indies left both American and French traders uncertain and cautious in their dealings with each other. The firm through which the Crowninshields dealt, Strobel and Martini, was suspected by Captain Ward of the Minerva in his dealings with them in 1803,[30] and subsequent events bore him out. The same feeling

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28. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Samuel Williams to George Crowninshield & Sons, London, Oct. 22, 1803.

29. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Strobel & Martini to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Nov. 13, 1803.

30. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Capt. Richard Ward to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Nov. 14, 1803.

was reflected in the actions of the ever-alert Jacob in America, who had Richard make drafts from New York on the French merchants and advised John to transfer all funds from them to London if at all possible.[31] The action was sound. Strobel and Martini went bankrupt early in 1804, while they held considerable Crowninshield funds. John immediately sent out letters to representatives of the Crowninshield firm in Copenhagen, New York, Baltimore, Charleston, South Carolina, Norfolk, Virginia, Philadelphia, Boston and New Orleans asking them to hold any assets of the French firm for the Crowninshields.[32] Despite this move, the Crowninshields lost between 90,000 and 100,000 francs because of the collapse of the firm.

The net result of this continuous trouble with the markets in France was that Jacob began to advise discontinuing sending cargoes to Europe and concentrating on handling trade only between the Indies and the United States. Others could run the risks of loss in continental commerce, the Crowninshields would stay with the safer Indian Ocean trade as they had done in the 1790's. The problem of getting their goods

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31. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Washington, Dec. 13, 1803.

32. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Samuel Williams, Bordeaux, Jan. 6, 1804. See also letters dated Jan. 8, 1804, Bordeaux, from John Crowninshield to Riberg and Co. of Copenhagen, Baily and Bogert of New York, H. Payson of Baltimore, Jon. Cort of Charleston, S. C., Phinias Dana, Esq., of Norfolk, Va., J. W. Faussett of Philadelphia, Chew & Relf of New Orleans, and Thomas K. Jones of Boston.

into France free of duty was out of the question, according to Jacob, and so he advocated selling it in New York at auction.[33] Still later in January, Jacob came to the point where he was willing to trade pepper for a ship if cash were not available.[34]

The major problem for the merchant following the turn of the year continued to be the acquisition of dollars in hard cash. Jacob, from his vantage point in the Capital in Washington, indicated that they were obtainable there, and had Richard come down to get some.[35] The bullion shortage continued to plague the Crowninshields well into 1804. Jacob remarked on the difficulty of obtaining dollars in a letter in February.[36] By the middle of April, dollars were more scarce in Salem than they had been for the previous ten years. The dollar shortage apparently was caused by the restrictions against allowing money to flow out of European countries, particularly France. Although credit transactions could be handled in America, cash was carried on the India voyages, and inveterate Indies merchants like the Crowninshields felt the scarcity severely.

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33. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob Crowninshield to ------, Washington, Jan. 22, 1804.

34. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Washington, Jan. 30, 1804.

35. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Washington, Jan. 20, 1804.

36. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Washington, Feb. 7, 1804.

Notes were being discounted at between 1 and 2½ per cent per month and dollars were selling at 5 per cent over par and in one or two cases Jacob had seen them sell as high as 7 per cent over par.[37] Later in April George, Sr. wrote Richard not to enter into any dealings with unknown merchants and especially not to draw on the home firm for money.[38] In July, Jacob told John that "business is flourishing as formerly but money is so scarce the India ships are not numerous."[39] With the Crowninshield firm having a traditional interest in Indian affairs and with the dollars that made that trade possible hard to get, much of the correspondence among the family members dealt directly with that problem.

The problem of getting money gives the impression that these were hard times for the Crowninshields, but nothing was further from being the truth. Occasionally the howls of anguish from these merchants indicated dissatisfaction with the very conditions which were creating the trade which allowed them to grow wealthy. Despite their fears over shortages of cash to send to India, their ships continued to go out and return with valuable cargoes. Richard told John in February,

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37. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 13, 1804.

38. PM, Crowninshield Ms., George, Sr., to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 28, 1804.

39. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to John Crowninshield, Salem, July 10, 1804.

1804, of the arrival of the Margaret and the Telemachus with coffee and remarked that coffee was the paying article at that time. The Crowninshields added to their business ventures by taking 120 shares of stock (twenty each for the six members of the family) in a new insurance company which set up in Salem.[40] Benjamin estimated the profits on the average Indian voyage at between $30,000 and $40,000, and spoke of the advantages of continuing that trade.[41] The house which represented the Crowninshields in Copenhagen sent John word that the cargo of the ship Fame had brought in $60,000, which was to be paid in Spanish dollars.[42] This cargo, which was made up in America, was said by Richard to be the poorest they had ever made, the profits not running more than $10,000 or $15,000.[43] Later in the year half shares on the John and Telemachus cargoes brought in profits of $20,000, which was considered by Jacob as "a good 4 months job."[44] The year 1804 represented a profitable period

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40. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, Feb. 20, 1804.

41. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Benjamin to John Crowninshield, Salem, Mar. 10, 1804.

42. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Roberg & Co., to John Crowninshield, Copenhagen, June 19, 1804.

43. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, July 30, 1804.

44. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Washington, Nov. 29, 1804. These same voyages were reported by Richard to John in a letter dated New York, Nov. 3, 1804, as netting $30,000 on their coffee for the Crowninshields and $5,000 for Captain Silsbee. EI, Crowninshield Ms.

for the firm of George Crowninshield and Sons.

As may be expected, this profitable period was clouded by occasional setbacks. The major area of trouble for the Crowninshields centered around France. French policy at this time, as well as later, followed the old mercantilist concept that a favorable balance of trade increased one's national strength; conversely, the nation which could not sell its goods would be forced into an unfavorable balance of trade and consequently weakened. Their policy during the peace of Amiens and in the months later aimed at excluding British goods from France, first by tariffs and after the renewal of war by outright prohibition. The penalty for bringing colonial or manufactured goods of British origin into France was confiscation. Certificates of origin were required of the neutral shipper, and vessels which had touched at British ports were not admitted to French ports.

Napoleon's system had a positive as well as a negative side. Tariffs on goods which were imported were subject to drawbacks if French goods were exported. Under this arrangement raw cotton paid a tariff for admission. If the carrier exported French produced cotton goods, he received a drawback of five-sixths of his tariff fee. Restrictions against taking currency from France were related to this desire to maintain a favorable balance of trade.[45] The problem the Crowninshields

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45. E. F. Heckscher, Continental System, pp. 83-87.

had of getting money out of the country and the loss of property occasioned by the failure of the firm of Strobel and Martini has already been mentioned. After losing heavily there once the Crowninshields were not anxious to gamble on the possibility or a repeat performance, so they avoided sending goods to France whenever they could do so.

The loss of the French markets caused another venture into the Russian area for goods, with results which were not favorable to the Crowninshields. In April of 1804, John wrote Capt. James Brace of the ship Hind to take his cargo, which would not sell in Bordeaux, to Copenhagen and then to proceed to St. Petersburg for a return cargo to New York.[46] Two months later Captain Brace reported back that he had been to Russia and gotten a cargo of hemp and iron, but not enough for a full load. He wrote that there had been a large number of American ships in Russia and that imports were cheap and exports were dear. He closed with the warning prophecy, "I do expect tham goods will not tirn to much Profit."[47] Captain Brace arrived in Salem late in August, having been stopped by the British who impressed one seaman.[48] As to the final disposition of

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46. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Capt. James Brace, Bordeaux, Apr. 31, 1804.

47. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Capt. J. Brace to Richard Crowninshield, Copenhagen, June 27, 1804 and EI, Crowninshield Ms., Capt. J. Brace to John Crowninshield, Copenhagen, June 27, 1804.

48. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Aug. 31, 1804.

the Russian cargo, it was what seemed to be the normal one for Crowninshield ventures into Russian produce. Jacob reported the sale price as low, but "they could do no better - & a great deal more is coming. & it has already sold at much lower in Boston proper."[49]

Another problem created by the French came from their uninhibited use of privateers. This situation might have resulted in less worry and higher insurance rates had the Crowninshields been inclined to insure their ships, but, as earlier, when insurance ran prohibitively high (10 per cent and over), they tended to rely on the ability of their ships and captains to outwit and outsail the privateers. The year 1804 found the various members of the firm constantly worried about the fate of their vessels. Richard commented on the danger from French ships in letters to John. The family had sent vessels to Haiti (Hispaniola) in the spring of that year, and at one time had given up on their safe arrival.[50] At one stage of the development, the firm asked about insurance premiums on a ship armed with sixteen guns and forty-five men and sent to the area of the West Indies for cargo, but apparently gave up on that possibility.[51] The two ships that went to the West Indies

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49. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Sept. 5, 1804.

50. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to John Crowninshield, Salem, May 7, 1804.

51. EI, Crowninshield Ms., George Crowninshield & Sons to Jacob Ashton, Esq., Salem, Apr. 23, 1804.

in the summer of 1804 were armed.[52] They reported seeing French privateers and being chased by another vessel which they assumed to be a British frigate.[53]

The French were also responsible for the failure of the Crowninshields to find the Amsterdam market all that it had been, as Holland was completely dominated by France during this period. Richard told John that European markets had seldom realized a profit to the firm. "We have to be sure sometimes found a convenience in making some European shipments, and in the most of them have been confoundedly cheated & plundered, particularly at Amsterdam."[54]

Jacob had voiced somewhat mild opposition to trade with France at the end of 1803 and in January of 1804. Based upon the fears and trouble of the late winter and the spring and summer of 1804, this opposition changed into a definite prohibition of European trade by late in the year. The increasing trend in this direction is plainly discernable in the following quotations from letters written by the different brothers. In February, 1804, "I am glad the Margaret is going round the Cape of Good Hope It is much better than to send her to Europe,

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52. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, June 18, 1804.

53. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Aug. 28, 1804.

54. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, Mar. 25, 1804.

yet as Coffee is amazing high there it might be well to send 5 or 600 bags on freight to Copenhagen, & order the proceeds remitted to London."[55] In March, 1804, "Considering we can make a voyage to India nearly as soon as one to Europe & taking into view what we have allready there we shall sell our coffee here; for when we send to any Port in Europe 3 & 4 mo must lapse before we can draw and we push and strain all parts taught."[56] Still later in March Richard wrote that they had to recoup their losses (the ones suffered from Strobel and Martini). "India voyages must be our aim <u>& there our Fortune lies</u> -- and sales in this country if possible -- the European prospects sometimes appear flattering -- but great or even small profits are but seldom realized."[57]

In June of 1804 Richard wrote to John that he hoped he had salvaged some of their losses from Bordeaux. He advised John to come home, and said that the firm would trust no more goods to Bordeaux.[58] In July, 1804, "I wish all the Hind's funds were in London from Copenhagen. no profits from Russias goods or any other from Europe. this you may be <u>sure of</u> - the

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55. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Washington, Feb. 20, 1804.

56. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Benjamin to John Crowninshield, Salem, Mar. 10, 1804.

57. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, Mar. 25, 1804.

58. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, June 10, 1804.

determination has been to send nothing more to any part of France or Holland & We think not to change our determination."[59] Finally, in November of 1804, Richard wrote that "We observe the markets are looking up in Bordeaux but I apprehend we shall make no shipments there our plans are well fixed for mor than 2 mo."[60]

Over the major portion of the year 1804 the Crowninshields avoided contact with the European markets wherever possible, even to the extent of sending their ships to the area of the West Indies. When they ventured into the Russian area their experience was similar to what it had been in the earlier period, that Russian goods did not provide profitable trade in most cases. Their usual plan of trading to the Indian Ocean area in the main and allowing others to handle the contact with Europe was followed by them throughout most of 1804.

Reports from their European contacts in general indicated similar action by others. In late October of 1804 their Copenhagen representative, Ryberg and Co., sent John Crowninshield a balance statement and the following description of the market there: "Our market is very favourable at present and we have every reason to expect it will prove so next spring, when

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59. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, July 30, 1804.

60. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, Nov. 1, 1804.

we shall be glad to receive the commands of your friends.[61] From Bordeaux came the following, "The markets continue much as for several months Sugar Cotton & Tobacco excepted, all of which have risen from 3 to 5 p cent. There are but few vessels in port & not many expected generally. -- although for my part I calculate differently for soon as the state of this market is known I am pursuaded it will produce many adventures."[62] The London market was described: "Sugar & coffee will be high in the Spring -- quantities on hand being very small. Cotton wool has risen about 6 pct & some ports more."[63] Favorable and rising markets on the continent indicated lack of American carriers of goods at this time almost as completely as does the lack of American ships in the various ports.

Statistics on American trade in general over the years 1800 to 1804 follow the general pattern indicated by the experiences of the Crowninshields during that same time. Total exports reached a peak of $94,120,000 in 1801. This figure was almost equally divided between domestic exports and foreign

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61. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Ryberg & Co. to John Crowninshield, New York, Nov. 1, 1804. As these reports came from commission merchants, whose income depended upon the quantity of business they handled, they must be viewed with some caution.

62. EI, Crowninshield Ms., S. B. Wigginton to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Nov. 29, 1804, and Leon Cohen to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Nov. 28, 1804.

63. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Samuel Williams to John Crowninshield, London, Dec. 11, 1804.

re-exports. Imports for 1801 totalled $111,360,000, but of this amount only $64,720,000, approximately 57 per cent, was consumed at home. The years affected by the Amiens peace, those of 1802 and 1803, saw a sharp drop in all areas of American trade. In 1803 total exports had shrunk to $55,800,000. Foreign goods handled in the re-export trade had naturally dropped most drastically. Contrasted with 1801 when foreign goods re-exported were valued at $46,640,000, the 1803 re-export figure had shrunk to only $13,590,000. This re-export trade was unprofitable in peacetime; the carrying of goods to the neutral shores of the United States was unnecessary for nations no longer at war. The other area where this decline in war-induced trade was visible, imports, showed a similar decline. From the 1801 figure of $111,360,000, American imports dropped to $64,670,000 in 1803. Whereas only 57 per cent of the 1801 total imports had been consumed domestically in 1801, 80 per cent ($51,070,000) of the 1803 imports were used in the United States. The catalytic effect of the European war upon American commerce is clearly shown in these statistics.[64]

This trend began to change with the shipping statistics for the year 1804. Although domestic exports were slightly lower in 1804 than they had been in 1803, total exports climbed

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64. These figures are taken from E. F. Heckscher, Continental System, p. 103.

to $77,700,000. Imports show a similar trend. Domestically used imports were reduced from $51,070,000 in 1803 to $48,770,000 in 1804, but total imports increased during this same period by more than 30 per cent, from $64,670,000 to $85,000,000.

These figures show two characteristics of American commerce in general which apply specifically to the trade of the Crowninshields throughout the first twelve years of the war in Europe. First, the tremendous growth of American commerce depended almost entirely upon the existence of the war in Europe; it increased and declined with war and peace in Europe as surely as a column of mercury rises and falls with changes in atmospheric pressure. Secondly, the figures which responded most significantly to war conditions in Europe were those dealing with foreign re-exports, the fringe area of commerce which the belligerent powers were most apt to consider within their power to regulate. Foreign re-exports in the year of peace of 1802-03 represented 28 per cent of the last complete year of war trading, and in the first year of fighting, re-exports climbed to 267 per cent of what they had been only one year previously. This contrasts with exports of native products which climbed about 15 per cent between 1802 and 1803 and actually declined slightly the first year of the war.

Turning to the Crowninshields, their trade during late 1802 and early 1803 tended to decline in the same proportion as that of the nation as a whole. With their realization of the impending war they consciously increased their shipping

ventures throughout the spring of 1803. These figures would be reflected in the national figures for 1804 rather than those quoted for 1803, as four to six months each way were required to complete a trip to the East Indies and also as the figures represent a year running from October 1 to September 30. This acceleration remained constant throughout the year 1804, although the Crowninshields found the importing of goods for the re-export trade more to their liking than completing the entire process of supplying the warring continental powers with the products of their colonies.

The Crowninshield trade was overwhelmingly that which was most affected by the war in Europe. Aside from the occasional Russian cargoes, the Crowninshields dealt in pepper, in coffee, in gum arabic, and in drugs or cloths from the Indies. As such they represent the area of American commerce most influenced by the war in Europe and were most dependent upon it. Their trade was a trade which had come into existence with the beginning of the war in Europe in 1792; it had flourished during the war periods down to 1801 when it had suffered a decline with the truce of Amiens. When the war was renewed in 1803, the Crowninshields again began to receive the benefits of the war-inspired neutral shipping between French and Dutch colonies and the two mother countries. The first of the year 1805 did not indicate an impending change in the conditions which had raised the Crowninshields to a position of power and wealth in Salem, and in the United States as well.

The accretion of the wealth, position, and power which added up to considerable prominence for the Crowninshield family by the beginning of the year 1805 might well be summarized. Their wealth was considerable. Definite statements of their total possessions are not available, but occasionally they refer to the amounts of goods or money that they have on hand at one particular time. In early 1804, for example, Benjamin wrote Richard an estimate of their wealth in goods and ships alone; that is, wealth which did not include any store of wharf property, and none of their shares in the insurance company, newspaper, or their various holdings of real estate. At that time, their wealth included $358,500 in goods and cash plus nine ships which Benjamin assessed at $111,000 for a total of $469,000 (sic).[65] The estimate of worth of the ships in these figures is extremely conservative for a wartime figure; if Benjamin's estimate of their wealth in goods was likewise conservative this would be a low estimate of their actual commercial wealth.

Their position in the nation and community had likewise climbed considerably by this time. Jacob had been elected to Congress in 1802 against the formidable Federalist opposition of former Secretary of State Timothy Pickering. More significant, he had even carried his native city of Salem, which

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65. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Benjamin to Richard Crowninshield, Feb. 8, 1804.

was a traditional stronghold of Federalism. On the occasion of this election the Essex Register, the Republican paper in which Jacob held a part interest, wrote, "In Salem the greatest number of votes were given ever known. The result was in favor of Hon. Jacob Crowninshield, Esq. The Selectmen did themselves great honor through the day and will derive a greatful remembrance from their fellow citizens.[66] The Salem Gazette, the Federalist paper, reported the election in the following terms, "Mr. Crowninshield, when he goes to Congress - for, 'in spite of nature and his stars,' go he will - will appear there as a representative from Massachusetts - But he will not be a Representative of Massachusetts - he will not be even the Representative of Essex South District - We trust he will be the true Representative of a portion of men who were politically made for the day of his triumph, and who will never more be seen, till called out again by orders which they dare not disobey."[67] Jacob carried the election by getting 1400 votes to 1293 votes for Pickering.

Standing for reelection in 1804, Jacob again proved his political popularity by increasing his margin over the Federalist candidate by 450 votes. He defeated his new opponent, Read, 1884 to 1324 votes for a substantial triumph.[68] Again

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66. Essex Register, Nov. 4, 1802.

67. Salem Gazette, Dec. 3, 1802.

68. Essex Register, Nov. 8, 1804.

the Gazette took a rather dubious view of the qualifications of Jacob Crowninshield, but the very harshness of the criticism in their last edition before the election reflected the formidible strength that the Republicans had acquired under Jacob's leadership. They commented that the Register had complained of their insinuations concerning Crowninshield and then, "We mean to insinuate nothing; but to say, in unequivocal terms, that he is totally unfit, both in point of principles & talents, for the situation he desires, and that the interests of Essex South District, and indeed of all America, forbid that he should receive our suffrage."

Shortly after the 1804 election Jacob received new honors when Jefferson asked him to accept the office of Secretary of the Navy. After writing to his wife, who had been in ill health, Jacob decided to decline the position. He wrote, "It is seperation from my family that I most dread. It is the fear that I could not pursuade her without doing violence to her feelings to come & reside in Washington, during that part of the time when I ought to be on the spot. It is the apprehension that seperate from my family & connections for a long period, I should not only be unhappy myself, but feel certain that I deprived them in some degree of that share of happiness which possibly my presence might contribute to promote."[70] Despite

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69. Salem Gazette, Oct. 30, 1804.

70. PM, Crowninshield Ms., (Copy) Jacob Crowninshield to Thomas Jefferson, Washington, Jan. 24, 1805.

Jacob's refusal to accept the position, his name was sent to the Senate by Jefferson in March of 1805 and his appointment was confirmed by that body. A copy of the commission to the office shows that it was signed by both Jefferson and Secretary of State Madison.[71]

Another indication of the prominence of the Crowninshields was the naming of their Salem minister, Dr. William Bentley, as Chaplain of the House of Representatives in 1805. Although Dr. Bentley refused the honorary position, Jacob's considerable influence in the House of Representatives is revealed by the choice going to his minister.[72]

In Salem itself, their position had improved tremendously, and the opposition gave them the respect that goes with power. Perhaps a statement of Dr. Bentley best shows the change that had been accomplished by the Crowninshields. "The great success which attends the Crowninshields has so far eclipsed the successors of Mr. Derby that they move into the shadow unseen. The names of Pickman & Derby no longer stand preeminent in the business & navigation of the Town."[73]

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71. PM, Crowninshield Ms. (Copy) List of nominees sent to Senate by Thomas Jefferson and Commission of Office for Jacob Crowninshield signed by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

72. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Washington, Nov. 7, 1804, Bentley, Diary, III, 87, 122.

73. Bentley, Diary, Mar. 29, 1805, III, 148.

The power of the Crowninshield name was also indicated from the occasional letters which asked for the use of that name for reference or recommendation. In Europe, John Crowninshield received letters from individuals who desired his recommendation to acquire a start in America. One person indicated that a letter from John Crowninshield would mean a great deal, insure success in America; a second said that it would "be a great help . . . not only your connections but it would assertain those of others."[74] In summary, the Crowninshields, over the period of about twelve years, had risen from a position of obscurity in the shipping of Salem to a position where they were one of the top firms in the country. Not only that, but with their rise to commercial preeminence, they had achieved success politically far beyond what could have been expected of them in 1793.

Despite this tremendous success in politics and prestige of the Crowninshields by 1805 that year also saw the beginning of a series of events which were bound to affect the firm seriously. The first of these was the British ruling in the case of the Essex, a Salem vessel. Great Britain had, from the opening of the war following Amiens, taken a rather moderate view concerning American shipping. Most of the shipping of the

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74. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Leon Cohen to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Mar. 18, 1805, also see Wiederholdt to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Mar. 18, 1805 and Jno. Ellery to John Crowninshield, Gloucester, Aug. 13, 1805.

Crowninshields was contrary to the spirit of the rule of 1756 (trade prohibited in times of peace cannot be allowed in time of war). The British, however, had allowed American "broken voyage" shipping to violate the idea of this law. Legal precedent for this position came in the case of the Polly and the ruling by the legal adviser to the British Crown which had stated in 1801 that "landing the goods and paying the duties in the neutral country breaks the continuity of the voyage."[75] The American traders had gotten around the financial drawbacks to such a system by arranging with their government to receive kickbacks on the duties paid when the goods were re-exported. This system had held sway until 1805. At that time the British courts reversed themselves with the Essex and decided that such trade did oppose the rule of 1756, and began making confiscations. Seizures had begun in 1804.

This decision struck very near to the heart of the Crowninshield trade. Jacob, the director of the firm's activities, frowned upon carrying their own goods to Europe if it could be avoided, but Richard's letters indicated that continental prices were enough higher than what could be received on the American market to make the risks palatable. For example, early in 1805 he wrote John that "If we could feel safe from British depredations we should like to send 1 cargo to Leghorn 1 to Marsailles & one with gum & coffee to the North of Europe. The difference

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75. A. T. Mahan, War of 1812, I, 103.

betwixt the best European prices & ours in our coffee say 900,000 expected is at least 100,000$ - it is a great sum and we ought in justice to ourselves."[76] Late in 1805, he wrote again, "coffee worth here about 75,000 & we hope in Leghorn about 100,000$.[77] A firm which tended to avoid carrying insurance when rates approached 10 per cent could not be expected to be diverted from that sort of profits by a clouded international situation. During 1805, despite the added dangers of the European trade, Crowninshield ships carried increasing numbers of cargoes to Europe.

Coupled with the new interpretation on the Essex was a toughening of the British attitude in general. Throughout the year 1805 fear of the British was expressed by the Crowninshields among themselves. In July of that year Jacob went so far as to write to James Madison to ask of the status of the Island of Curacao. "Several recent captures of vessels belonging to this quarter of the Union, under the charge of being bound to Curacoa has caused much sensation among our merchts and I have been repeatedly asked for information on the subject."[78] Nonetheless, Crowninshield ships continued to go out,

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76. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Salem, Feb. 23, 1805.

77. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 7, 1805.

78. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob Crowninshield to James Madison, Salem, July 9, 1805.

and were successful in avoiding seizure by the British. Apparently they were lucky or exceptionally clever. Admiral Mahan reported that "great numbers of American vessels carrying colonial produce to Europe were seized and brought into port, as well as others proceeding from the United States to the West Indies, with cargoes originating in the mother countries; and when, in the opinion of the court, the duties had been only nominally paid, they were condemned.[79]

Reaction to this sort of treatment came quickly from Republican voices in Salem. Dr. Bentley reported that the "Public mind was much agitated by the Commercial news which has arrived. The British have adopted a new Construction of the right of neutral powers . . . . The English deny this right at a time when an immense property is upon the Ocean & without any notice have actually taken and condemned many vessels . . . ."[80] One week later Bentley reported that for fear of the British regulations, vessels fitted for the sea lay in the harbor and waited.[81]

The Crowninshield vessel, Fame, was readied for sea by mid-December 1805, but the family decided to hold her in Salem for a time. Richard thought "the British will be cooled down soon & that they will learn to Respect the rights of Neutrals -

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79. A. T. Mahan, Sea Power and French Revolution, II, 268-69.

80. Bentley, Diary, Sept. 14, 1805, III, 190.

81. Ibid., Sept. 21, 1805, III, 192.

or we must attempt to teach them."[82] The battle of Trafalgar had been fought in October of 1805, and no doubt that influenced the Crowninshields in their consideration of British power. John wrote that "their late sea success will . . . make them more insolent than ever."[83] At Christmas time the Fame was still waiting in Salem, "the English are such rogues, we are afraid to let her go yet."[84] January of 1806 found the Crowninshields still undecided as to what to do. The Belisarius arrived from the East Indies at that time, but the trade to the continent was so uncertain that the Fame was still held. Finally, in March of 1806 the Fame and the Margaret were both sent out for Europe. Richard reported that the "English have relaxed their doing & will find it to their interest to give up the unjust & infamous principles they have been pursuing."[85] By May of 1806, four Crowninshield vessels were en route to Europe with cargoes. All arrived safely, although because of the carelessness of the captain one of the vessels was sunk in the Loire below Nantes. The loss suffered was estimated at

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82. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 13, 1805.

83. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John to Richard Crowninshield, New York, Dec. 19, 1805.

84. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 25, 1805.

85. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Apr. 10, 1806.

$80,000.[86] Profits on these voyages were extremely high, no doubt because of the increased danger attached to the trade. Certainly the Crowninshields were making money at a high rate, but two ship losses (one was lost in October, 1806, on a bar off the coast of New Jersey) cut into those profits rather severely. Jacob reported to Rev. Bentley that the family had saved enough to pay the full value of both ships by not taking out insurance in the usual manner and risking all the losses themselves. Bentley estimated the dual loss "at the lowest estimate given at 100 thousand Dollars."[87] The worst curse of the merchant, uncertainty, had been eliminated when Great Britain relaxed its severity toward neutrals in March, 1806, and shipping went on with renewed speed.

Unfortunately the British threat was not the only one confronting the neutral American merchant in 1805 and 1806. On the continent the second of the belligerent goliaths waited to bedevil the harassed trader. As has been indicated above, commerce to France had not taken on the favorable aspects that might have been assumed to have followed the renewal of war. Because of this, during 1803 and 1804 the Crowninshields had tended to avoid sending their own ships to France whenever other shipping could be obtained. They had lost money when the

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86. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to John Crowninshield, Salem, July 24, 1806.

87. Bentley, Diary, Oct. 25, 1806, III, 257.

firm through which they dealt, Strobel and Martini, had gone bankrupt early in 1804. Despite the presence of John Crowninshield in France during all of those two years, Crowninshield ships had not made that country a regular port of call.

Jacob Crowninshield saw nothing to change that condition in early 1805. In January he wrote, "How unwisely the French act with their embargoes & exhorbitant duties. They will never learn what is for their interest & the worst of it is they injure us without benefitting themselves."[88] Writing about a cargo of coffee later in the month Jacob said, "I rather it sh^{d} all be sold here if possible than to risk the shipment to Europe. In France or Holl^{d} I suppose it will be considered as English coffee, for they w^{d} willingly make Arabia a part of British India with a view of condemning it if they could & having the power I w^{d} not depend much on their sense of justice."[89]

The awkwardness of dealing in France is further indicated by the fate of the Crowninshield bark Hind, which came to Bordeaux in January of 1805, loaded with sugar, gum, coffee and indigo. At this time John (in Paris) sent the captain, James Brace, notice that unless he was definitely consigned he should stay there and sell his goods only for cash.[90] Throughout

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88. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob Crowninshield to Nathaniel Silsbee, Washington, Jan. 13, 1805.

89. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob Crowninshield to Nathaniel Silsbee, Washington, Jan. 30, 1805.

90. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Capt. Brace, Paris, Jan. 22, 1805.

March and April the reports from Bordeaux merchants were all the same, that business was bad although prices were good enough so that those who sold their property "make generally from 20 to 40 pCent clear money."[91] Many reasons were given by the merchants, the season was bad, correspondence between France & England threatened to end the war, a carnival had been held. On April 1 came the report from Bordeaux that Captain Brace had left Bordeaux bound for Nantes with his cargo intact. "Business still remains here very dead."[92]

Captain Brace reported to John from Nantes on April 11. He wanted to know if John's orders meant that he should remain there indefinitely or if he should go overland and attempt to handle the sales at some inland city.[93] On April 13 a pessimistic account of conditions came from Nantes, but the news was added that Brace had turned the cargo over to a Nantes merchant; prospective sales were bad.[94] On April 18 Captain Brace wrote that he had gotten rid of the coffee at highest prices.

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91. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wigginton to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Mar. 4, 1805, and Mar. 24, 1805. Also Leon Cohen to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Apr. 1, 1805.

92. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Leon Cohen to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Apr. 1, 1805.

93. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Capt. James Brace to John Crowninshield, Nantes, Apr. 11, 1805.

94. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Capt. James Brace to John Crowninshield, Nantes, Apr. 13, 1805.

Other boats coming into the harbor had hurt his sales, but he had completed them in good order except for some frankincense which was of bad quality.[95] Captain Brace had been delayed for about three months in the process of disposing of the goods of the small (157 T.) vessel. He had been forced to go from one harbor to another after spending a fruitless two and one-half months trying to sell his goods at Bordeaux. He finally left France for the United States on June 3, 1805, and John Crowninshield left with him. There was nothing connected with this voyage of Brace's that was indicative that French markets were worth the risk involved in shipping to them in early 1805.

Reports later in the year on the French market were varied, but generally better. A Bordeaux contact said that "the American business is at present pretty brisk"[96] in October of 1805. Two months later the same contact considered "Business here very dull here and many failures."[97] At year's end Jacob had modified his position somewhat as regards France. As the leader of the House of Crowninshield his statement that ". . . we have little to fear from her (Spain) or even from her potent

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95. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Capt. James Brace to John Crowninshield, Nantes, Apr. 18, 1805.

96. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Leon Cohen to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Oct. 7, 1805.

97. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Leon Cohen to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Dec. 2, 1805.

& powerful ally France, tho' most certainly we have no favours to expect from either of them."[98] was reflected by shipments of goods in Crowninshield ships to France, Italy, and "the north of Europe" in the spring of 1806. The rising markets in Europe promised high profits to those who could get goods onto the continent. The Crowninshields were, then as ever, quick to seize each opportunity for profit.

That spring saw the Crowninshields enter the great boom period of the Napoleonic era, a boom period which was to last for about eighteen months. Like the others from 1793 on, it was a war-induced boom; consequently events in the warring countries played a most prominent role in eventually destroying the boom. A resume of events in the European theater following the renewal of the war helps bring the picture into focus.

Aside from the fluctuations of policy by the belligerents which caused the changes in the commercial picture already mentioned, the events of the first two years of the war which broke out in 1803 were not significantly different for the Crowninshields. The British had taken some of the West Indian possessions of the French and Napoleon had sold his dubious title to Louisiana to the United States early in the war. Napoleon assumed the title of Emperor in late 1804. The formation of

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98. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob Crowninshield to Nathaniel Silsbee, Washington, Dec. 29, 1805.

the Third Coalition, comprising Great Britain, Russia, Austria, Sweden, and later Prussia, was completed during 1805 as the British sought to organize opposition to the French juggernaut.

In late 1805 the areas of the concentrations of power by the two major adversaries became apparent. In October, Admiral Nelson's British fleet annihilated the French fleet under Villeneuve in the battle of Trafalgar. This naval victory "shattered all [Napoleon's] confidence in the French navy and destroyed his hopes of directly invading Great Britain."[99] Great Britain, previously dominant on the seas, became overwhelmingly so with this victory. On the other hand, Napoleon's land strength evidenced itself almost simultaneously with the revelation of his naval inadequacy. The surrender at Ulm of the Austrian troops occurred one day before the Trafalgar defeat, and the battle of Austerlitz, which came in December of 1805, made the imperial forces appear as invincible on land as the fleets of Great Britain were on the sea.

The appearance of invincibility was borne out by events of 1806 and 1807. Napoleon took advantage of Prussia's vacillating policy by extorting a treaty from that nation in the winter of 1806. Before the end of June of that year he had placed his brothers Joseph and Louis on the thrones of Naples and Sicily (combined) and Holland respectively. The headship of the Holy Roman Empire, weak as it had been, was removed

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99. A. T. Mahan, Sea Power and French Revolution, II, 271.

from the Austrian Hapsburg house, and Central and Western Germany became a French puppet state under the name of Confederation of the Rhine. In the autumn Napoleon's destiny took him into battle against the Prussians; the month of October found the Prussians humiliated at Jena and the Hohenzollern kingdom reduced to quavering submission. The last major foe on the continent, Russia, stood before him and Bonaparte flung himself into the campaign against Alexander. In February of 1807 he claimed a victory over the Russians in a costly and indecisive battle at Eylau. After licking their wounds for four months the French scored a more real triumph over the Russians at Friedland and in July signed the Treaty of Tilsit with Alexander, a treaty which allied the French and Russian states. The Emperor's cup appeared filled when Russia declared war on Great Britain in November of 1807. The Third Coalition had proved unable to stand against the military might and genius of Napoleon. In late 1807 Continental Europe was thoroughly under Napoleon's thumb, "from Memel to Ragusa", and the allied forces were as completely overmatched on land as the French fleets had been on the sea.

The combination of circumstances which made France dominant on the continent and Great Britain just as dominant on the seas spawned the series of decrees and orders in council which made up Napoleon's Continental System and its antithesis. Napoleon, defeated in whatever hope he may have had of reducing

the British Isles by direct attack, decided to "conquer the sea by the land"; Britain, stung by the formidable scope of the decrees issued by the Emperor, countered with orders devised to offset the effectiveness of the continental blockade.

Napoleon initiated his Continental System with a decree issued from Berlin and dated November 21, 1806.[100] The first section of the decree listed abuses relative to international law which the British had broken according to Napoleon. These included charges of using a paper blockade, seizing neutral shipping, and attempting to ruin world commerce for the betterment of their own. With the charges in this section serving as a motive, Napoleon outlined the procedures the French would take. Great Britain was to be blockaded and all correspondence with her prohibited. All British subjects and British property were subject to capture or seizure. Commerce was prohibited with any vessel which had been to Great Britain or any of her colonies; such ships were not to be admitted to any port. False declarations by any ship were to make it British property. The order was sent to the kings of Spain, Naples, Holland, Etruria and all France's allies. This was the famous Berlin Decree.

Although the Berlin Decree prohibited any trade with Great Britain or her colonies, a loophole was created by an interpretation which was handed to the American minister by Décrès, the

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100. Correspondance de Napoléon Ier, #11283, Nov. 21, 1806, XIII, 682-85.

French Minister of Marine. This ruling stated that American ships were not liable to seizure on the high seas because they had visited or planned to visit a British port, although such ships were denied admittance to France.[101] The author of the decree, Napoleon, had become engaged in the war against Russia in early 1807 and so the decree was inoperative until the end of that campaign.[102]

Great Britain retaliated quickly against the Berlin Decree. An Order in Council of January 7, 1807 cited the Emperor's decree as a motive and then prohibited the coasting trade by neutral carriers, that is, the trade between two hostile ports located on the continent.[103] The difficulty raised by this regulation for shippers like the Crowninshields was obvious. Their boats, which up to this time had sought out the continental port where their goods would sell best and, if their captains deemed it advisable, had gone from port to port in search of better markets, were by this order now prohibited from doing so.

Napoleon entered into the spirit of measure versus countermeasure with his Warsaw Decree which called for the confiscation of all British merchandise or colonial property in the

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101. A. T. Mahan, Sea Power and French Revolution, II, 273.

102. Ibid., II, 274; E. F. Heckscher, Continental System, pp. 90-91.

103. A. T. Mahan, Sea Power and French Revolution, II, 275-76.

Hanseatic cities. The British responded with a blockade of the continental coast between the Elbe and the Ems River.[104] As far as fresh legislation was concerned, matters rested here until the latter part of 1807.

During the summer of 1807 Napoleon completed his triumph on the continent (with the defeat of Russia) and was able to divert his attention to commercial affairs. Aside from measures to tighten the control of vessels seeking to enter continental ports very little change occurred until September of 1807, when Napoleon modified the interpretation of his Minister of Marine by stating that his intention had been for French armed vessels to seize and carry to port any vessels carrying goods of British origin.[105] Later an American vessel which was wrecked upon the French coast had her cargo which was British confiscated and sold by France.[106] American commerce, which had reached an alltime high in the year ending with September, 1807 (see tables, pp. 65A-B) received a body blow from this interpretative measure. Two new measures, one by each of the major warring adversaries, made the American position untenable by year's end in 1807.

The first of these measures, a series of three Orders in Council by Great Britain, appeared to stifle all neutral

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104. Ward, etc., Cambridge History, IX, 366.

105. A. T. Mahan, Sea Power and French Revolution, II, 281.

106. Ibid., II, 282.

commerce with France and her colonies by interdicting shipping with them and any ports or places in Europe from which British shipping was excluded.[107] The general confusion attached to this series of Orders in Council was made apparent by the second order which allowed any friendly vessel to import to Great Britain produce from hostile countries.[108] Two major exceptions to the first of these rulings added to the confusion. Neutral traders were allowed to trade between their own country and enemy colonies or between enemy colonies and open British colonial ports. Neutral traders could also trade directly between hostile ports and British continental ports, although not between their home ports and hostile ports.[109] The consistency amid the confusion of these Orders in Council followed mercantilist lines. Great Britain's economic function was two-fold: to drain France's liquid wealth away and at the same time to increase the gold supply of Great Britain. Thus goods could go to France through England, after paying fees which added to the wealth of Great Britain by taking from France. By controlling French exports and supervising French imports, both for a fee, Great Britain could simultaneously build her own economic strength as she drained that of her enemy. Fringe retaliatory measures added to the confusion by

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107. Ibid., II, 284.

108. Ibid., II, 284n.

109. Ibid., II, 285-86.

claiming the right to confiscate neutral vessels that carried the French-required certificates of origin. The middle road of neutrality was dwindling to nothing between the two opposing systems.[110]

Napoleon's answer to this latest British ruling was his Milan Decree, of December 17, 1807.[111] Like its Berlin predecessor, the Milan Decree set up its motivation in British action which violated the rights of neutrals. It denationalized any ship which submitted to British vessels, went to a British port, or paid a duty to the British. Any such vessels were to be legal prize, whether in ports of France or on the high seas. In an attempt to make the British action more odious to the neutral carrier, the decree stated that these provisions would not be enforced against those who forced the British to respect their flag. It would be discontinued whenever the British returned to just maritime policies.

The nature of these two opposing systems of measures has been much debated, especially as applied to specific measures. The Orders in Council are masterpieces of confusion and inconsistency. Napoleon's decrees, while clearly worded for the most part, left enough loopholes of interpretation to beguile and confuse the American government as to specific action to

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110. E. F. Heckscher, Continental System, pp. 110-21. For the text of the fourteen 1807 Orders in Council, issued between Jan. 7 and Dec. 18, see Appendix I.

111. Correspondance de Napoléon Ier, XVI, 227-29.

be taken at any given time. Action and law were intentionally kept confusingly different throughout the effective period of operation of the Continental System. Had the principles relating to the two powers' actions been clearly stated the neutral shipper would have been sorely harassed, but the enforced penalties added to the uncertainty brought about by frequent and occasionally unannounced or retroactive changes served to make his existence itself doubtful.

In general, the decrees of Napoleon prohibited all trade with Great Britain in the hope of defeating that country by destroying her industrial and commercial base. The British orders, on the other hand, attempted to channel all French commerce through the British Isles and at the same time force British produced goods into the continent through the opposition set up by the Continental System. In both cases, the neutral carrier had to be broken to conformity to provide any hope of success. Thomas Jefferson said of these regulations: "These decrees and orders taken together, want little of amounting to a declaration that every neutral vessel found on the high seas, whatsoever be her cargo, and whatsoever foreign port be that of her departure, or destination, shall be deemed lawful prize; and they prove more and more the expediency of retaining our vessels, our seamen, and property within our own harbours, until the dangers to which they are exposed can be removed or lessened."[112] The Crown-

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112. American State Papers, VI, 74.

inshields, whose trade was almost entirely war created and so most apt to contravene the spirit and the letter of the opposing systems, accepted this statement as a sound one.

Jacob Crowninshield believed, with the Jeffersonian administration, that the English were the primary enemy. Although he had refused the position of Secretary of the Navy when Jefferson had offered it to him, he did serve as a frequent adviser to Secretary of State Madison on shipping and wrote opinions to Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith. Jacob thought the major effort of the nation in the area of naval defense should be spent in the construction of gunboats. In an undated letter to William Bentley (apparently written in 1805) he gave his opinion that gunboats were superior to forts for naval defense. He thought that 100 gunboats would cost less than one frigate while that number could be supported at one-fourth the cost of the support of a frigate.[113] In the spring of 1806 he reiterated this faith in gunboats to Robert Smith. At that time he advocated the spending of $250,000 for them and estimated the protection afforded by such an amount would be double that to be gained by construction of shore batteries. He gave instances where naval craft had succeeded in getting by shore batteries, most recently the success of Nelson in the attack upon Copenhagen, and advocated

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113. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob Crowninshield to Wm. Bentley, Washington, 1805.

the construction of boats to protect the harbors of New York and New Orleans.[114] As gunboats were effective only against naval attack, it is inconceivable that Jacob intended these measures against France, whose navy had been made impotent in the Trafalgar struggle.

In a detailed report made to James Madison on the state of American commerce, Jacob restated his belief that Great Britain was the major enemy. He said that American shipping was much more economically run than that of other countries and so was able to operate more profitably. Because of inefficiently run ships, said the report, British vessels could not compete with those of the Americans, and so they countered this difficulty by restricting the products the American could carry from their colonies. His solution to the problem of British restrictions on American commerce had a prophetic tone, "If we shut up the export trade six months the Islands (the British West Indies) would be starved. It is not believed they could possibly hold out any considerable time without supplies from the U. States. . . . Whatever may be said to the contrary it is a fact that the West Indies are dependent on us for the necessaries of life, both for the white & black population."[115] It is unlikely that suggestions from this source were taken

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115. National Archives, Ms., Department of State Miscellaneous Letters, January to December 1806, Jacob Crowninshield to James Madison, Salem, Sept. 1, 1806. Hereafter cited as NA, State Ms.

lightly by Jefferson and his Secretary of State. Although Jacob did not hold the position of Secretary of the Navy, his advice was sought and his years of experience, both as a ship captain and as the leader of a commercial concern gave that advice considerable stature.

As far as the general picture for the American merchant in September of 1806 Jacob was not gloomy so long as the war lasted. "We can get along tolerably well in war time, even with the present embarrassments but if peace comes and France adopts the principles of the English navigation act, we ought & we must resort to totally different regulations in regard to English & French shipping than what are now in operation in the U. S."[116] This prophecy came two and one-half months before Napoleon issued his Berlin Decree. Apparently the idea of the emperor of France embarking on the self-denying policy of a continental blockade had not occurred to Jacob as a possibility while the war lasted. Even with the issuance of the decree, the early interpretation of it offered little danger to the American shipper who, as the Crowninshields did, tended to avoid shipping goods from one belligerent power to the other.

The feeling that Great Britain was the major threat to American commerce persisted with Jacob Crowninshield. He was particularly irritated with the British Order in Council which

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116. NA, State Ms., Jacob Crowninshield to James Madison, Salem, Sept. 1, 1806.

prohibited continental coasting trade by neutrals as retaliation against the Berlin Decree. The British regulations were "far worse than Bonaparte's decree even if it was executed without the modification referred to by Mr. Armstrong & the French Minister."[117] What made this ruling particularly harsh was that it struck at the merchant who was not in fact carrying on hostile coasting trade, but who, as was his custom, went from port to port looking for higher markets to dispose of his goods.

Jacob likewise opposed ratification of the treaty with Great Britain which James Monroe and William Pinkney had negotiated and signed in the late months of 1806. Monroe and Pinkney had done this despite Madison's instructions to regard Great Britain's disavowal of the right of impressment as a sine qua non, and that nation's refusal to accept that position. As negotiated the treaty defined contraband and the Americans formally gave up the position that a neutral flag covers non-contraband enemy goods. The British also agreed not to stop unarmed vessels within five miles of the United States shore. The American negotiators agreed that continuance of the East India trade should require a broken voyage each way; that is, ships could no longer sail directly to the Indian Ocean area from Europe, or from that area to Europe,

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117. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob Crowninshield, no address, no date.

but must stop at an American port to neutralize the goods. Heretofore the broken voyage, whereby the shipper stopped and paid duties at an American port, had been required only on the Indies to Europe run. The harm that such legislation would have done to the India trade was obviously considerable.[118] In a letter to James Madison in April of 1807, Jacob suggested that this treaty's acceptance would entirely destroy the rich India trade.[119] Still later in the year, Jacob suggested to Madison that no treaty should be accepted that did not include a British concession on the right of impressment of American sailors.[120] His consideration of the French position was limited to comparing it with that of the British, and it appeared to him to be less offensive to American interests.

Beginning with the late summer of 1807, several factors combined to bring an end to the booming commercial state which had existed for America. The spectacular action of the British in forcibly impressing seamen off the American frigate, the Chesapeake, retained the British in the position as top offenders

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118. Charles E. Hill, "James Madison," in S. F. Bemis, ed., The American Secretaries of State and their Diplomacy, (New York, 1927), III, 112-16.

119. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob Crowninshield to James Madison, Salem, Apr. 7, 1807.

120. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob Crowninshield to James Madison, Salem, Aug. 18, 1807. Jefferson refused to submit this treaty to the Senate for ratification.

so far as the American government was concerned. Public indignation tended to agree as to the menace of Great Britain. In late August Bentley reported a stagnation of business because of the apprehension brought by this affair.[121] Few vessels went out during the month of September. "We still remain as under an Embargo. Our merchants are afraid to trust their valuable cargoes at sea till they know the state of the negociation in England."[122] In addition, it was in September that Napoleon ruled that his Berlin Decree, hitherto held inoperative on the high seas, was to be enforced wherever ships carried British goods. The effectiveness of the new interpretation of the decree was demonstrated by the seizure and confiscation by the French of the British goods of a shipwrecked vessel.[123] Finally, in November of 1807, the British Government issued a new series of Orders in Council, which prohibited all continental trade except through Great Britain. Napoleon's Milan Decree, issued in December of 1807 in retaliation against the latest Orders in Council denationalized all vessels which complied with the British Orders, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. Before news of this new decree reached America, an Embargo had been passed.

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121. Bentley, Diary, Aug. 29, 1807, III, 316.

122. Ibid., Sept. 19, 1807, III, 320.

123. A. T. Mahan, Sea Power and French Revolution, II, 282.

The picture of American commerce in the late months of 1807 was one of vessels returning to home ports and being retained there by fearful owners. Fear of hostilities breaking out with England haunted the merchant shippers, who recognized the complete supremacy Great Britain was able to wield over American commerce. This was reflected in the pessimism of the available comments during that period. An acquaintance of John Crowninshield, writing from New York, told of a beautiful new ship being constructed, but added that there would be but "little occasion to use her, as business here in the freighting line is entirely at a stand, and indeed in almost every other line; . . ."[124] Bentley, at the same time, recorded that "our vessels continue to arrive & the proportion now abroad is inconsiderable compared with the sum at the first alarm of war."[125] In November came the news of the condemnation by the British of a vessel which had visited two continental ports.[126] Crowninshield ships that were reported at sea were in the Indian Ocean area. A New York merchant wrote to Jacob Crowninshield that one of his captains reported that the Belisarius had sailed from Calcutta at the end of September, 1807. The same source said that the Telemachus was preparing

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124. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Drake Seymour to John Crowninshield, New York, Oct. 14, 1807.

125. Bentley, Diary, Oct. 17, 1807, III, 323.

126. Ibid., Nov. 14, 1807, III, 328.

to sail a short time later.[127] The Belisarius arrived in Salem in March, 1808.[128] One estimate showed that 117 of 185 Salem vessels were caught in Salem by the Embargo.[129] This represents an abnormally high figure for vessels in their home port. In short, the period for two or three months before the Embargo was a period of developing stagnation of commerce.

The Embargo was passed by the United States Congress on December 22, 1807. Jacob Crowninshield, consistent with his actions throughout the previous decade, voted with the administration forces in favor of the measure.[130] In his direction of the Crowninshield fortunes, throughout the periods of great danger, Jacob had tended to avoid the areas of trade where possibilities of irregularities or captures were greatest, in favor of the calmer trade regions. In the early days of the war which began in 1803, Crowninshield ships had avoided the markets of Europe when that was at all possible. In his report on shipping which he sent to James Madison in the late summer of 1806, Jacob suggested the beneficial results that could be obtained by cutting off American trade to

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127. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Benjamin Bailey to Jacob Crowninshield, New York, Jan. 30, 1808.

128. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Benjamin W. to Mary Boardman Crowninshield, Washington, Mar., 1808.

129. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, p. 266.

130. Salem Gazette, Jan. 1, 1808.

the West Indies and thus forcing modification of what he at that time considered the high-handed attitude of Great Britain against American commerce. Finally, Jacob's policy regarding naval defense of the homeland, in which he advocated the use of gunboats as the primary block against a potential enemy, would be in line with his acceptance of an embargo, rather than attempting to defend American shipping wherever it happened to be.

Jacob Crowninshield's attitude toward the Embargo was further evidenced by the following report from the Gazette. "On the 29th December, in consequence of a motion from Mr. Crowninshield a bill supplementary to the Embargo Act, was reported to the House. It provides, that licensed vessels shall give bonds to reland any goods, etc. they may take on board, in some part of the United States. Licensed fishing vessels, with salt are excepted."[131]

The passing of the Embargo and supplementary legislation marked the end of the brief legislative career of Jacob Crowninshield. He became sick during the month of January of 1808 and grew rapidly worse. In February Benjamin and John Crowninshield went to Washington to take care of their brother. Their letters to Salem from Washington, written between February and April, tell of the constantly weakening condition of

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131. Salem Gazette, Jan. 5, 1808.

Jacob, and finally of his death on April 15, 1808.[132] He was 38 years old.

The immediate effects of the Embargo on Salem were slight. According to Dr. Bentley "The Merchants had already laid one in our port as few vessels ventured abroad so that this measure has excited no surprise or particular alarm at present & it is yet a secret whether the cause be from French or British measures."[133] Two days later the same source mentioned that official notification of the Embargo had arrived. The delay between official and unofficial news of the law had allowed several vessels to escape Salem harbor.[134]

However, within a short period of time more dire news of the effects of the Embargo began to arrive. As early as January 2, 1808, Dr. Bentley reported rumors of failures of "some unprincipled adventurers in business" from Portland, "that dissipated but infant settlement of Speculators."[135] By April the full effects of the prohibition upon shipping were upon Salem. An acute depression prevailed. Goods could not be sold at all as no cash was to be had and the Crowninshields thought credit too risky to consider non-cash sales.

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132. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Benjamin to Mary Boardman Crowninshield, Washington, Apr. 15, 1808.

133. Bentley, Diary, Dec. 29, 1807, III, 336.

134. Ibid., Dec. 31, 1807, III, 336.

135. Ibid., Jan. 2, 1808, III, 336-37.

The debilitating effects of embargo, which John Crowninshield had prophetically described as comparable to the effects of consumption on an individual,[136] hit with full fury during the spring and summer of 1808. American exports, the primary area of trade for the Crowninshields, had reached an alltime high of $108,343,150 in the year ending September 30, 1807. For the year ending September 30, 1808, the figure was $22,430,000.[137]

Despite this indication of hardship caused by the Embargo, there was another side to the picture. This was indicated by the self-imposed embargo in the fall of 1807. In April, 1808, several vessels, which had pushed to sea hastily in late December, 1807 in the hope of beating the effects of the Embargo, limped back into Salem. "Three were carried into Gibralter, & two escaped from the fleet & returned home with their cargoes not in better condition than when they went out with all the charges of the voyage to pay."[138] Indications were that European waters were extremely troubled ones for neutral commerce. A similar situation was revealed in the experience of a Maryland shipowner who sent out fifteen vessels between September and December, 1807. Of the fifteen

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136. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John to George Crowninshield, Ile de France, June 1, 1796.

137. See Statistics on page 65.A.

138. Bentley, Diary, Apr. 30, 1808, III, 356.

vessels, three reached their destinations, two were captured by the French and Spanish, one was taken at Hamburg, and nine were seized by the British.[139] It seems highly questionable that American shipping was worse off in American harbors than engaging in trade under those conditions.

The Crowninshield fortunes received their first formidable setback in September, 1807 when the opposing European maritime systems forced their commerce off the seas and finally made the Embargo necessary. They had gone through a period of fifteen years of commercial activity, which, with limited exceptions, had been extremely opportune years, and they had taken advantage of them. Beginning with their three small vessels in the fall of 1792, they had, as a result of their war-induced commercial activity, grown to a position of considerable wealth. They had risen from the comparative obscurity of ship captains to the prominence of important business men, one of whom had held, for six years, a seat in the Congress of the United States. The gods of war, who had created the Crowninshield fortunes, now had decreed that the outcome of the struggle was to be decided in the area where those fortunes lay. In the struggle between the overwhelming land power of one antagonist and the overwhelming sea power of the other, the neutral carrier became a prime target for both. The original American answer was the answer that Jacob Crowninshield

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139. E. F. Heckscher, Continental System, p. 131.

had used throughout the fifteen years of successful commerce - withdraw and wait for better days. In this case, however, there was no area toward which to direct the activities of the firm while waiting for conditions to improve, and so throughout 1808 the Crowninshields suffered the consumption of embargo which the United States government had determined was less damaging than the suicide of continued commercial activity.

The Embargo had created hard times for Salem, as it had for the entire commercial world. Federalist opposition to the Jefferson Administration had concentrated its attack on the Embargo and the hard times that resulted, and the attack had been successful in creating opposition to such a policy. It had not mattered that Salem's richest merchant, William Gray, hitherto a Federalist, had openly backed the Embargo.[140] Gray had been placed in charge of Salem harbor, and his statement that of eight vessels which had left port in the month of December, 1807, not one had reached its destination[141] likewise fell on deaf ears to those whose political leanings permitted no useful result to come from the Embargo. Gray defended the Embargo, and so Gray was attacked unmercifully.[142]

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140. Bentley, Diary, June 9, 1808, III, 364.

141. Ibid., Aug. 27, 1808, III, 379-80.

142. Ibid., July 8, 1808, III, 375.

Despite the concentrated attack upon the Embargo in Salem (and New England generally), opinion was not solidly opposed to the measure. In October of 1808 a Salem town meeting voted down a motion to petition Congress to oppose the Embargo, by a majority of "above one hundred out of nearly one thousand votes."[143] Votes for Congressman in that same city in November, 1808, found the Federalist and Republican numbers evenly divided with 901 votes each.[144] Normally Republican Marblehead continued to agree with the administration policies in the 1808 congressional election by favoring the Republican candidate, 664 to 79.[145] Reports of suffering due to the Embargo varied also with the political viewpoint of the person reporting. The Federalist charge that Salem alone had five hundred families suffering was vigorously denied by William Bentley, who countered that "not one person has become a pauper by the operation of the Embargo. . . ."[146]

Yet misery undoubtedly accompanied the Embargo, as even Bentley inadvertently admitted. He told of the generousity of the merchants, Mr. Gray, Captain White, and Captain George Crowninshield in providing flour, corn, biscuits, rice, and

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143. Ibid., Oct. 26, 1808, III, 391.

144. Ibid., Nov. 7, 1808, III, 395.

145. Essex Register, Nov. 9, 1808.

146. Bentley, Diary, Sept. 13, 1808, III, 383.

other food stuff for the poor during the winter of 1808-09.[147] A soup house was in operation in Salem in January of 1809 where the poor could obtain food. Those who made their living on the seas; the young captains, mates, and seamen were the major sufferers according to Bentley.[148]

The loss suffered by the merchant because of the Embargo is extremely difficult to estimate. The damage done to ships lying at anchor for an indefinite period must have been sizeable. The goods caught by the Embargo that had to be sold at a loss or stored at a loss or allowed to deteriorate must have cost the merchant a great deal. The destruction of established contacts at ports throughout the world that must have been occasioned by the Embargo would be impossible to assess. Probably the merchants would have had difficulty estimating the cost of the Embargo to themselves.

Two bits of evidence point to the idea that the Embargo costs were high, but not of the type that would wipe a firm of the stature of the Crowninshields out of existence. William Gray, while defending his position regarding the Embargo against Federalist attack, made the statement that his estate had declined more than ten per cent in the first eight months of Embargo.[149] Such losses must have included the sizeable

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147. Ibid., Jan. 20, 1809, III, 409-10.

148. Ibid., Jan. 31, 1809, III, 413.

149. Ibid., Aug. 12, 1808, III, 377.

amounts of aid given to the poor - at one stage Gray offered those who had charge of care of the poor to draw whatever they needed from his account.[150] The other evidence, an estimate of the value of the Crowninshield assets in September of 1809, shows that the firm was worth $742,646,[151] as contrasted with an estimate of $469,000 in 1804. Although this statement gives no indication of the size of the loss suffered by the Crowninshields due to the Embargo, it does indicate that they had not suffered overwhelming financial losses.[152]

The Embargo was undeniably costly. Any consideration of its cost, however, must be weighed against the cost of the alternative move, that of trying to compete with the maritime restrictions imposed by the belligerent powers. As Jefferson had said, the neutral could not go to sea without violating some of the requirements of the warring states. The self-imposed Embargo of late 1807 showed that the merchants themselves were aware of these dangers. The plight of those vessels which had fled Salem at the news of the Embargo had made it apparent that European trade was so hazardous as to be

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150. Ibid., Oct. 26, 1808, III, 392.

151. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Crowninshield Estate Agreement, Sept. 17, 1809.

152. A standard Monograph on the Embargo is L. M. Sears, Jefferson and the Embargo (Durham, N.C.,1927). For the effects of the Embargo in New England, see pp. 143-96. The emphasis of this work is on Jefferson's desire for peace and his rationale which led to the Embargo rather than on the economic scene itself.

operated only at a loss; some of those craft had returned to Salem after four months with their outgoing cargo still intact. The fate of the Crowninshield fortunes in dealing with the continent in the post-Embargo period confirms the hypothesis that the cost of the Embargo was low compared to the cost of continued trade. But critics of the Embargo were not faced with the responsibility of creating an alternative policy. They seized upon the Embargo as a vulnerable spot in the Jeffersonian administration, and it admirably filled the requirements.

Chapter IV

THE INEVITABLE HOUR - EUROPE DESTROYS THE CROWNINSHIELDS 1808 - 1815

The United States Congress repealed the unpopular Embargo act on March 1, 1809, only three days before the new administration of James Madison took office. In its place it substituted the Non-Intercourse law which prohibited trade with all ports under British and French control, but reopened American trade with the rest of the world. American ports were opened to American ships, and the merchant world rushed to take advantage of the renewal of commerce.

Negotiations with Great Britain during the first three months of the new administration were of particular significance to the American shipper. The Non-Intercourse law stipulated that the President should have the authority to withdraw the effects of the law against either of the belligerent powers if that power agreed to raise its restrictions against neutral shipping. The British minister in Washington, David Erskine, worked out an agreement with the Madison administration whereby the Orders in Council would be withdrawn and a preliminary agreement to this effect was signed. Consequently Madison, in what has come to be regarded as a major diplomatic blunder, announced that non-intercourse with Great Britain

would be withdrawn as of June 10, 1809. Under this ruling, American ships were allowed to sail to continental ports, such as Cadiz and Gibralter and Cagliari, which were under British control. George Canning, British foreign secretary, quickly disavowed the Erskine agreement and announced that the Orders in Council would be retained, and the Madison administration was forced to reinstitute its ban on commerce with Great Britain in the month of August of 1809.[1]

Meanwhile Great Britain had taken a constructive step which allowed safer American trade with the continent. In an Order in Council dated April 26, 1809, she ruled that only the ports of Holland, France, and as much of Italy as was under Napoleon's immediate control were to be considered under blockade. Consequently, American trade to the Hanse cities, to Spain, Portugal and the Baltic Sea was allowed by Great Britain. Trade with the enemy, that is with France, Holland and Italy, was still only allowed under conditions which would result in its confiscation upon arrival in those countries.[2]

The period following the Embargo found Napoleon taking measures to strengthen his Continental System. He had sealed

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1. For the complete story see C. C. Tansill, "Robert Smith", in S. F. Bemis, ed., The American Secretaries of State and their Diplomacy, III, 157-164.

2. A. T. Mahan, Sea Power and French Revolution, II, 313-14.

the ports of France and Italy against British trade and had control of that territory. On the other hand, the Dutch Netherlands was under the rule of Napoleon's brother Louis, who seems to have been interested in the welfare of his subjects to a sufficient extent to bring the wrath of Napoleon upon his head. After summoning Louis to Paris in November of 1809, Napoleon warned him of possible French seizure of his lands if he did not enforce the measures of the Continental System more effectively. Because of continuing evasions of the system on the part of the Netherlands, the territory was annexed to France in July of 1810 by a decree of Napoleon.[3] By the end of that year, Napoleon had annexed the northwest section of Germany, and included that territory within the confines of the continental area which he personally was determined to make as inhospitable to commerce as possible.

The direct measures of Bonaparte whereby he seized territory and closed that territory to commerce of British origin or which had in any way been tainted by British hands was only a part of his system affecting neutral commerce. Goods which he did allow to enter the continent were subjected to merciless tariff charges by a series of decrees laid down in the late summer of 1810. Sugar, which had paid no duty or slight

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3. C. M. Galisset, Corps du droit français; or, recueil complet des lois, décrets, ordonnances, sénatus-consultes, règlemens, avis du conseil d'état, rapports au roi, instructions ministérielles, etc., publiés depuis 1789 jusqu'a nos jours, mis en ordre et annoté, (Paris, 1843-47), July 9, 1810, II, 943.

duties during the years between 1802 and 1806 (duties ranged between 30 and 80 francs per 100 kilograms), paid 300 to 400 francs per 100 kilograms in 1810. Duties on the same measurement of pepper went from 30 francs to 600 francs between 1802 and 1810. Cinnamon, nutmeg, and cochineal, none of which had paid a duty prior to 1810, paid a duty of 1400, 2000, and 2000 francs per 100 kilograms in 1810. Raw cotton, which had paid 2 francs per 100 kilograms in 1802 and 1803, paid 200 to 800 (depending upon the point of origin) in 1810.[4] These were the products which the Crowninshields had carried throughout the years, and the development of this tariff structure was bound to be felt by them if they continued to handle their traditional cargoes.

The lifting of the Embargo was the signal for the bursting forth of the long bound economic energies of American merchants, the Crowninshields among them. The first Crowninshield vessel to clear for foreign shores after the Embargo was the Minerva, which was reported as having sailed for Canton on May 5, 1809.[5] Others followed in rapid succession, the ship Golden Age bound for Sumatra on June 20, 1809;[6] the Traveller for

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4. E. F. Heckscher, Continental System, Appendix II, pp. 408-09.

5. Salem Gazette, May 5, 1809.

6. Ibid., June 20, 1809.

Algiers on June 23;[7] the John for Loningen on June 27;[8] the Margaret for Tunis on July 4;[9] the bark Hind and the ship America for Loningen and Cagliari respectively on July 14.[10] In the flurry of activity after the Embargo, the Salem Gazette reported that by June 20, 1809, 145 vessels cleared Salem harbor for foreign ports.[11]

The rush of trade which followed the lifting of the Embargo does not bear out the idea that Jefferson's measure completely destroyed Salem's economic base. In 1807, the last year before the Embargo, 134 vessels had cleared from Salem for foreigh ports.[12] The ability to exceed the last active year's number of port clearances in ninety days indicates some economic strength; such activity is hardly feasible for a community whose economic strength has been destroyed. The American historian Edward Channing stated that the Embargo losses on a national scale were not as severe as had been claimed. He said that the Federalist use of the measure as a propaganda weapon succeeded in creating the impression of

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7. Ibid., June 23, 1809.

8. Ibid., June 27, 1809. Loningen is in Oldenburg in Northwest Germany.

9. Ibid., July 4, 1809.

10. Ibid., July 14, 1809.

11. Ibid., June 20, 1809.

12. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, p. 267.

losses beyond their actual size.[13]

The Crowninshields decided to split their firm into three separate companies in the summer of 1809. Richard Crowninshield, who had spent considerable time in New York over the course of the years, split from the parent firm in June of 1809 and from that time forward operated his own firm from New York City. John Crowninshield, like Richard, took his one-sixth of the firm's wealth and worked independently of the parent company from that time. Benjamin W., George, and George, Jr., continued the operation of the parent company, while the final one-sixth of the Crowninshield wealth was set aside for the use of Jacob's orphaned children (Jacob's wife, Sarah, had died a year earlier than Jacob). The details of the transfer were concealed behind bills of sale of vessels from the parent firm to the sons for one dollar each. Apparently there was no serious disagreement or family quarrel involved in this change of ownership, as all branches of the firm continued to write among themselves and to exchange comments on the state of business throughout the world.

In those early hectic days after the lifting of the Embargo, the major chore was the gathering together of a cargo and hastily sending it out for Europe. Crowninshield ships were not sent to the warring states, as such action was

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13. Edward Channing, The Jeffersonian System, 1801-1811 (Vol. XII of A. B. Hart, ed., The American Nation: A History) (New York, 1906), pp. 216-20.

prohibited by federal law, but all other markets were considered. In the case of the Hind, John Crowninshield changed her destination within the last week before she sailed, because of doubt as to where the vessel would be better received.[14] Six Crowninshield vessels cleared Salem harbor in the course of twenty-five days between June 20 and July 14, 1809. Of these, five went to European or North African prts, while one had Sumatra as her destination.

The problems of coping with the Continental System and the Orders in Council were not long in appearing. The first indication of trouble for the Crowninshields was in the cryptic postscript on an insurance policy dated at the end of September, 1809. The ship John was sent to "one or more ports in the north of Europe below Copenhagen." The qualifying statement read: "It is understood notwithstanding the above, that the assurers are not to be liable for any loss arising from capture, restraint or detention, but are to be accountable for other risks as well while under restraint, as at other times, until her arrival as above mentioned."[15] The policy makers refused to accept the risks of capture at the hands of European powers. They forced the ship owner to

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14. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to T. Williams, Salem, July 6, 1809, and John Crowninshield to S. Williams, Salem, July 11, 1809.

15. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Insurance policy on ship John, Salem, Sept. 22, 1809.

brave the hazards of continental trade; insurance companies continued to insure against the standard peacetime risks.

The Crowninshield papers revealed the further troubled conditions of continental trade. Jacob Endicott, handling a cargo for Richard Crowninshield at Algiers, wrote that he contemplated getting a cargo of oil and heading for Lisbon or England. His original cargo had sold at a loss because the Algiers market was bad. In addition, he was detained for considerable time in making the sale and then had to wait longer in collecting for the goods. He did not anticipate great profits from the sale of oil, but the oil represented the only method of getting his money out of Algiers without incurring further loss. London bills of exchange were selling on the Algiers market at 25 per cent over par. Endicott sought to avoid this loss by going to a port where the London bills were more available.[16] This type of trouble was not of such a nature as to be reflected in captures or shipping statistics, but was extremely costly to the shipowner, who took not only the original loss on his cargo, but then absorbed additional losses in transferring his returns into a currency which was usable.

Later in October, Richard Crowninshield reported that Altona and Loningen or possibly Hamburg were acceptable

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16. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob Endicott to Richard Crowninshield, Algiers, Oct. 11, 1809.

receiving points for goods destined for continental Europe.[17] The feeling that Nortn Europe represented the best marketing place persisted throughout the autumn of 1809. On November 5, Richard wrote that "There have been great shipments made to Loningen yet the markets have kept up. there are several ships going now and I have a cargo going on one of the best. Rice cotton coffee."[18] Ten days later he wrote of two recent arrivals from Loningen who reported prospects good there, with both cotton and coffee selling at high prices. The British, said Richard, were apparently not interested in the blockade if they did not blockade Loningen.[19]

The old standard run for the Crowninshields, to the East Indies for pepper with occasional stops at Europe, also presented problems. The parent firm's ship Fame left Salem for Lisbon in October, 1809, carrying flour, gum arabic, pepper, tobacco and sugar. One day out of Lisbon harbor she was approached in the evening by a strange vessel. Captain Bullock noted in his log, "She kept away with apparent intention to board us. Supposing her to be a Pirate fired 10 shot at her. She finally hauld to & passed a Stern of us."[20] The

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17. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, Oct. 25, 1809.

18. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, Nov. 5, 1809.

19. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, Nov. 14, 1809.

20. EI, Ms., Log of ship Fame, Nov. 2, 1809.

Fame arrived in Lisbon on November 3. The process of disposing of her cargo and getting underway for Sumatra required stops at Cadiz for six weeks, a two-day stop at Tangiers, and five weeks at Algeciras. On February 22, 1810, she left Gibralter to head for the Island of Sumatra carrying Spanish dollars and rock ballast. She acquired a cargo of pepper in Sumatra and headed back for Salem, arriving there on November 29, 1810.[21] The problems attached to her voyage, those of delay, of difficulty in obtaining negotiable currency or goods, struck at the heart of profitable commerce.

More direct and dire results of the commercial war were not long in arriving. The ship Margaret, owned by John Crowninshield (five-sixths) and Wm. Fairfield (one-sixth), had left Salem on July 4, 1809, bound for Tunis. She carried India piece goods, clayed sugar, Havanna sugar, India sugar, black pepper, ginger, coffee, Frankinsense, myrrh, gum arabic, codfish, New England rum, rice, indigo, and cassia.[22] She carried French certificates of origin. She went to Sardinia "without being boarded or even spoken to by any Foreign Ships", stopped at Cagliari Bay and got information and refreshments, but did no business. She did not obtain pratique (permission to trade granted after a ship obtains a clean bill of health). Leaving

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21. EI, Ms., Log of ship Fame.

22. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Fairfield to American consul in Naples, Gaeta, Aug. 10, 1809.

Cagliari, the Margaret sailed for Tunisia, and when within two miles of land, at Bizert, she was stopped and captured by a French privateer. The privateer took all the ships papers and put on a prize crew, which took the Margaret into Gaeta. They arrived at Gaeta on August 16, 1809, and Captain Fairfield could locate nobody there with whom he could converse.[23]

Fairfield attempted to make contact with the American consul at Marseilles and at Naples to get advice on what he should do. His fish were getting bad and the situation was getting desperate. On January 12, 1810, Samuel Williams, John Crowninshield's agent in London, reported to John that "Capt. Fairfield had compromised at Naples for his Ship, her expenses to be paid out of the cargo, & for half the net proceeds of her cargo."[24] Meanwhile, in Salem John Crowninshield did some figuring on a piece of scratch paper, dated November 12, 1809, as to his possibilities in the dealings with the ship Margaret. Her total cargo was worth, according to these figures, $58,840. The ship was worth $11,160 for a total value of $70,000 of vessel and cargo as they were carried into Naples. The vessel had been insured for $15,000 at 10 per cent, so the value of her insurance was $13,500. The difference, by these figures, between acquittal or condemnation at Naples was $56,500. The

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23. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Fairfield to Isaac Cushing, Gaeta, Aug. 10, 1809.

24. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Sam. Williams to John Crowninshield, London, Jan. 12, 1810.

actual loss, based upon the value of the cargo of the Margaret as she left Salem, lightened the possible loss, but it was still formidable. The outgoing cargo was worth $26,000 in Salem while the ship was worth $11,000. Deducting the payment for insurance ($13,500), the owners still would lose $23,500 if the ship were condemned. At the bottom of all this figuring was the statement "if acquitted may fetch me as above $70,000 & if condemned shall receive only 13,500."[25] Captain Fairfield's compromise figure was $27,765.22.[26] The Margaret was released and headed for America, loaded with American seamen whose ships had been confiscated in the port of Naples. Her troubles were not yet ended - she was wrecked in a storm forty-one days out of Naples and sank with a sizeable loss of life. The final insurance payments on the Margaret were delayed until November, 1811, when a partial payment was made on her.[27] John received a total of $4646 insurance on the Margaret,[28] as the amount paid on her was pro-rated as to the amount of the loss compared with the total value of ship and cargo as they left Salem.

The Margaret story shows some of the problems continental

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25. EI, Crowninshield Ms., note by John Crowninshield dated Nov. 12, 1809.

26. United States National Archives, Department of State Spoliation Claims from 1831 Treaty with France, Margaret. Hereafter cited as NA, Claims.

27. Bentley Diary, Nov. 28, 1811, IV, 70.

28. NA, Claims, Margaret.

regulations made for the neutral shipper. Napoleon, anxious to insure that no British goods travelled on neutral ships and that no neutral ships visited British held territory, had two violations against the Margaret. According to the Council of Prizes at Paris, which passed upon the legality of the compromise, the Margaret had stopped at the enemy port of Cagliari and had not had a French certificate of origin to cover her entire cargo.[29] Possession of a certificate of origin, in compliance with the latter regulation, made a vessel subject to English seizure; British orders also made a stop at a British port mandatory for vessels trading to French held territory. The neutral was forced to encounter the Charybdis of British orders in order to avoid the Scylla of the Continental System. No safe route lay between.

The Margaret case was the most spectacular misadventure of the Crowninshield family in the 1809-10 period, but was far from the only one. The general state of European commerce was so treacherous that little profit derived from it. The Telemachus went to Smyrna, in hopes of finding favorable markets. The fact that she did not return to Smyrna, nor did any of the other Crowninshield vessels do so, indicated that her quest was not successful. The Hind, which had sailed from Salem for Loningen, had sold her cargo in Copenhagen and come back to Salem, arriving there in January of 1810. John Crowninshield

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29. NA, Claims, Margaret.

made estimates of the proceeds to be netted on her cargo based upon the report of the Captain, James Brace,[30] but these proved too high. The money was remitted to the London agent, Samuel Williams, but by the time the money arrived in London, John had already overdrawn on the expected amount.[31] Williams, writing to John in the fall of 1809 acknowledged the receipt of 3185 L, and described the European market prospects as follows: "Sugars were rising, other goods falling a little but prices expected to revive with the interruption of arrivals, naturally to be looked for from the advanced season of the year."[32]

Upon her arrival in Salem the Hind took on a new cargo of tobacco, whale and fish oil, and cotton and returned to Loningen. The whale and fish oil sold, but the cotton ran afoul of the new tariffs enacted by the French emperor. The cotton was allowed to go to Hamburg on payment of a 6 per cent duty. From there the sale of the cotton could proceed subject to a duty of two-thirds of the cotton. The French seized 17,872 pounds of cotton, leaving the owner, John Crowninshield, in possession of half that amount or 8,936 pounds

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30. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Prince & Ward, Salem, Nov. 21, 1809.

31. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to S. Williams, Mar. 5, 1810.

32. EI, Crowninshield Ms., S. Williams to John Crowninshield, London, Nov. 6, 1809.

of cotton, which was sold.[33] This was not confiscation; it was a tariff payment, but the result for the shipowner was similar to confiscation.

The other member of the Crowninshields most active in continental trade, Richard, had similar experiences with his dealings. Richard had bought the former pride of the Crowninshield fleet, the Belisarius, from the family firm, and had sent her to Europe in late 1809. In February, 1810, the Belisarius was wrecked and she sank off the coast of Tunis. Her cargo was saved and placed on the Tunisian vessel, Marbruka, which sailed for Cadiz and Lisbon. The Marbruka was captured by a French privateer, the Pelican, and taken to the Bay of Almeria off Spain where she was condemned, probably on the grounds that she was going to British-controlled Lisbon. Her cargo was sold by a judgment reached on October 12, 1810.[34]

In another case, not involving a Crowninshield ship, Richard suffered a loss of half the value of forty-six bales of Georgian cotton. He had shipped the cotton on the ship Emeline, which had headed for the Spanish port of San Sebastion. She was captured by a French privateer as she approached the port. Rather than face the French courts the captain of the Emeline completed a deal whereby he accepted half the value of

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33. NA, Claims, Hind. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Alex Brodie, Esq., Boston, Mar. 11, 1833.

34. NA, Claims, Marbruka.

his cargo in exchange for being allowed to proceed on his way.[35]

Not all of the Crowninshield cargoes faced such impossible trading conditions. Richard's ship, American Flower, had headed for San Sebastian in late 1809, but was warned off by a British vessel. She then sailed to England and arrived there on January 22, 1810. She waited there for twenty-eight days, trying to ascertain exactly the type of reception she would receive on the continent of Europe, especially Loningen.[36] The American Flower was successful in her chore of getting her goods landed on the continent, for in June John wrote Richard a letter in which he congratulated him on his success in getting goods through to the continent on that boat, especially seeing that those vessels which landed at San Sebastian had been confiscated.[37] In another letter, Richard wrote of his vessel the Ocean getting through, but that she had suffered a loss of $4,000. A second vessel would clear between $5,000 and $6,000 according to reports he received from Gothenburg. He had been guaranteed a profitable return on the goods carried by the American Flower, and the merchant to whom the property was consigned was holding it for a price rise, in

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35. NA, Claims, Emeline.

36. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard Crowninshield to Capt. Silsbee, New York, Apr. 17, 1810.

37. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, June, 1810.

which case Richard would receive still more.[38]

The general pattern, even for those ships which escaped the privateers and direct condemnations, was not good. The shipping which was getting through was doing so in the face of odds which took the profit out of commerce. Delays and being warned off from a prospective port and having to change destinations added to the uncertainly involved in a hazardous business. Despite all these odds, prices were not high enough to guarantee a profit on what goods did get through. British regulation and competition made prices unfavorable in territory they controlled. The French tariff structure and regulations against taking money from France combined to make prices low there.

Cargoes sent to France were in a particularly ticklish situation. The fear of trusting one's fate in the hands of French courts was indicated by the willingness of ship captains to accept partial value for their goods rather than risk the prospects of a trial. Nonetheless, Crowninshield ships were sent to France. Richard's ship Traveller was there in the summer of 1810, and first faced a sequestration despite her American cargo. In June the merchant firm through which Richard dealt sent the following information:

. . . the sequester was raised on the ship Traveller and other

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38. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Ltr. addressed "Dear Brother", unsigned, probably by Richard Crowninshield, New York, June 14, 1810.

American vessels in port loaded with articles the growth of America, and that liberty was given to dispose of the Cargoes and depart with the neat (sic) proceeds employed 2/3 in Silks and 1/3 in any other productions of France, at the same time it was further reported, that a decree was rendered which gave more favourable conditions to the American trade and a diminution of existing high duties was to be the result.

He continued that the decree had not yet passed, and that business was dull.[39]

The Crowninshields had piled up a sizeable fortune in the fifteen years before the laying of the Embargo, but this sort of restriction and loss on commerce could not help but be felt. In the first year after the renewal of commercial activity, they had suffered losses enough to destroy many firms. Their old pattern of trade, that of bringing goods to America and allowing others to run the risks involved in carrying those goods to Europe had been destroyed, and they were forced to take on the ruinous task of selling their own goods on the continent. Delay, confiscations, confiscatory tariffs, and rules which restricted produce which could be carried from a country all took their toll of what had once been an extremely profitable enterprize. Their captains on the continental run were battling the tough odds of the Continental System and Orders in Council on the scene. The family itself was faced with the problem of keeping their financial heads above water and meeting obligations and raising cargoes for new ventures that they hoped would be more rewarding.

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39. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jonathan Jones to Richard Crowninshield, Bordeaux, June 8, 1810.

Those problems began to assert themselves in conditions which have already been indicated, such as the question of where to send ships and John's overdrawing on Samuel Williams on money derived from the sale of the Hind's cargo. Letters sent by these captains of commerce speak of still other problems which confronted them. Large quantities of goods piled up on American docks, but ships were either unavailable or refused to take the risk of carrying them to Europe.[40] Money was hard to obtain, and could not be obtained on the cargoes which were ordinarily considered ample collateral for loans. John Crowninshield found this out to his sorrow when he tried to borrow "$6,000 to $8,000" from a Boston merchant. The high rates quoted and the demand for an endorser for the note were indignities to which the Crowninshields were unaccustomed. But such conditions obtained nonetheless.[41] News available from their ships was unreliable at best and occasionally entirely false, as is indicated by the discrepancy between Captain Brace's estimate of the value of the Hind's cargo and the actual sale price (see above) or the false report of the capture by the British of the Belisarius.[42]

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40. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, Mar. 12, 1810.

41. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Wm. Marston, Salem, June 14, 1810.

42. Bentley, Diary, July 5, 1811, IV, 32-33.

The problem of insurance and the Continental System also came up to plague the merchant. Prior to the post-Embargo period, the Crowninshields had made a habit of not taking insurance when the rates were high. In the days shortly after the outbreak of war in 1803, they sent their ships out uninsured, and Jacob had boasted of their being able to pay for the loss of two ships in 1806 by what they had saved in not taking out insurance over the course of years. In these treacherous days however, insurance was necessary, and it came high. A list of policies issued to Richard Crowninshield between late 1809 and early 1811 amply illustrates the high cost of insurance and the added dangers of dealing with that area of the continent under French control or within reach of French privateers. The vessel Rhoda and Betsy, New York to Loningen, November 29, 1809, insured at 17½ per cent,[43] the same vessel to the same port February 28, 1810, 13 per cent.[44] The Emeline, New York to San Sebastian, February 28, 1810, was insured at 6 per cent.[45] The Merchant, New York to Gottenburg, May 9, 1810, paid 10 per cent.[46] The Traveller, three policies all

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43. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Insurance policy, Rhoda & Betsy, Nov. 29, 1809.

44. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Insurance policy, Rhoda & Betsy, Feb. 28, 1810.

45. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Insurance policy, Emeline, Feb. 28, 1810.

46. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Insurance policy, Merchant, May 9, 1810.

dated July 14, 1810, New York to Lisbon, was insured at 4 per cent, 3 per cent, and 4 per cent respectively.[47] The Traveller, Lisbon to New York, October 6, 1810, 2¼ per cent.[48] The Pocahantos, New York to Lisbon, November 1, 1810 (two policies), 2½ per cent.[49] The Dart, New York to Bordeaux, December 7, 1810, 15 per cent.[50] The Pocahantos, Lisbon to New York, February 1, 1811, 2½ per cent.[51] Napoleon's system and the British blockade had placed insurance rates on a plane where they reduced profits in continental trade considerably. Only areas free from the French privateer allowed a merchant vessel to acquire insurance at rates which were not ruinous. Vessels which would trade directly with France faced the most formidable gauntlet. If they did succeed in making their way into and out of the French port, they immediately became fair prey for the British navy, and under the dual threat insurance was impossibly high priced.

Under the circumstances, it was only natural for the

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47. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Insurance policy, Traveller, July 14, 1810.

48. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Insurance policy, Traveller, Oct. 6, 1810.

49. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Insurance policy, Pocahantos, Nov. 1, 1810.

50. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Insurance policy, Dart, Dec. 7, 1810.

51. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Insurance policy, Pocahantos, Feb. 1, and Feb. 2, 1811.

directors of the commercial fleets to look elsewhere for markets. Richard reported to John Crowninshield in May of 1810 that many vessels were going to Great Britain and her dependencies. He also reported that sugar was paying high prices at the port of Loningen, but ventured no information as to the best method of landing the sugar at that port. He closed on a note which held an ominous portent, "I am sorry to hear of the failures that have occurred in Salem since last fall."[52]

Failures or discouraging comments began to occupy considerably more space in Salem correspondence in the spring and summer of 1810. A letter to John in June spoke of the discouraging situation in Europe regarding sequestered property, and offered a hope that the Margaret would do better than was feared.[53] A report from an agent in Naples was even more discouraging. After saying that American vessels that had been taken were being left to rot in the harbor rather than resold, the agent commented, "As things now stand it would be of no use to talk about commercial business."[54] Bentley added to the gloomy picture, "More failures in Business. Welman and Ropes have suffered their property to be

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52. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, May 7, 1810.

53. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Unsigned, addressed "Dear Brother," probably Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, June 14, 1810.

54. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Degen to John Crowninshield, Naples, June 19, 1810.

attached. Salem never was witness to more speculation & more sufferings from them."[55] As yet the merchants of Salem would not bring themselves to realize that the boom years were a thing of the past. The war was still on. Aside from one major exception, conditions still prevailed which had resulted in fast profits and vast accumulations of wealth throughout the war years. That exception was that the major powers were now enforcing their regulations which restricted neutral shipping. The regulations which Jefferson considered reason for issuing the Embargo still existed, and neutral merchants were receiving negative proof of Jefferson's wisdom. The attempt to obviate the consequences this change brought became the serious concern of the Crowninshields in the spring of 1810 after bitter experience taught them that the good old days were gone.

Despite the history of unsuccessful attempts to deal in the Russian markets on other occasions when normal continental commerce had failed, John Crowninshield turned to that area of trade in the spring of 1810. He loaded two vessels, the Telemachus and the Dido, and sent them to Russia, while a third ship, the Diomede was sent to Christianburg. The two vessels which ventured into the Russian market had more trouble than their predecessors into that region.

Both the Telemachus and the Dido went to the port of

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55. Bentley, Diary, June 5, 1810, III, 522.

Archangel. The first report to come back to Salem came from Captain Penn Townsend of the Telemachus. The brig had arrived at Archangel on June 13, 1810, and on July 24, 1810 was still waiting in port for a clearance from the port commissioner. There were 111 ships in the fleet which entered Archangel at that time, and in the six weeks that had elapsed only forty-seven had been cleared for landing their cargoes. Townsend's trouble had only started with the difficulty of landing his cargo. He had been ashore and checked the market on exportable goods. As might be expected the rush of business to the northern port had sent Russian prices soaring. Manufactured goods were too high to hope for a profit. Sail cloth, which the Crowninshields had taken from Russia on their previous ventures into that land, was prohibitively high priced. Charges on exchange of money and for credit were likewise described as prohibitively high. The only hope for profit was a somewhat dubious one. Townsend planned to wait in Russia until winter, while sending the Telemachus back to Salem under the mate (he had little hope of getting out before winter anyhow). He would send iron and hemp back to Salem and have the goods imported on the Telemachus loaded on sledges and taken to Moscow.[56] He, Townsend, planned to accompany it there and transact the sales. As a footnote he added that cotton and all dye

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56. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Penn Townsend to John Crowninshield, Archangel, July 24, 1810.

woods were in great demand and would bring high prices. The Telemachus had carried currants, raisins, pepper, sugar, coffee, cassia, nutmegs, cloves, and frankincense.[57]

The report from the second vessel, the Dido, was equally disheartening. Captain Lewis reported that the voyage was almost a total loss and that he was returning to Salem and leaving Townsend with the responsibility of selling his cargo. He wrote: "I do not think according to present appearances that my cargo will sell for near the Invoice. Pepper is very low & dull sail (sic). Gums no price is mencioned. Our coffee is a very bad quality for this market. So the Principle part of my cargo is low & dull, but The Sugar will do very well. The thirty Eight casks of oil is a Total loss it being prohibited but I am in hopes that Capt. Townsends will sell so as to make up for the loss of mine."[58] The Dido and the Telemachus left Archangel in the autumn of 1810 leaving Penn Townsend behind to make what he could from what appeared to be a bad situation.

Townsend's next report was dated November 24, 1810 and said that the goods had been sold, except for the coffee, gums and tamerack root. The oil had been confiscated. He had acquired some hemp and some duck in the process of selling his

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57. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Telemachus papers, cargo list, May 21, 1810.

58. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Capt. Edmund Lewis to John Crowninshield, Archangel, Sept. 8, 1810.

cargo.[59] This action required further dealings in the disastrous Russian markets by John Crowninshield. The following spring John sent the vessel Diomede to Archangel to bring back the proceeds (in goods) of the receipts of the sales from the two previous vessels. The Diomede carried ballast, cotton and logwood to Russia. John asked Townsend to return with all possible haste and to bring back iron, cordage, sheeting and duck.[60] He later instructed him to sell the Diomede cargo in Archangel and to return immediately.[61] Reports in America indicated that many ships were going out in the Archangel trade in the spring of 1811, and that as a result little could be hoped for in the way of profits from Russian goods.[62]

The Russian story was a familiar one. The Crowninshields had been forced into that trade on other occasions when their trade with Europe had become too dangerous or too competitive under war or peacetime conditions respectively. Statistics for the nation as a whole show that the Russian trade was used in the nature of a safety valve, as an outlet for shipping

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59. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Capt. Penn Townsend to John Crowninshield, Archangel, Nov. 24, 1810.

60. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Penn Townsend, Salem, May 8, 1811.

61. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Penn Townsend, Salem, May 11, 1811.

62. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, May 14, 1811.

which found the normally more profitable markets of Western Europe or the European colonies unhospitable. For example, figures for the nation as a whole reveal that the United States had shipped no sugar to Russia in the years 1800 and 1801. In the peacetime year of 1802 the negligible amount of 61,048 pounds of sugar was shipped. The next year in which any cargo of sugar was sent to Russia was 1805, when again a negligible amount of 44,476 pounds was sent. In 1807, by the end of which European waters were extremely hazardous, 350,696 pounds of sugar went to Russia. The next year in which Russia received sugar from American ports was the post-Embargo year 1809, when 2,193,257 pounds of sugar were sent to Russia. In 1810 the figure climbed to 11,414,895 pounds and in 1811 to 14,608,428 pounds.[63] Coffee statistics show the same situation. The only years following 1800 in which coffee was shipped to Russia were the years, 1802, 1805, and 1807, which were, respectively, a year of peace, the year of the Essex decision, and the year when the powers of Europe began to enforce the Continental System and the Orders in Council. Shipments for those years were: 101,126 pounds in 1802; 129,577 in 1805; and 149,271 in 1807. In the first year after the repeal of the Embargo, however, the amount

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63. Timothy Pitkin, A Statistical View of the Commerce of the United States of America; its connection with Agriculture and Manufactures; and an account of the Public Debt, Revenues, and Expenditures of the United States (Hartford, Conn., 1816), pp. 145-147.

of coffee sent to Russia was 1,283,100 pounds; in 1810 it was 4,048,909 pounds; in 1811 the amount reached 5,113,891 pounds.[64] The Crowninshield dealings with Russia hold roughly to this pattern. The Russian trade in which they engaged during the period between 1798 and 1800 represented a stop-gap trade which was not overly successful. In the post-Embargo period, it was disastrous in its outcome.

The former stand-by of the Crowninshields, trade to the Indian Ocean islands and the East Indies had been eliminated by the gradual capture of all of those lands by Great Britain. As they had done in the war in the 1790's, the British reduced the French and Dutch strongholds in the East Indies. A treaty with the Dutch king, at that time living in exile in England, allowed the forces of Great Britain to occupy any Dutch possessions in case of war in order to defend them from the French.[65] A systematic policy had effected the capture of French Indian Ocean possessions: Bourbon and Mauritius (Isle of France) had been taken in 1810; by 1811 the last major Dutch stronghold, the island of Java, surrendered after a siege of the major city of Batavia.[66] Sumatra, Celebes, Borneo, and Amboina had like-

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64. Ibid., pp. 148-49.

65. Justus van der Kroef, "Indonesia and the Origins of Dutch Colonial Sovereignty," Far Eastern Quarterly, X (1951), 165.

66. Ward, etc., Cambridge History, IX, 240.

wise fallen to the British by 1811.[67] The British did not look with favor upon neutral commerce in this area. A blockade was enforced in the East Indian islands, and the warehouses of Batavia piled high with coffee in the 1808-11 period.[68]

Even had their normal source of re-exportable goods not been cut off, the Crowninshield's experience with the European markets made their business ventures dubious. After the uncomfortable undertakings in Russian markets, John turned back to the continent as the lesser evil. His brother Richard had been successful upon two occasions in getting cargoes accepted, and there was no other direction in which to turn. It was not the nature of these merchants to submit to a personal embargo, so they continued to send out cargoes in the hope of a turn for the better.

Our diplomatic relations with France had assumed paramount importance for the shipper again in the spring of 1810. The Non-Intercourse act had been superseded by a bit of legislative chicanery known as Macon's Bill No. 2, on May 1. This law repealed the Non-Intercourse act, which had prohibited trade with the belligerent states. However it stated that should either France or Great Britain change its obnoxious edicts regulating American commerce to such an extent that

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67. Bernard H. M. Vlekke, Nusantara A History of the East Indian Archipelago (Cambridge, Mass., 1945), p. 242.

68. Ibid., p. 234.

the American President should recognize their negation, the other power would be given three months to do likewise. Failure of the second of the great belligerents to lift its restrictions on neutral shipping would result in the reimposition of non-intercourse against that power.

Napoleon's eyes must have gleamed at the possibilities for deceptive diplomacy this bill afforded. He had his Foreign Minister, de Cadore, send a note to the American minister in Paris to the effect that the Berlin and Milan Decrees had been revoked and that they would cease to be operative after November 1, 1810, providing the English likewise revoked their counter-blockade or the United States forced England to respect its rights. Although this famous Cadore letter promised nothing, Madison accepted it as a revokation of the two fundamental decrees of the Continental System. When England refused to consider the diplomatic letter as a repeal of the Emperor's blockade, non-intercourse was proclaimed against her by a new law dated March 1, 1811. This diplomatic coup on the part of the Emperor of France made war with Great Britain nearly inevitable.[69]

Meanwhile the brig Telemachus returned to Salem late in 1810 after her venture into the Russian markets. John Crowninshield had her loaded with cargo entirely American in origin:

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69. S. F. Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States (New York, 1936), pp. 154-55.

"green fish, cotton, ashes, and oil" and sent her out with the orders "therefore no one can trouble nor molest you but must let you pass safely & freely both out & home."[70] Those in charge of the vessel, a captain and supercargo, were to bring back French products, brandy, sewing silk, crepes, silk gloves, stockings, suspenders, and ladies kid gloves, according to their orders. The Telemachus left Salem on December 7, 1810 and had an uneventful passage, arriving in Bordeaux in 32 days. On March 27 she was still waiting for the details of the French system to be worked out so she could acquire a cargo.[71] Meanwhile a detailed report of conditions in France was sent to John Crowninshield by the merchant firm in Bordeaux through which he dealt. It read as follows:

Although the Operation of the Berlin & Milan Decrees is suspended, as far as those laws respect American vessels yet all the examinations, interrogations & other complicated formalities to which they gave rise continue in activity. After the assurances which have been given to the U. States through their Minister in Paris, we did hope that a general measure would have been adopted to authorize the admission of all American vessels, loaded exclusively with American produce; but so far from this being the case, a simple order was issued to the Customs Houses in the Seaports to examine very strictly such vessels & send the result of their examinations to the Director General of the customs at Paris, on whose Report the Emperor was to decide the admission or non-admission of each vessel & a special Decree was necessary for every individual case. These reports often laid over for weeks without being taken into consideration, & the few admissions which have taken place. were granted after ruinous, [delays ?] & on the condition of

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70. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Telemachus orders, Dec. 1810.

71. EI, Crowninshield Ms., David Burdette to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Mar. 27, 1811.

exporting one half the net proceeds in silk goods, & the other half in other french manufacturery or the produce of the French Soil. To ascertain the amount to be exported a scale or estimate was to be made & sent to Paris to be inspected & approved before the outward cargo could be cleared out. Of all the American vessels arrived here within the last 3 months 3 or 4 only have been admitted as yet, & orders were issued in the beginning of this month to suspend all further Reports on American cases until called for by the Emperor, which has excited much alarm. The Telemachus was among the small number admitted to entry, & an estimate of the proceeds of her outward cargo has been long since sent to Paris for the inspection & verification of the office charged with that formality, & we are dayly expecting its return in due Rule to enable us to expedite the Brig. She will probably have on board about 6000 gallons of Armagnac Brandy in Cognac Pipes & $3000 worth of silk goods. This is a very small cargo, but the green fish only sold for 50 francs pr Quintal, with the numerous deductions to which that article is subject. & both cottons & oils & votashes are such Drugs here that no offer has been made for them. Large quantities of oil have been imported from England under licences, & the consumption is now extremely small. Great commercial distress during the last three months & innumerable failures have destroyed all confidence, but an end to all speculation, & so completely dried up the resources of the manufacturers that they have almost entirely ceased the purchase of raw materials.[72]

This rather dismal report concluded by saying that the only article which could be imported with any assurance of decent profit was sugar, of the best quality. If John Crowninshield could obtain any of that commodity they "could inform . . . him of the needful formalities to ensure its admission. Under existing circumstances we cannot recommend the shipment of any other articles as the prices are low and we cannot regard American property as entirely safe in the present uncertain state of the relations of the two countries."[73]

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72. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Morton and Russel to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Mar. 26, 1811.

73. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Morton and Russel to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Mar. 26, 1811.

The next report on the progress of the Telemachus came form the same merchants in April of 1811. They apologized for the loss which was incurred in the sale of the cargo, and attributed it to the poor quality of the incoming goods and the high prices of brandy in France. No ships had been granted entry at Bordeaux in the previous four weeks, and they considered it "hazardous to send any cargo from the United States to this country unless protected by an Imperial Permission." Business continued extremely dull, with only sugar and fine coffee in any demand.[74]

John Crowninshield decided he needed additional insurance on the Telemachus and her cargo for the return voyage to the United States. Insurance rates had soared, however, even from the time when the brig had headed for France. He had taken out $10,000 in insurance for the round trip to Bordeaux at that time; in May of 1811, the rate for insurance one way from the French seaport was 20 per cent.[75] The amount of insurance a merchant could acquire at those rates was extremely limited. The round trip to Archangel for the Diomede, which went out at

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74. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Morton and Russel to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Apr. 22, 1811. For a detailed account of the license system under which some British goods were admitted to the continent as is suggested here and in the letter cited by footnote 72 see Frank Melvin, Napoleon's Navigation System, A Study of Trade Control During the Continental Blockade (New York, 1919), and E. F. Heckscher, Continental System.

75. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Chas. Bradbury, Salem, May 1, 1811.

this time, was only 11 per cent.[76] Under the circumstances the risk involved was great enough to force the purchase of insurance, whatever its cost. Richard Crowninshield wrote of insurance home from France being as high as 20 per cent in New York, although he had hopes of acquiring it at 15 per cent, "or at any rate for it will not due for me to risk it."[77]

Late in May 1811 the report reached John Crowninshield that the Telemachus would sail from Europe in twenty-five or thirty days, and that she was carrying brandy and silk. Describing his affairs to Richard, John wrote,"- - that she may arrive home safe is ---- possible."[78] Early in July word arrived in Salem that the Telemachus had been taken by the British and condemned, on the grounds that she had illegally entered a French port. John Crowninshield found himself signing a paper which included the words which had become common to commercial firms during the previous two years, ". . . I do hereby abandon to said William Gray such proportion of said Brig^t as two thousand dollars bears to her value and such proportion of the cargo as two thousand dollars bears to the first cost

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76. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Chas. Bradbury, Salem, May 10, 1811.

77. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, May 14, 1811.

78. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, May 25, 1811

at Bordeaux."[79]

The Telemachus was not an isolated example, even for the Crowninshields. Richard Crowninshield's vessel, the Dart, had sailed for Bordeaux in December of 1810. She was captured and condemned by the British for breaking the conditions of the blockade. The captain and supercargo arrived back in New York in April of 1811 with a copy of the condemnation procedures.[80] The ship Traveller set out on a similar voyage in December of 1810, and arrived in Bordeaux in January of 1811. She was detained in the process of unloading[81] and acquiring a return cargo until July of 1811. When she finally left Bordeaux she was captured by the British vessel Little Belt and taken to London and condemned.[82] The wealth which the Crowninshields had built up on war-induced commerce over a fifteen year span was being dissipated in a much shorter period of time than it had taken to build it up.

Despite the losses which had come almost without exception on every cargo sent out after 1809, the first indication of any financial emergency for the Crowninshield firms did not

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79. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield, abandonment statement on Telemachus, Salem, July 9, 1811. The wording safeguarded the merchant against loss of more than the sum of the insurance money he received should the vessel be recovered.

80. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, Apr. 19, 1811.

81. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, May 25, 1811.

82. NA, Claims, Traveller, Dec. 27, 1833.

appear until February of 1811. During that month Richard Crowninshield wrote a rather lengthy letter to his father discussing the state of his business affairs. The missive is filled with complete optimism. Richard listed his assets, including five ships and cargoes plus what he had on deposit with Samuel Williams in London, at $283,000. In addition his other credits, including sheep, goods, insurance stock, and cash brought his total wealth to $359,500. Against this he listed his liabilities as $161,000, due in the following notes: February, $30,000; March, $40,000; April, $60,000; May, $14,000; June, $2,000; July, $13,000; August, $2,000. Richard described his financial condition as very prosperous. He closed with a request that the family raise $30,000 to help him meet his notes which were coming due, and to avoid his taking the tremendous losses involved in converting his assets into cash. He enclosed promissory notes for $12,000 of the $30,000 desired.[83]

The entire family answered Richard's plea for money with a simple statement of their own situation. In a letter bearing the names of George, George, Jr., Benjamin and John they told him that they did not have the cash nor the means to raise it. They told him that they had all lost heavily since the firm had broken up. "We owe at home & abroad about 20,000$

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83. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to George Crowninshield, Sr., New York, Feb. 8, 1811.

& no means of paying but from the America's stock -- only 6000$ in Sam[l] Williams hand, now if we put the America cargo into your hands, the Ship must lay by, you only know how long." Their closing statement, exaggerated though it may be because of the context in which it was written, summed up the position of their firm, ". . . in fact Richard, you only out of all the family are the only one who has made anything since the disolution, & you have actually by your own statement, more means of raising money than we all put together."[84]

John Crowninshield wrote his brother the following day with a summary of his own personal affairs. They were similar to those of the rest of the family.

My own property like your own is out, what little on hand will not sell to pay my immediate and unavoidable calls. & my two last Russia market from Archangel vessels did not bring half their stocks. it is now with Penn Townsend left there with it. --& there is no one who can tell or pretend to calculate if it will come home safe. The little Telemachus is gone to Bordeaux with a very small cargo green fish etc -- you can tell if she will return in safety as well as anyone can. . . . what property at home will pay my debts but it cannot be sold -- but yet necessity is obliging me to force the sale in as prudent a way as it can be done. -- it is but a short time since that a friend in Boston paid a considerable sum for me & is now repaying himself from goods which was put in his hands for that purpose from the pressure of the times. We find that is is not dishonourable to request a friend to postpone his demand, but he must be made secure & it is our duty to do it.[85]

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84. EI, Crowninshield Ms., George, Jr., George, Benjamin, and John to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Feb. 13, 1811.

85. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Feb. 14, 1811.

The position in which the Crowninshields found themselves in the spring of 1811 was being repeated and worse in other Salem commercial firms. Chronicler Bentley noted in his diary the failure of a Captain John Barr, who had endorsed notes totalling $300,000 and was committed to pay $200,000 for which he had "no kind of property to that amount. These things explain the state of the Commercial world & the influence it has upon the moral."[86] The following month Bentley reported new bankruptcies of individuals who had speculated in the morass of commercial affairs and had been caught short when payments were due.[87] In April, 1811, the number of those who failed in business increased. "Repeated failures among the Tradesmen turned Merchants. They could sail down the Ohio without steering but lost when they entered the Ocean."[88] Other reports of "failures of Speculators" were mentioned by Bentley later in the year, although he tended to repeat his contention that those who failed were those who were not natives of Salem, and not members of the old established churches of Salem.[89] The implication from this was that those who failed were mainly those who gained their wealth hurriedly

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86. Bentley, Diary, Feb. 17, 1811, IV, 7.

87. Ibid., Mar. 14, 1811, IV, 11.

88. Ibid., Apr. 23, 1811, IV, 17.

89. Ibid., Sept. 27, 1811, IV, 51-52, and Oct. 12, 1811, IV, 55.

and were not clever enough or experienced enough in the field of mercantile activity to succeed when conditions became difficult.

Richard Crowninshield managed to avoid succumbing to the crisis he faced in February of 1811. On February 17 he wrote a letter assuring his family that he would never do anything which would lower their credit rating or result in a loss to them. He said that he had ssumed that they could raise the money he needed rather readily. He resented their inference that he could not repay them in time for them to meet their own obligations.[90] On February 20 he told them that he had raised $20,000 by giving some bills and by putting up some of his vessels as security.[91]

John Crowninshield had not been exaggerating the extent of his financial embarrassment when he had refused to aid Richard in the settlement of his debts. In a series of letters written during the month of March of 1811 to a William Marston of Boston, John arranged to have hemp sold at a considerable sacrifice to meet some outstanding bills, amounting to $7,120.31.[92] The year 1811 opened with the most dismal

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90. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to George, George, Jr., John, and Benjamin Crowninshield, New York, Feb. 17, 1811.

91. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to George, George, Jr., John, and Benjamin Crowninshield, New York, Feb. 20, 1811.

92. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Wm. Marston, Salem, Mar. 4 to Mar. 28, 1811.

prospects for the entire Crowninshield family of any year since the outbreak of the wars of the French Revolution in 1792.

Reports from European agents continued to be discouraging. The disastrous French market situation, the dangers of which were multiplied by the presense of British ships which preyed on American merchants, has already been mentioned. A report from Hamburg indicated that the confiscatory tariffs which had caused the loss of the cotton in Denmark on 1810 still obtained. It stated ". . . that a part of the goods will be received as duty for the rest . . . if no more favorable mode is adopted this will always leave a part to the propietor."[93] In June of 1811 new correspondence showed little change in French markets. Little commerce was reported. Sugar, cotton and coffee were scarce enough to sell well, although the source thought that none except the very best quality would return a profit.[94] Similar conditions held in August of 1811. American goods could be imported, but two thirds of the value of the return cargoes had to be in French produced silk goods. Changes were expected shortly.[95]

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93. EI, Crowninshield Ms., J. Pitcairn to John Crowninshield, Hamburg, Nov. 22, 1810.

94. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Preble to John Crowninshield, Paris, June 5, 1811.

95. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Norton & Russell to John Crowninshield, Bordeaux, Aug. 8, 1811.

Under these dismal circumstances the family firm sent the Fame out to the East Indian area again in the spring of 1811. The vessel was armed. She proceeded to Sumatra and took on pepper there, and was successful in acquiring a load although she had to stop at two different ports to acquire enough to make the home trip. Included in her cargo was one buffalo, not indicative that she carried a tremendous load of pepper. The Fame completed an uneventful trip by arriving back in Salem on November 28, 1811. It was the shortest trip that had been made to Sumatra and back up to that time, seven months and ten days.[96] The voyage of the Fame represented a faint glimmer of hope that the old markets might come back, and that the old conditions might again prevail. On the other hand, Dr. Bentley, after noting the arrival of the Fame from Sumatra, discussed the affairs of the family as follows: "They have lost their property almost as fast as they collected it from their unsuccessful enterprises. Some taken, some detained, some foundered, some upon false credit, & some from overstocked markets. These things are different from what they have been in past years when we might risk anything without danger."[97] Crowninshield fortunes were at a low ebb by the end of 1811.

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96. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Log of ship Fame.

97. Bentley, Diary, Nov. 28, 1811, IV, 70.

Throughout the year 1811, however, John Crowninshield had retained one ship in the European area. She was the Golden Age, with William Fairfield as captain. She had arrived at the island of Minorca in January of 1811 with a cargo which was not admitted to the continent, mainly rum and tobacco. Rumors had reached him at that time of the revocation of the French decrees. After consulting with the British commander as to their attitude toward American commerce with France, he decided that the only continental area safe for American trade was the Italian Adriatic coast. He then reported the sale of his cargo. Sales were bad but he though it better to sell than to retain the cargo and suffer further costs of carrying and handling.[98]

The next word from the Golden Age came in February, 1811, when her captain reported the impressment of two men by the British frigate Cambrian. The two had had different papers from the rest of the crew. In addition the British captain charged that Captain Fairfield had threatened an officer of the British navy, a charge which Fairfield denied. The Golden Age was at Terragona off the south coast of Spain.[99]

Fairfield remained at Terragona for more than a month. In a report to John Crowninshield in late March he said that

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98. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Minorca, Jan. 6, 1811.

99. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Fairfield to Am. consul at Mahon, Spain, Terragona, Feb. 20, 1811

he had sacrificed his entire outward cargo. He was taking on a load of wine for his next sales venture. He had had favorable reports of the markets on wine from both Lisbon and England, and had placed a private adventure in wine on another boat bound for Lisbon.[100] His report of May 21 came from Lisbon. He reported that wine prices were off there. He now contemplated going on to Plymouth in England to sell the wine. As to the Lisbon markets, he considered them bad. "The markets in this quarter are overstocked with Colonial Produce & also the productions of our country." He explained that possibilities in England were much better. However, if he could not obtain cash for his cargo there he thought he would return to Gibralter so as to obtain cash which he could remit to John Crowninshield.[101]

These letters reached John Crowninshield in America early in July. He answered quickly, telling Fairfield to remit some of his money to Samuel Williams in London and to try to pick up a salable cargo in England. He thought it advisable to proceed to the Mediterranean area, and there, preferably at Sicily, pick up a cargo for the West Indies. If a British cargo were obtained, Fairfield should not bring

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100. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Terragona, Mar. 24, 1811.

101. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Lisbon, May 21, 1811, and May 23, 1811.

it to the United States.[102] Five days later John wrote Fairfield not to attempt to pick up a cargo in England, but to take what cash he had and go to the Mediterranean Sea. He should go to Malta and try to pick up a cargo which would sell in the West Indies.[103] This was the period when both John and Richard Crowninshield were suffering heavy losses from their continental trade. John's vacillation and frequent changes of mind are explainable when one considers that he had just received notice of the loss of the Telemachus to British privateers for violating the continental blockade, and that his brother Richard had lost three vessels engaged in that same trade since April.

In July of 1811, Fairfield reported to his shipowner that he had arrived in England. Some of his cargo of wine had been rejected as being of poor quality upon arrival.[104] Throughout the months of August, September, October and November Fairfield remained in Plymouth, England, attempting to settle the snarled mess of the sale of wines. He had contracted with a Captain Carleton to reship the wine to a Baltic port, as it would not sell in England. Carleton had taken the wine, but

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102. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Wm. Fairfield, Salem, July 3, 1811.

103. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Wm. Fairfield, Salem, July 8, 1811.

104. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Plymouth, July 25, 1811.

had later refused payment on the grounds that the wine was of such defective quality that it would not sell. After consulting with Samuel Williams, Fairfield had Carleton jailed. Released on bail, he still refused to arbitrate on the wine settlement, and Fairfield was delayed throughout this extended period waiting for payment.[105] Finally, in December, 1811, Fairfield reported to John Crowninshield that he had settled the wine incident at a loss of 500 L.[106]

The next action of Captain Fairfield appeared to make no sense whatever. He bought 750 hogsheads of pilchards at Plymouth and headed for the Mediterranean sea in December, 1811. He had recieved 5410 L in the wine settlement, and the cost of the pilchards had been only 700 L. He had hopes of avoiding a loss on the exchange rate in the Mediterranean area by carrying the pilchards. He told John Crowninshield that he was going to Sicily, in all probability.[107] As Sicily was under British control, high profits on the cargo of fish from England could not have been anticipated by Fairfield. En route to Sicily, while in the Mediterranean Sea, the Golden Age met a French privateer. Fairfield was taken on board her

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105. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Plymouth, see letters written Sept. and Oct. 1811.

106. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Plymouth, Dec. 2, 1811.

107. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Plymouth, Dec. 2, 1811.

where he "was very Politely treated, and after 20 minutes detention allowed to proceed on my voyage." Perhaps this polite treatment caused Fairfield to assume that the conditions of the Continental System would no longer apply. Perhaps the captain of the privateer gave him information which led him to believe that he could land British produce at French controlled Naples with impunity. Whatever his reasoning, instead of going to British Sicily, Fairfield took the Golden Age to French Naples. He wrote, "I arrived at Naples on the 19th Febry where my cargo was Immediately Confiscated & sold by order of Govt.

"The cause assign'd for such Proceeding was that I had not a Neapolitan licence, tho' it prov'd finally, that every vessel having such a Document, were in a much worse situation than the Golden Age."[108]

The Golden Age was held in quarantine in Naples for forty days after her cargo was taken. At the end of that time, Fairfield took on a cargo of wine and set out on the return trip to England. On May 23, 1812, he was back in Plymouth, England, attempting to sell his wine.[109]

Some explanation of the action of Captain Fairfield in this obvious contravention of the Napoleonic Decrees appeared

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108. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Plymouth, May 23, 1812.

109. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Plymouth, May 23, 1812.

when the price of the fish in Naples became known. In an attempt to collect spoliation for the cargo John Crowninshield claimed that he had lost $35,000 on the seizure of the Golden Age pay load.[110] That sum, contrasted with the 700L cost of the fish on board ship in England, made rather formidable risks seem worth taking. Too, Alexander Hammett, American consul in Naples, suggested that Fairfield had made a deal for the pilchards (such as an agreement to split the proceeds with a privateer captain or a dishonest official) and had received a partial settlement.[111]

William Fairfield remained in England attempting to sell his wine through the rest of May and all of June, 1812. His first report indicated that the British government might be willing to purchase the cargo; if they would not, he planned to sell it through Mr. Samuel Williams.[112] This impression was destroyed by the news that the British government planned to grant licenses to import wines and brandy from France, "which destroys all hope of effecting a sale here. - - - therefore no person would make any offer for the cargo after those arrangements, showing no alternative left but to seek a

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110. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Maxey to John Crowninshield, Washington, Oct. 20, 1834.

111. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Alex. Hammett to John Crowninshield, Naples, May 6, 1833.

112. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Plymouth, June 14, 1812.

market in some other quarter."[113] After conferring with Williams, Fairfield wrote that he planned to join a convoy being formed in London and sail with it to the Baltic Sea. The charges were to be 5 to 6 per cent out and 2 to 3 per cent for the return trip. Williams considered it possible that the wine might sell at Copenhagen or Gothenburg, possibly without depositing "the proceeds of the Wine in the publick [treasury?] and draw [ing] it out in 22 monthly payments"[114] as was customary. In September, 1812, Fairfield wrote that he was in a convoy bound for St. Petersburg. "The prospects of obtaining a good Price for the wine at St. Petersburg appear flattering."[115] Meanwhile, the United States had declared war on Great Britain on June 18, 1812.

The adventures of the Golden Age in her wanderings in European waters for twenty months between the end of 1810 and autumn of 1812 show clearly the strangling effect of the competing blockade systems on the limited shipping which managed to avoid direct confiscation of vessel and cargo. Available markets were glutted with goods the American carrier had to

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113. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Plymouth, July 3, 1812.

114. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Plymouth, July 5, 1812.

115. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Plymouth, Sept. 9, 1812. This letter was written with this address apparently after Fairfield had left England and was en route to St. Petersburg.

offer. Those who succeeded in landing their goods were forced to suffer delays in arranging sales. Dubious return cargoes had to be accepted for produce carried into harbors to avoid taking a further loss on the exchange rate, which was always rigged against the merchant. The danger of the privateer was always present. Convoys which were run to avoid this danger dipped into the slender profits or added to the losses which were being sustained. And lurking in the consciousness of each merchant captain, like a desire for some forbidden but very delicious fruit, was the knowledge of fabulous prices to be obtained for his wares in the closed ports. If he resisted temptation and stayed on the open markets he faced slow but sure losses. On the other hand, quick confiscation awaited those who failed to resist the lure of the prohibited port.

Meanwhile, in America, the fortunes of the Crowninshields continued to spiral downward. Richard, never quite recovering from the crisis he had passed through in February of 1811, acknowledged debts to John Crowninshield of $19,800, borrowed in amounts of $5,000, $4,300, $5,000, and $5,500. His only possibility of payment was enclosed; two insurance policies that were valued at $10,000 each which he had taken out on his vessel, the Sylph, which had been lost in the Continental trade in early 1811.[116] He estimated the amount due on the two policies

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116. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, July 13, 1811.

as $16,997.50, but that he could do no better so far as payment was concerned. John noted that he had lost $3,912.00 in the transaction.[117] Actually John was overly optimistic in spite of his bad arithmetic. One of the Insurance companies refused to pay its claim until the account it had with Richard, amounting to $9,463.64 of the $10,000 policy, had been settled.[118]

In January of 1812 Richard was brought to court by his creditors to attempt to force payment of his bad debts. He sent letters to his family, asking them to come to New York and testify as to the validity of notes in which he acknowledged money owed to them.[119] In February word arrived in Salem that Richard was in jail and that his wife and children were in want. A friend of Richard's wrote to ask John to send them aid.[120] Richard Crowninshield went through bankruptcy proceedings in 1812. His creditors were paid, according to notes in the Essex Institute, about 67 per cent of the value of their loans to Richard. In addition to the $20,000 he owed to his brother John (which was not paid in the bankruptcy

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117. EI, Crowninshield Ms., note by John Crowninshield.

118. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Bailey & Willis to John Crowninshield, New York, Jan 11, 1812.

119. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, New York, Jan. 30, 1812.

120. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Silvanus Miller to John Crowninshield, New York, Feb. 4, 1812.

proceedings, because of John's acceptance of the insurance policies the summer before) he owed debts of $12,000 to the family firm and $13,000 to a brother-in-law, Nathaniel Silsbee.[121] John Crowninshield paid the legal fee, $227, for Richard's bankruptcy proceedings.[122]

John Crowninshield's affairs were in less danger than those of his brother. His ships had suffered sizeable losses in the two and one-half years following the repeal of the Embargo. He still had some vessels at sea, and retained hope of adequate returns on cargoes that were not definitely known to be lost. His losses in the Russian market had not cost him any ships, although they had been heavy. William Fairfield's reports from the Golden Age, although never showing any profits, expressed confidence in finding a market which would give some returns. The Diomede, sent to Russia in the spring of 1811 to recover the goods and money from the ill-fated voyages of the Telemachus and the Dido, had returned to Salem in the autumn of that year. She had been sent to Manila in 1812 in the hope of obtaining a cargo. Some relief had been afforded with an advance in the low prices of Russian goods[123]

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121. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Letter to John Crowninshield, no date, no signature.

122. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Receipt to John Crowninshield, Apr. 12, 1812.

123. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Bailey & Willis to John Crowninshield, New York, Jan. 6, and Jan 18, 1812.

in January, 1812.

The relief was temporary, however. No firm could stand the consistent losses which John Crowninshield had had for an indefinite period. He received a severe financial blow when the insurance companies refused to pay on the policies he had accepted from Richard in lieu of payment of a $20,000 debt. Likewise in January, John requested William Marston, his Boston merchant, to pay an $800 debt for him without security, a function normally performed by those representing major commercial firms. He received the following answer:

> . . . I am truly sorry that . . . you should wish me to forward you, your proportion of Ravens duc re a/c/August, and to pay your note to Mr. Bradbury for over $800. --for, upon every principle of commission business, I think I ought to decline it. - If I should comply, it would make me in advance nearly 2000 dol^rs - without any funds -- and carry me compleatly over my bounds, of what I call the best of Rules -- viz., Not to advance without Funds -- I think you must be sencible that such rules ought to be strictly attended to; It certainly will give greater confidence amongst all my friends -- Had I dispensed with those rules 5 years since -- should I am sure, have been bankrupt 2 or 3 times before now.[124]

Marston then proceeded to sell John Crowninshield's ravens duck and apply it to John's debts.[125] On February 17, 1812 Marston sent him a financial statement which indicated further trouble. "All your goods on hand are worth about $2100

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124. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Marston to John Crowninshield, Boston, Jan. 11, 1812.

125. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John Dodge to John Crowninshield, Boston, Jan. 22, 1812, and EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Marston to John Crowninshield, Boston, Jan. 31, 1812.

which when sold will leave a ballance in your favour of between 5 & 600 doll^{s} ---This you will perceive is a small sum to retain for bad debts, when the whole am^{ot} outstanding is near $6000."[126]

The months between March and August of 1812 were months of trying to satisfy the demands of needy creditors for John Crowninshield. The number of letters demanding cash for notes held and the number of different individuals to whom John owed money testify as to the uneasy state of his finances. On March 9, 1812, a letter from C. Bradbury, said: "Mr. J. Crowninshield, Dear Sir, If perfectly convenient to you to pay the am^{t} of your note some time in this month, it would oblidge me having some cargo payments to provide for."[127] J. Putnam, on March 14, 1812, wrote John: "Sir We find among our notes yours of $255 for Premiums on the Harriott due us [?] Feby to which we beg your attention when convenient."[128] On March 20, 1812, William Marston notified John that he had sold some of John's wine without permission. John answered that he was displeased with the sale, as it had been promised to a Captain Leach, but Marston answered that Leach would probably prefer cash for his debt

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126. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Marston to John Crowninshield, Boston, Feb. 17, 1812.

127. EI, Crowninshield Ms., C. Bradbury to John Crowninshield, Boston, Mar. 9, 1812.

128. EI, Crowninshield Ms., J. Putnam to John Crowninshield, Boston, Mar. 14, 1812.

than the wine.[129] Other notes continued to arrive with requests or demands or acknowledgements of a deferred date for the notes from various individuals.[130]

John's only salable cargoes were those he had obtained from Russia and some wine that he had held. His delay in selling these goods indicated that the markets were highly unfavorable. He had ignored the rise that had occurred in Russian cargoes in January, 1812, and had sent some of his hemp to Philadelphia for sale there. Dull Philadelphia markets had forced him to move the hemp on to Baltimore, just as the family firm had done ten years earlier while dealing with Russian goods. Baltimore reported dull markets, and that the only possible sales would result in a heavy loss on the hemp.[131] Improved markets early in April brought the sale of this cargo in Baltimore.[132] The necessity of moving it from market to market eliminated whatever hope John had had for profit on it.

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129. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Wm. Marston, Salem, Mar. 20, 1812, and Wm. Marston to John Crowninshield, Boston, Mar. 21, 1812.

130. See letters, EI, Crowninshield Ms., Joseph White to John Crowninshield, no place given, Apr. 24, 1812; C. Bradbury to John Crowninshield, Boston, June 4, 1812; July 5, 1812, and July 12, 1812; Also see PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to C. Bradbury, Salem, July 4, 1812 and July 21, 1812.

131. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jona. Felt to John Crowninshield, Baltimore, Mar. 15, 1812.

132. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Henry Payson to John Crowninshield, Baltimore, Apr. 3, 1812 and Apr. 8, 1812.

In June, 1812, John Crowninshield was forced to reduce some of his capital assets to meet notes which were due. He transferred a small parcel of land located next to the Crowninshield wharf, and his one-sixth of the wharf itself to his father George for $14,000 that he owed him.[133] In early August, 1812, he inquired as to the possibility of wine sales in Boston. The report came back that the price on wines was very dull.[134] He then tried to obtain an advance on the wines. The answer that came back was the familiar answer of the cautious merchant, ". . . I should be happy to make an advance on your wine, but haveing advanced largely on many goods on hand it is not in my power to advance any more at present, you will have a just Idea of this no doubt when you recollect the dull sale of all goods at present." The merchant, William Ray of Boston, advised John to sell the wine at short credit to a wine dealer rather than hold it further.[135]

In the summer of 1812, after war with Great Britain broke out, John Crowninshield faced the same ruin his brother Richard had suffered. His assets had dwindled from the small fleet he had owned to two small vessels, the schooner Elizabeth

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133. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Bill of Sale for wharf, June 23, 1812.

134. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Ray to John Crowninshield, Boston, Aug. 1, 1812.

135. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Ray to John Crowninshield, Boston, Aug. 3, 1812.

and the brig Betsy, which he had limited to American waters. His two vessels still at sea, the Golden Age and the Diomede, were not to return to Salem. That most valuable asset of the merchant, credit, was removed from John by the merchants with whom he dealt. John did not go through bankruptcy proceedings as Richard had done. His debts had been kept more among members of his immediate family or Salem and Boston creditors who did not hail him into court for settlement as Richard's creditors had dome in New York.

The only section of the three-headed Crowninshield firm not to go under financially was the parent firm, consisting of the two Georges and Benjamin W. They had lost heavily because of the European restrictions on shipping, but managed to retain two large vessels, the John and the America which they sent out privateering once the war with Great Britain broke out. The parent firm, however, had tended to avoid European markets during the vigorous enforcement of the Continental System and Orders in Council. They were not forced to sell off their wealth-producing goods or suffer the embarrassment of continued debts as was John Crowninshield. Neither were they compelled to settle their accounts at law as Richard had done.

In summing up the fortunes of the Crowninshield family, one observes that their decline, as their expansion had been, was a result of European affairs. They had suffered during the Embargo, but their suffering had been a limitation of

growth rather than great losses. Once the Embargo had lifted, and they were allowed to return to their old markets and trading areas, they began to lose much more heavily. Evidence concerning the Crowninshields indicated that the cost of the Embargo to the shipper was cheap compared to continued commercial intercourse, whether or not that intercourse was limited to belligerent areas. At first they had learned by the application of the confiscation and seizure restrictions of the Continental System and British measures and actions that the profitable colonies-to-continent trade was not permitted. Forced into marginal trade areas, they had lost money because of overstocked markets and delays in handling their goods. Each venture back into the ever-narrowing legal area of continental trade had cost them money, whether by confiscatory tariffs or complex port restrictions. Their venture into the extremely low margin trade, represented by Russia, was disastrous. When they attempted to carry American cargoes to France as the last possible market, their ships were seized and confiscated by the British. The three year period between June, 1809, when the Crowninshield fleet went forth under the partial freedom of non-intercourse, and June, 1812, when the war with Great Britain broke out, had seen the reduction of their fortunes to the point where only the parent firm had enough resourses to join in the wave of privateering which came with the war.

The beginning of the War of 1812 marked the end of the period in which the Crowninshields were engaged in the unequal commercial struggle against the goliaths of Europe. The economic affairs of the family were in ruins. Richard had been eliminated from commerce, and did not continue maritime activity. John's two remaining ships were at sea when the war came; the parent firm alone had two large ships at Salem.

With the news of the outbreak of war (June 1812), the citizens of Salem, and particularly the Republican ones, hastened to send out privateers in search of British merchantmen. The parent Crowninshield firm, the only branch of the family which was still able to put ships to sea, entered vigorously into the battle. American ships were successful in the early days of the war, and the vessels owned by the Crowninshields were very successful in the summer, autumn, and early winter of 1812.

The first Crowninshield privateer to take to sea was the little yacht Jefferson, of twenty-two tons, which headed for open waters with a crew of thirty on July 1, 1812.[136] However small she may have been, two prizes to the Jefferson appeared in Salem harbor on July 11.[137] The Jefferson was too small for privateering. A Maine woman, who saw the crew

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136. Bentley, Diary, July 1, 1812, IV, 104.

137. Ibid., July 11, 1812, IV, 106.

of the Jefferson coming ashore to purchase milk, commented that "when I saw you landing, I could think of nothing else than so many goslins in a bread tray."[138] Bigger Crowninshield ships were ready to go out to take up the task which the Jefferson had begun.

In August the two large Crowninshield vessels, the John and the America, were readied for the sea. On her first cruise the John captured eleven British merchantmen.[139] The next voyage of the John ended on October 23, 1812, after forty-five days at sea. She had taken five vessels on this cruise, although only one had arrived at Salem by this time. Some of the problems of privateering were suggested in the report on the John. Of the eleven prizes she had taken on her first voyage, only three had been "secured". On her second cruise she had retaken an American privateer which had had so many British prisoners on board that they had revolted and put the American captain and crew in irons.[140] The John made one more cruise, her third, which ended with the vessel being captured by the British and sent to St. Thomas. Bentley described her as the largest and best of the vessels of Salem which had been captured.[141]

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138. Ibid., July 16, 1812, IV, 107.

139. Ibid., Aug. 21, 1812, IV, 110.

140. Ibid., Oct. 23, 1812, IV, 125.

141. Ibid., Mar. 19, 1813, IV, 159.

The most successful privateer of the Crowninshields was the America. The America was a large vessel, and extremely fast. She managed to avoid capture throughout the entire war, and went on five successful cruises. Because of her great speed she was able to outrun any ship dangerous enough to cause her trouble.[142] The success of the America assisted in rebuilding the fortunes of the Crowninshield family.

The America put to sea "for the first time . . . against British shipping" on September 7, 1812. She carried sixteen guns and was "praised as the best ship ever fitted from this Port for an armed vessel."[143] The legendary feats of this ship during the war justified this high praise from Dr. Bentley. On January 5, 1813, a prize of the America came to Salem and reported that the ship had been in the British Channel attacking shipping. Two of her five captured vessels had arrived at Salem.[144] Later in January Bentley described the America as the "most successful Ship in our Port & [the one that] will divide the largest sums."[145]

The America came back to Salem in the late winter, and by the end of March was away again with a new contingent of

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142. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, pp. 402-03.

143. Bentley, Diary, Sept. 7, 1812, IV, 115.

144. Ibid., Jan. 5, 1813, IV, 144.

145. Ibid., Jan. 25, 1813, IV, 147.

officers. This second voyage was successful, but nearly disastrous, as the America was chased up the Kennebec by British vessels.[146] On her next voyage the America was fitted for the sea at Bath in Maine, and by December 13, 1813 was reported back at sea again.[147] At the end of this cruise, her third, in April of 1814, it was estimated that she had taken 26 prizes, of which the number which arrived at Salem were worth "11 hundred thousand dollars."[148] Prizes of the America continued to come into American ports throughout the remainder of the war period.[149] Late in 1814 the now famous ship suffered damages to her mast which removed her from the lists of privateers for a time.[150] She went to sea for one last voyage after the repairs were made. When the America reached Salem three months after the end of the war, she had captured forty-one prizes, of which twenty-seven arrived safely in America and of which the Crowninshields received one-half the total value.[151] The

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146. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, p. 400.

147. Bentley, Diary, Nov. 2 and 12, 1813, IV, 213-14; and Dec. 13, 1813, IV, 221.

148. Ibid., Apr. 1, 1814, IV, 246.

149. Ibid., Mar. 21, 1814, IV, 244; Apr. 1, 1814, IV, 246; also J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, pp. 401-02.

150. Bentley, Diary, Nov. 10 and 14, 1814, IV, 297, 298.

151. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, pp. 405-06. For the complete account of the privateering career of the America see B. B. Crowninshield, "The Private Armed Ship America," Essex Institute Historical Collections, Vol. 37, p. 1.

Crowninshield family firm succeeded in making the war pay enough to regain the wealth they had lost in the years immediately before the war.

John Crowninshield was not so fortunate in avoiding loss as his brothers and his father. His Golden Age, heading for St. Petersburg with a cargo of wine shortly after the United States declared war, had gone instead to Stockholm. Considerable confusion existed in the convoy system which had developed. When the news of the outbreak of war arrived at Gothenburg in late July, 1812, many United States vessels were captured. Apparently the Golden Age was one of those fortunate enough to escape, although Captain Fairfield spoke of being in a British convoy after that time.[152] In the spring of 1813 Fairfield reported that the cargo of the ship was only bringing enough to pay his expenses plus duties. He was forced to sell the wine at low prices, and then only at three or four pipes per sale. His only hope of retrieving anything on the ship itself was to sell her, but that would be difficult because the vessel was not large enough to satisfy Swedish buyers. Fairchild had discharged the crew of the vessel, but they had

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152. Franklin D. Scott, "President Madison's Foreign Policy - The views of an American Merchant abroad in 1811," Journal of Modern History, XVI (1944), pp. 294-98. Also EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Plymouth, England, Aug. 24, 1812 and Sept. 9, 1812. Gothenburg is in Sweden opposite the point of the Danish peninsula.

been unable to get home.[153] Two weeks later a second letter reported that Fairfield could not sell his cargo or the ship. Sales of wine had been reduced to the point where he was forced to sell it by the single pipe. He talked in terms of selling the Golden Age at a small fraction of what she would bring in the United States, but the choice that he had was between selling her at a tremendous loss or letting her rot in the harbor.[154] The Crowninshield papers do not tell what happened to the Golden Age, but she did not return to Salem and was presumably a total loss.

John's other vessel, the Diomede, had been sent to the Phillipines in the spring of 1812. In May, 1813, word arrived in Salem that the Diomede had been captured and taken to Halifax by the British vessel La Hogue. John asked for permission to go to Halifax to attempt to have his ship restored to him. The war and the ease with which such ships were converted to privateers made such a quest fruitless, although John did go to Halifax.[155]

After this failure, John, left without any maritime interests, decided to turn to privateering as his father and

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153. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Stockholm, Apr. 24, 1813.

154. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Wm. Fairfield to John Crowninshield, Stockholm, May 6, 1813.

155. PM, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Richard Cetts, Salem, May 18, 1813, and EI, Crowninshield Ms., Bailey & Willis to John Crowninshield, New York, May 19, 1813.

brothers had done so successfully. He went to New York City, and between September, 1813, and January, 1814, he arranged to have a fast schooner built, which he also called the Diomede. Bentley's Diary recorded cryptically the story of the new privateer. On March 8, 1814, "The fast sailing schooner built at New York on the Baltimore outline with improvements, the Diomede, John Crowninshield, commander, reached this port this morning."[156] June 6, 1814, "We have the disagreeable news that Capt. John Crowninshield of the Diomede, armed vessel from this port, has been taken. Three of her prizes have arrived in Maine. --The Diomede was taken by a Sloop of war & could not escape as was expected by her high reputation."[157] John's fortune was not so bad as this indicated, but he had nowhere near the success of the others of his family. On the cruise between New York and Salem he had captured six prizes[158] and they brought him, as captain and part owner of the vessel, about $8,000. On her second and last voyage she captured twelve vessels, of which only three arrived back in the United States safely.[159] John, who had married just before starting out on the voyage, spent the remainder of

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156. Bentley, Diary, Mar. 8, 1814, IV, 240.

157. Ibid., June 6, 1814, IV, 258.

158. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Mary Boardman Crowninshield to Benjamin W. Crowninshield, Salem, Mar 9, 1814.

159. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, p. 405.

the war a prisoner at Halifax.[160]

Richard Crowninshield turned to greener pastures following his release from jail as a debtor. He went to Connecticut and became involved in woolen manufacturing, and toward the end of the year 1814 returned to Salem to set up a textile mill there.[161] Later Richard constructed a building in Danvers to be used in woolen manufacturing.[162] His bankruptcy had apparently saved him from the financial troubles which bothered John Crowninshield for the remainder of his lifetime.

The friendliness which had existed among the Crowninshield brothers had deteriorated by the end of the war to something close to a condition of constant bickering. Richard had never completely forgiven the others for their failure to come to his aid when he faced emergencies in 1811. When the war came both Richard and John were heavily in debt. Irritations which had been concealed at the time of the family split cropped up with the antagonism caused by the wide discrepancy between the fortunes of these two and Benjamin, George, and George, Jr. Apparently Richard and John were urging George, Sr. to assist them with their debts. Benjamin,

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160. Bentley, Diary, Apr. 4, 1814, IV, 247, and Mar. 16, 1815, IV, 320.

161. Ibid., Dec. 15, 1814, IV, 301.

162. Ibid., Oct. 29, 1815, IV, 358, and Mar. 21, 1816, IV, 378.

in Washington, wrote his wife, ". . . tell me if Sir pays R & J debts, from our money? this must not be done, his own he can do what he pleases with, but he ought to know who made & who left him in the hour of trouble."[163] Later he wrote that "George must take care of our own property & give nothing up, . . . tell him how anxious I am about it, for nothing can be got back from John & Dicks hands, but by suit, at law."[164] Benjamin's wife reported that John was no longer speaking to her in May, 1815.[165] The trouble and antagonism piled up when George, Sr., died and the spoils of the estate were left for them to battle over. George, Jr., refused to attend his father's funeral because he would not sit with his brothers and their wives.[166]

Benjamin W. Crowninshield went to Washington, D. C., in 1814 to expedite the condemnation of some of the vessels that the Crowninshield privateers had captured. His success in getting the condemnations approved was worth "above half a million of dollars. . . ." The prizes to the America and

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163. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Benjamin W. to Mary Boardman Crowninshield, Washington, Apr. 29, 1815.

164. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Benjamin W. to Mary Boardman Crowninshield, Washington, May 24, 1815.

165. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Mary Boardman Crowninshield to Benjamin W. Crowninshield, Salem, May 21, 1815.

166. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Mary Boardman Crowninshield to Benjamin W. Crowninshield, Salem, June 22, 1815.

Jefferson were concerned.[167] Later that year he accepted Madison's offer of the post his brother Jacob had refused nine years earlier, that of Secretary of the Navy.[168] While in Washington he made the decision that was to remove the last solvent Crowninshield firm from the shipping industry. He wrote his wife, "Well, I have written to Sir & Geo that tis best for us not to trade any more, this I think right, I advise to sell off all ships Hemp etc. get money & pay debts."[169] Benjamin retained the post of Secretary of the Navy through the rest of Madison's term and untill 1818 served in the cabinet of James Monroe.

George Crowninshield, Jr., who never married, provided Salem with conversational topics throughout his lifetime. During the summer of 1813 the famous Chesapeake-Shannon battle occurred, in which Captain James Lawrence (of "don't give up the ship" fame) was killed. The British took his body to Halifax. At the request of the Crowninshield's Dr. Bentley wrote James Madison asking for permission to go to Halifax to recover the body.[170] Permission was granted, and Bentley mentioned that George sailed on August 10, 1813.[171] Feeling

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167. Bentley, Diary, Mar. 17, 1814, IV, 242-43.

168. Ibid., Dec. 22, 1814, IV, 304.

169. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Benjamin W. to Mary Boardman Crowninshield, Washington, Feb. 15, 1815.

170. Bentley, Diary, July 20, 1813, IV, 180-81.

171. Ibid., Aug. 10, 1813, IV, 187.

in Salem was high in opposition to the war, and the wrath of the Federalists came to the surface when the body of this hero was brought back to Salem later in the month. Bentley's description indicated the strength of this wrath.

> The day of the interment of Capt. Lawrence & Lieut. Ludlow. Circumstances which will not be found in the printed account. The North Meeting was refused under the influence of Samuel Putnam, now a Senator of the State, & Icabod Nichols, a Master of a Vessel & lately master of the Salem East India Marine, 19 black balls being in that Society against an attendance at the funeral or a third of the whole. It is affirmed out of doors not more than 12 propietors would have refused the North House. If they would not few dare to shew any signs of disapprobation. Putnam wrote the note & Deacon Holman, as he was required, signed it. . . . The bell of the North Church did not toll, tho' we passed & turned at the Church. Again not an officer of the State Government appeared with any badge of Office. All the Officers of the General Government offended. Gov. Strong was in his council determined not to appear. The Arrangement was on the large scale. . . . Putnam & Nichols left Salem upon the occasion of the solemnities to express the malignity of their feelings, etc. On the other hand, Salem never saw such a day.[172]

After making whatever political capital was to be obtained by bringing the bodies to Salem, George Crowninshield applied for permission to take the bodies of Lawrence and Ludlow to New York City, but the permission was refused.[173] Later the bodies were taken overland to New York, where final services and burial occurred.[174]

The indecisive conclusion of the War of 1812 ended the period in which European conditions dominated Crowninshield

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172. Ibid., Aug. 23, 1813, IV, 191.

173. Ibid., Sept. 2, 1813, IV, 195.

174. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, p. 383.

affairs. The family was no longer involved in the commerce which had brought them wealth and fame. John Crowninshield was in Halifax, a British prisoner; both Georges were in Salem but no longer engaged in commerce; Richard was a novice manufacturer; and Benjamin was serving as Secretary of the Navy to James Madison. The war had restored the fortunes of the three members of the old firm. On the other hand it had completed the destruction of John Crowninshield's wealth. Richard, engaged in manufacturing, was less directly concerned.

The ending of the war brought down the curtain on the House of Crowninshield as a significant maritime concern. The parent firm, which had grown wealthy again with the war, retired from the sea voluntarily. Richard remained in manufacturing. John Crowninshield, who had lost his privateer after brief successes, was never able to revive the Crowninshield name to its old position of power in the nation's commerce.

Chapter V

"JACOBINS" IN SALEM

The political effects of the French Revolution and Napoleon upon the affairs of the Crowninshields are closely tied to the commercial development of the family firm. It is doubtful if the Crowninshields, albeit capable, would have climbed to the position of respect and authority in the area of government without the economic power they derived as a result of the unsettled conditions in Europe, although such a thesis would be impossible to prove. On the other hand, the political scene of which the Crowninshields were a part was not considered with the account of their merchant activity, and it is to this part of the Crowninshield story that this section is devoted.

The American Revolution had been a relatively conservative affair. Henry Adams described Americans of the 1790's as a group whose "society was democratic; in the worst excesses of their own revolution they had never become savage or blood thirsty; their experience could not explain, nor could their imagination excuse, wild popular excesses; . . ."[1] There had been few displays of wild radicalism in the early

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1. H. Adams, United States, I, 82.

stages of the French Revolution either, although the storming of the Bastile, the descent of peasants upon country homes of the nobility in the late summer of 1789, the march of the women upon Versailles, or the establishment of the liberal constitutional monarchy in 1791 might be so termed. Hence the great majority of Americans, recipients of French aid in their struggle for independence, were inclined to view without disfavor the establishment of constitutional government in France.[2] William Bentley reported toasts being drunk favoring the French Revolution at a meeting of the militia in 1791[3] and as late as January of 1793 his diary indicated considerable public support for the liberalism of France.[4]

The execution of Louis XVI in January, 1793, changed some of this sentiment. Bentley, whose liberal leanings are obvious, wrote of the "melancholy news of the beheading of the Roi de France" and said that the "french loose much of their influence upon the hearts of the Americans by this event."[5] Women in Boston wore a black rose in honor of the monarch who had aided in the cause of American independence, and in Providence the bells tolled at the news of the

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2. Eugene P. Link, Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800, (Morningside Heights, N. Y., 1942), pp. 44-45.

3. Bentley, Diary, Sept. 5, 1791, I, 295.

4. Ibid., Jan. 9 and 18, 1793, II, 2; Jan. 31, 1793, I, 4.

5. Ibid., Mar. 25, 1793, II, 13.

execution.[6] With the building up of revolutionary intensity following the proclamation of the Republic in France, most New Englanders tended to look with alarm at their erstwhile benefactor. "Thenceforward the mark of a wise and good man was that he abhorred the French Revolution, and believed democracy to be its cause. Like Edmund Burke, they listened to no argument: 'It is a vile, illiberal school, this French Academy of the sans-culottes; there is nothing in it that is fit for a gentleman to learn.' The answer to every democratic suggestion ran in a set phrase, 'Look at France.' "[7]

New England Federalism seized upon the odious terror of French radicalism and associated opposition to their political beliefs with the evils of Jacobinism. The Federalist half of the population, which according to Adams cast about 25,000 votes in Massachusetts in the late 1790's (contrasted with about 20,000 votes by the Republican half), "included nearly every one in the professional and mercantile classes, and represented the wealth, social position and education of the Commonwealth; but its strength lay in the Congregational churches and in the cordial union between the clergy, the magistracy, the bench and bar, and respectable society throughout the state."[8] The union of respectability, bench, and religion

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6. Ibid., Apr. 2, 1793, II, 14.

7. H. Adams, United States, I, 82.

8. Ibid., I, 76.

tended to ostracize and strike out against dissenters of all types, and in an Eighteenth Century application of guilt by association, political opponents to their rule assumed the proportions of the bloodthirsty French extremists. "The democrat had no caste; he was not respectable; he was a Jacobin, -- and no such character was admitted into a Federalist house. Every dissolute intriguer, loose-liver, forger, false-coiner, and prison-bird; every athiest, -- was a follower of Jefferson; and Jefferson himself was the incarnation of their theories."[9]

One continental interpreter of the change in this segment of American attitude toward France considered the attack on religion as the dominant factor in the change. He considered the enthusiasm of the United States for the revolution as being retained so long as Americans thought the attack of the apostles of reason to be against Roman Catholicism and not against Christianity itself. Hence they "protested little" at the execution of Louis XVI. As soon as the pure deism of the movement revealed itself in America, through what were called the anti-Christian speeches of Genêt, anti-French and anti-Revolution sentiment soared. "It was no longer a valuable auxiliary that they saw in the French Revolution, but a powerful enemy that would have replaced the religion of Christ with

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9. Ibid., I, 79-80.

the worship of man deified."[10] Despite the variance of opinion as to the source of the new feeling concerning France, there is little disagreement with the statement that a solidification of opposition feeling, based upon religious-political grounds, did develop in the period of three years following the execution of Louis XVI.

The outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars forced the American nation to take a stand. The United States was bound to France by the treaty of alliance signed in 1778, but was in no position to undertake a war at the side of the French Republic. American neutrality was therefore proclaimed. American political opinion was splitting over the problem of which of the two major antagonists was our worst enemy, and the early raids upon shipping conducted by both powers did little to lessen the problem. Several incidents of the early years of the war, most significant of which were the Genêt affair in 1793, the negotiation and signature of the Jay Treaty with England in 1794, and the Quasi-War situation with France between 1798 and 1800 which made commerce so hazardous, all tended to place American politics on a base where prime issues between the two political groups centered around the attitude

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10. Bernard Faÿ, The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America, tr. from the French by Ramon Guthrie (New York, 1927), pp. 353-68.

toward the two major belligerents.[11] The latter two of these events have been dealt with earlier, but the Genêt mission to America, which was very influential in forming American opinion, needs some explanation.

Edmond Genêt had been sent by the French Republic to the United States as minister. He arrived in America at the port of Charleston in early 1793 and proceeded overland to Philadelphia, drawing the applause and well wishes of those with whom he came in contact. He arrived in the American capital shortly after the proclamation of American neutrality. Genêt was brilliant but he was also young, and he overestimated the pro-French feeling of the American people and government. He had fitted out a privateer in Charleston, an act which placed American neutrality on shaky ground. Arriving in Philadelphia, Genêt was also greeted by pro-French throngs whose enthusiasm seemed to match that of the young diplomat himself.[12] The

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11. An interesting and enlightening account of the development of this thought and of the intensity of feeling involved is the study of the writings of the highly literate Ames brothers, Fisher the Federalist and Nathaniel the Jeffersonian, by Charles Warren, Jacobin and Junto (Cambridge, Mass., 1931). The account is based upon the diary of Nathaniel Ames, but the complete opposition between the brothers is clearly presented by comparing this diary with the more widely-known writings of Fisher Ames. Seth Ames, ed., Works of Fisher Ames (Boston, 1854).

12. Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People (New York, 1946), p. 75. Hereafter cited as T. A. Bailey, Diplomatic History.

American government, however, remained cool toward Genêt.[13]

Genêt was not discouraged by the coolness of the officials of the federal government of the United States. He continued his activities aimed at helping France from American soil in two ways; by attacking British shipping, and by attempting to organize attacks on British and Spanish territory in North America.[14] He succeeded in aligning many private citizens with his ventures, but quite naturally ran afoul of the already unenthusiastic men charged with the responsibility of running the American government. First Hamilton, and later Jefferson, came to the decision that Genêt's activities were dangerous to American neutrality. Finally Genêt, whose experiences had revealed unrestrained eagerness for his schemes on the part of the American people and equally unrestrained opposition on the part of the government, attempted to overcome the opposition by appealing directly to Congress as the representatives of the people. It was an unforgiveable breech of diplomatic etiquette. The Washington Administration had already asked for Genêt's recall. The French government,

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13. The account of the Genêt affair comes from Edward Channing, A History of the United States (New York, 1905-27), IV, 129-33.

14. An account of Genêt's attempt on Louisiana and the Floridas is Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Origin of Genêt's Projected Attack on Louisiana and the Floridas," American Historical Review, III (1898), 650. Hereafter cited as F. J. Turner, "Genêt," A.H.R.

which had moved several degrees farther to the left since Genêt's appointment, was willing to have its minister returned, probably for the purpose of executing him; so Genêt, relieved of his official position, took refuge in the United States for the remainder of his life.[15]

Genêt's diplomatic fiasco served to diminish sharply the support the French had held, including even that of Jefferson himself, who normally was associated with pro-French feelings. The Jay Treaty, thoroughly detested by France and by a great share of the American public, also focused attention on the significance in American politics of attitude toward the warring European powers. After the Senate had ratified the treaty, there was action in the House of Representatives to block money appropriations needed for the operation of the treaty. A speech by the Federalist orator Fisher Ames served to work the bill through the House, but did little to ease the ever-widening breach between Anglophile and Francophile in American life.[16] The Quasi-War with France, which followed the excitement over the Jay Treaty, added to the importance of the embattled European states in American politics.

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15. Genêt had been sent to America by the Girondist element of the French revolutionists. He was of the aristocracy close to Louis XVI. His sister, Madame Campan, was lady in waiting to Marie Antoinette. See F. J. Turner, "Genêt," A.H.R., III, 656.

16. T. A. Bailey, Diplomatic History, pp. 66-68.

The Crowninshield brothers were ship captains in their early twenties or late teens when the French Revolution began. Their connection with it was vague at best until the wars of the French Revolution began to affect their shipping, and then their contact with continental affairs lay entirely within the area of maritime activity. The seizure and condemnation of one of their three small schooners by the British in 1793 had been the most significant event in orienting their affection for either power. Their early letters gave no indication of interest in the political theory involved between the Jacobin or the Junto. The French and British were making their shipping hazardous - consequently they took what measures they thought necessary to deal with the inconveniences created by those powers. Their concern in the years 1792-96 lay in the direction of finding goods that would sell, and markets where those goods would bring the highest prices. Their activity as ship captains placed them in a position where application of theory to commercial regulations in certain areas was extremely significant; on the other hand their closeness to the privateers and embargoes of the conflicting systems made them impervious to the subtleties of doctrine. In the early stages of the war, the position of the Crowninshields might be likened to that of a peasant whose house and farm are in the center of a battle ground. The immediate inconveniences and dangers of the struggle were of such dimensions that little time was

left to ponder the problem of where moral correctness lay. Each side seemed equally destructive.

Attempting to decide at what stage the Crowninshields became thorough-going Jeffersonians, and the depth of their feeling for the political ideas associated with Jefferson, is difficult. Their writings are dissappointly free from expression of political ideas. On the other hand, outward manifestations of Jeffersonian feeling appear rather early. There was evidence that they were thoroughly opposed to the English from the beginning of the war. The seizure of the Charming Sally in the first year of the war doubtless contributed to the Anglophobia. Jacob, writing a letter of advice to his brother Richard in November, 1795, told him that he should not trust the English, as they were contemptuous of Americans, and that Americans should reciprocate the feeling.[17] Opposition to the Jay Treaty, normally associated with hatred for England and with Republicanism in America at this time, likewise appeared.[18] Whether this dislike for England was new to the Crowninshields in the 1790's or represented a holdover from antipathy generated during the Revolutionary War was not indicated.

Linked to this animosity toward the British was a feeling

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17. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Ship America, Nov. 15, 1795.

18. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Mar. 20, 1797.

of admiration for the French which appeared in the Crowninshield papers of the middle 1790's. Jacob said early in the crisis with France that war with France should be avoided at any cost, so long as humiliating terms were not agreed to.[19] After learning of the French action in freeing a captured American merchant vessel, Jacob commented, "Our friends the French are not quite so bad you see as they are represented."[20] On another occasion he mentioned how shameful it would be for America to fight France. "They [the French] do not want a War with us, & twill be our own fault if we engage in one with them."[21] During this same period of uncertainty, John wrote from France that the designs of the French state were peaceable, and that America stood to lose much by starting a war with France. Were France disposed to war, said John, she would gain greatly by starting a conflict and confiscating American property in France. He estimated that there was $300,000 in Salem property in Bordeaux alone.[22]

In 1798, when the near war situation between the United States and France was at its height, the attitude of the

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19. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Mar. 20, 1797.

20. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Mar. 22, 1797.

21. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 4, 1797.

22. PM, Crowninshield Ms., George, Sr. to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 2, 1797.

Crowninshields toward France remained essentially friendly. In a letter where he told Richard of the French capturing vessels "for a bale of English goods, a p^{s} of cloth, a hhd sugar without clear Certificate sworn to with seals in due form that the goods are not of English growth produce or manufacture or of her colonies", Jacob spoke of the war threat, but added, "I can assure you none are disposed to go to war against our good old French friends."[23] Such statements categorize their writer as a "Jacobin".

Two other events cannot be overlooked in the political development of the Crowninshield house. The first was the long feud which arose between them and their powerful Derby cousins, and the second the attempted loan of ships to the federal government.

Some of the details of the Derby-Crowninshield falling-out have been mentioned earlier. It apparently had its beginnings when Jacob Crowninshield, a captain of Derby ships, had a disagreement with Elias Hasket Derby over shipping accounts. When the accounts were finally settled a group which acted as umpires in the dispute awarded Jacob a cash settlement, but the rancor remained. In 1796 the Derbys went to court to attempt to force the Crowninshields to cut the end off their wharf, and in the Salem courts the decision favored the

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23. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 22, 1798.

Derbys. From that point on the Crowninshields were rarely at peace with either the Derbys or Salem. As the Derbys represented Salem Federalism at its highest, political opposition on the part of the Crowninshields naturally developed.

Examples of this feud appeared constantly in the writings and actions of the period. In April, 1799, the Crowninshield family refused to attend the funeral of Mrs. Derby because of the ill feeling between the two groups.[24] The Crowninshields boasted of the ability of the Belisarius in beating the Federalist boat, the Essex, as the two left Salem harbor.[25] Bentley wrote in 1803 of the determination to exclude the "friends of Mr. Crowninshield from the usual pleasures of the winter season. To the men this was no evil, but it was not acceptable to the ladies. The excluded gentlemen wrote & wrote again to require the reasons, & at length obtained only a vote that there should be no notice taken of their letters."[26] The legal battle over the wharf cropped up again and again. In 1803 the case again went before the courts in Salem, and after a lengthy trial Bentley reported that Crowninshield had lost his case.[27] In this struggle, the major opponents were

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24. See page 26. Bentley, Diary, Apr. 23, 1799, II, 301.

25. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Dec. 30, 1799.

26. Bentley, Diary, Jan. 7, 1803, III, 2.

27. Ibid., Sept., 1803, III, 45-48; Oct. 25, 1803, III, 56; and May 5, 1804, III, 84.

the Crowninshields and Derbys, although the Federalists of Salem, except in rare cases where their own purses were involved, stood solidly against the Crowninshields.[28]

The feud affected young and old alike in its malice. George Crowninshield, Sr., told Richard how "young Benj Crowninshield is Now aboute to Set of for the Southard to Enter the Collages at Virginia under Bishop Madison. . . . He was refused admission in our [town] on a/c of his Principles."[29] George, Sr., had cut down a Federalist fence along the waterfront, and after he had been forced to pay for the fence he was brought to trial for inciting a riot. A hung jury forced the case to be taken to Ipswich Court for trial.[30] Jacob's description of the Ipswich case was as follows:

Good news from the Court at Ipswich in Sirs riot case. After 4 years prosecution & persecution the Judge has ordered a nol prosegue to be entered to the extreme mortification of the Derbys & Wards & our other federal friends. No honest jury would convict & this irritated them. Three times had it been tried & the jury could never agree. A judge by the name of Parker who took Judge Story's [?] place presided at the last court. He came upon the bench unprejudiced & advised the

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28. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, pp. 245-58. Jacob wrote Richard, "Mr. Gray's ship Lucia hauled in to the wharf this morning to repair her bottom. he could not do so well at any other place or she w'd never have been sent among the Jacobins." EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, June 15, 1803.

29. PM, Crowninshield Ms., George, Sr., to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, Feb. 21, 1804.

30. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, p. 255.

solicitor . . . to drop the suit. he was obliged to consent. So far good & we consider it a sort of triumph.[31]

In December 1806, a wharf case trial concluded with the Crowninshields being the losers, and they were ordered to cut forty feet off the end of their pier.[32] A battle as long standing and involved as this one was bound to involve the dead as well as the living. The body of a little Crowninshield girl, dead twenty-eight years, was removed from its Federalist burial spot in the Derby tomb to the more hospitable Republican soil of the Crowninshield tomb.[33] The chasm which divided Salem society was of such depth that all were affected by it. Its influence in politics must have been considerable. A remark to the writer by a Salem resident that if the Derbys had been Republicans the Crowninshields would have been Federalists appears to have more than a little credibility.

The second occurrence, the Crowninshield's attempted loan of two of their ships to the government during the near war situation, of 1798-1800, undoubtedly added to the anti-federalist feeling of the family. A misunderstanding arose between the family and the government as to the nature of the agreement. The final Crowninshield letter on the subject to President Adams showed some irritation. The implication that

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31. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to John Crowninshield, Salem, May 2, 1806.

32. Bentley, Diary, Dec. 19, 1806, III, 268.

33. Ibid., May 19, 1807, IIV, 296.

the Crowninshields political position was affected by this event is probably also sound.[34] By this time the Crowninshield's were thoroughly associated with the "Jacobin" element of Salem society.

Not too much emphasis should be placed upon the terms Francophile or "Jacobin" in connection with the Crowninshields. Their loyalty, throughout the entire period, was with the United States. Although they asserted their friendship for France they did not hesitate to offer their ships to the Adams administration during the period of the Quasi-War, and this at the same time that they were writing to each other of their desire for peace. Their shipping, largely concerned with trade which the French and Dutch were no longer able to carry on for themselves, depended upon peaceable relations with France; their dislike and even hatred for the British was a part of their make-up; through it all, however, their allegiance remained with the United States as was demonstrated in this action.

By 1800 the Crowninshield family had taken over the leadership of the Salem Republicans. In that year Jacob Crowninshield had advanced part of the money to purchase the press for a Republican newspaper, the Salem Impartial

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34. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, pp. 134-35 and 251-52.

Register, which printed its first issue on May 12, 1800.[35] Jacob had also run for Congress in the year 1800 but failed to make the grade, in contrast with the success of the national ticket. Despite the support of the new journal, Jacob was defeated by the Federalist candidate, Nathan Reed.[36]

Jacob Crowninshield succeeded in defeating one of the big name Federalists, however, in the 1802 federal election, when he was sent to Congress over the candidacy of former Secretary of State Timothy Pickering.[37] Jacob continued to hold this seat in Congress until his death in 1808 at the age of 38. Although he was elected on the ticket that the Gazette consistently labeled "Jacobin", there appeared to be little of the radical in him. He evidenced a liking for a spoils system when he remarked that he was "more & more convinced that all the federalists holding offices under the U. States should be replaced with republicans & friends to their government and country."[38] His primary legislative interest naturally turned to maritime activity. In the letters that he wrote back to Salem he favored leniency toward the owner of

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35. Tapley, Salem Imprints, pp. 112-13. For an account of the Republican newspaper see Chapter V, pp. 112-52. Bentley, Diary, Oct. 8, 1911, IV, 53.

36. Bentley, Diary, Aug. 25, 1800, II, 346-47.

37. Salem Gazette, Nov. 2, 1802.

38. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to John Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 7, 1802 and Jacob to John Crowninshield, Salem, n.d.

the cargo of a vessel which had fired on a peaceful ship. Rather than have both ship and cargo confiscated he said only the vessel should be seized.[39] A seamen's bill was opposed by Jacob because it advocated sailor's bonuses. Jacob commented that the New York merchants likewise opposed this legislation.[40] In 1806 he proposed that the government tax banks for deposits of public funds at a rate of 6 per cent, from which he estimated revenue of $180,000.[41] This could have been radicalism; it could have been the merchant attempting to force taxation upon another element of society and remove it from his own group. There was no legislative activity by Jacob Crowninshield which indicated anything close to the position of the Jacobins in France. The law which aimed at spreading more wealth among seamen by granting sailors bonuses he rejected along with the other merchants.

The "Jacobinism" of the Crowninshields continued to consist of three elements. They hated the English, and considered them the primary enemy of the United States. They admired and felt friendship for France, not necessarily Jacobin France, but France under the directory, under the consulate, or under the empire. They were Jeffersonians, partly because they felt with

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39. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Washington, Nov. 29, 1804.

40. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Washington, Dec. 18, 1804.

41. Salem Gazette, Dec. 19, 1806.

the Republicans relative to England and France, and partly because they hated and consistently fought with the pro-English Federalist element of Salem. Other reasons are not readily discernable from their writings.

The hatred of England was revealed in many ways, of which Jacob's action in the House of Representatives was the most significant. In March, 1806, he was quoted as saying that he would not hesitate to go to war with England over the impressment problem. "But, as I observed before, I do not believe Great Britain will go to war. Our trade is too valuable to her." He went on to indicate that Massachusetts and Vermont stood ready to seize Canada and Nova Scotia, and to talk of the benefits that would fall to Americans, who owed $40,000,000 to British subjects, which could readily be confiscated.[42] In a report to James Madison in September, 1806, Jacob listed the British as the chief foe, and spoke in terms of bringing the British to a proper attitude by cutting off

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42. H. Adams, United States, III, 157. It was at this point that John Randolph attacked Jacob Crowninshield with all the venom of his strikingly sharp tongue. "The proper arguments for such statesmen are of strait-waist-coat, a dark room, water-gruel, and depletion."

"God help you if these are your ways and means for carrying on war! if your finances are in the hands of such a chancellor of the exchequer! Because a man can take an observation and keep a log-book and a reckoning, can navigate a cock-boat to the West Indies or the East, shall he aspire a navigate the great vessel of State, to stand at the helm of public councils?"

shipping to the West Indies.[43] On another occasion he noted that the British Orders in Council were far more harmful on American shipping than the French decree (Berlin). "The late order is every way more alarming than Bonaparte's decree even as it was understood when it was first issued, & is so considered by all our well-informed and dispassionate merchants.[44]

Other correspondence throughout the period spoke in derogatory terms of the British. In 1803 Jacob had written to Richard that he thought the British declaration on shipping at that time was a justification for war. John Crowninshield was in France during this time, and Jacob feared that England would condemn Crowninshield vessels as being French-owned.[45] In 1807, when negotiations were going on between England and the United States, Jacob wanted the British terms rejected by the American government. He wanted the American government to hold the relinquishment of the right of impressment by Great Britain as a sine qua non, and continued to attack the whole structure of the Orders in Council, which he considered much harsher and more restrictive of American shipping than the

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43. NA, State Ms., Jacob Crowninshield to James Madison, Salem, Sept. 1, 1806.

44. PM, Crowninshield Ms., no addressee, no date, signed Jacob Crowninshield.

45. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, July 5, 1803.

decrees of Napoleon.[46]

The other brothers believed with Jacob so far as the wickedness of the British was concerned. The years 1805 and 1806 found more and more references to the arrogance and viciousness of the British treatment of neutrals. Richard wrote to John that he assumed the British "will learn to Respect the rights of Neutrals - or we must attempt to teach them."[47] Following Trafalgar, John wrote of his fear that the British would become more insolent than before.[48] The English were termed "rogues"[49] and the notion that neutrals had to protect their rights against Great Britain was repeated with great frequency.[50] John described the English as "determined to support their navy by all arbitrary means in their power" and "willing to take from foes & plunder friends."[51] Similar quotations continued to indicate the antipathy of the

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46. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob Crowninshield to James Madison, Salem, Aug. 18, 1807.

47. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 13, 1805.

48. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John to Richard Crowninshield, New York, Dec. 19, 1805.

49. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Salem, Dec. 25, 1805.

50. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Salem, Sept. 10, 1805.

51. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John to Benjamin Crowninshield, New York, Jan. 21, 1806.

Crowninshields for the British throughout the years down to the War of 1812. The speed and relish with which the Crowninshield privateers left Salem after the Declaration of war against England was in part due to their hatred of the English, for the Federalist element, who opposed the war, were disinclined to support it in any fashion.[52]

Crowninshield approval for French actions and even for Bonaparte also held constant throughout the period, although Jacob occasionally sounded a warning against the piling up of too much authority in the hands of the Corsican. A false report of the death of Bonaparte in 1800 brought the comment from Richard Crowninshield that "if so we shall honour his memory on board the America . . ."[53] Jacob's caution and warning for the French came when Napoleon had the term of the First Consul extended to a lifetime job[54], and again when he became emperor. "Great rejoicing there [France] in consequence of Bonaparte's being declared Emperor. They had better cry I think for they are now going into the calm of despotism & that of the worst kind."[55] Later that same

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52. J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, pp. 381 and 386.

53. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Salem, June 1, 1800.

54. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, July 3, 1802.

55. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Salem, July 30, 1804.

year Jacob spoke in friendly terms of the new French ambassador in Washington.[56] In 1806 Richard Crowninshield spoke of ". . . Bonna fighting and conquering to our benefit I hope & trust."[57]

John Crowninshield, who spent considerable time in France and was there continuously between 1802 and 1805, shared the opinions of his brothers concerning this friendship for France. John also thought highly of Napoleon and commented that Frederick (Frederick William III) of Prussia should have been placed in a madhouse for attempting to oppose Bonaparte on the field of battle. John described Bonaparte as well-loved by his people and the administrator of an efficiently operated kingdom.[58]

When the Continental System of Napoleon began to contribute its share to the destruction of American commerce, the Crowninshields tended to concentrate their vilification in the direction of the British, who were also seizing their vessels. More direct seizures were made by Great Britain, so far as the Crowninshields were concerned, but the losses in markets and because of general conditions brought about

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56. PM, Crowninshield Ms., Jacob to Richard Crowninshield, Washington, Nov. 19, 1804.

57. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Richard to John Crowninshield, Salem, Jan. 3, 1806.

58. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John to Jacob Crowninshield, New York, Dec. 15, 1806.

by the Continental System were at least as destructive to the affairs of the family as all British captures. Bentley's comment in late 1810 that "the measures of the French have quite perplexed our poor republicans"[59] might well describe the feelings of the Crowninshields. They had become so accustomed to hating the English and so completely associated with France that even financial loss to the French did not eliminate their affection for that country. Following the War of 1812, the old friendship for Bonaparte and France was still evident. Letters from Mary Boardman Crowninshield to her husband, the Secretary of Navy in 1815, spoke sympathetically of Napoleon, and of the low state to which France had fallen.[60]

The party conflict in Salem, which contributed to the Crowninshield attitudes, became increasingly violent and bitter as the years passed. With the passing of the Embargo law, the opposition to the Jefferson administration became more vociferous. Two episodes serve to indicate the height of passions. Jacob Crowninshield died in April, 1808. The body was brought to Salem from Washington and Dr. Bentley conducted funeral services. He wrote, "This day I delivered a funeral discourse upon the death of Jacob Crowninshield our worthy member of Congress. So virulent is political

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59. Bentley, Diary, Nov. 3, 1810, III, 544.

60. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Mary Boardman Crowninshield to Benjamin W. Crowninshield, Salem, Apr. 30, 1815.

party we could not be suffered to perform this service undisturbed. A relative of Timothy Pickering undertook to place himself in the centre of the congregation to insult them . . . . This is the party who have a deep interest in promoting religion."[61]

The violence was further demonstrated when William Gray, the leading Federalist merchant in Salem, accepted the Embargo and became the federal official for the port. His Federalist associates made Gray an outcast, and broke ties with his family. Gray was attacked by the Federalist newpaper, the Gazette. Timothy Pickering, the former Secretary of State and United States Senator from Massachusetts, likewise took up the attack against Gray. In 1809 Gray bought a house in Boston, and later, hounded by this Federalist pressure, he moved from Salem to Boston.[62] The offensive force needed to drive any individual from his home is considerable, but when one considers that Gray was the wealthiest merchant in Salem the power of this political enmity looms even greater.

The same names were used to describe Republicans in 1808 as were used in the 1790's. Bentley summed up political thought with these terms. "We have no Jesuits in talents in

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61. Bentley, Diary, May 1, 1808, III, 356.

62. For the Bentley references to the Gray story see Bentley, Diary, June 9, 1808, III, 364; Aug. 12, 1808, III, 377; Aug. 27, 1808, III, 379-80; Dec. 20, 1808, III, 403-04; Jan. 10, 1809, III, 408; Feb. 15-19, 1809, III, 416-17. Also see J. D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, pp. 271-80.

this Country, who we have in villany. Religion is to make its defence by Mysticism & one Parish . . . is to give the alarm. The French are Antichrist. The opposers of British tyrrany are friends to Antichrist,. . ."[63] In May, 1811, the Gazette reported the election results by calling the one party the French ticket and the other the American ticket.[64] The Federalist insistence upon linking the Salem Jeffersonians not only to France but to Jacobin France persisted throughout the years between 1795 and 1812.

As for the Crowninshields, they simply do not fit the mold for Jacobins. There is no indication that they even pondered the doctrines of the French radicalism, much less subscribed to them. Aside from a reference to a copy of Voltaire[65] and a receipt for the binding of a ten volume history of the French Revolution[66] there is nothing which shows the Crowninshields were interested beyond the practical application of these thoughts to commerce. Their admiration for France was obvious throughout the period, but this was not an admiration of principles, for they respected France under the Directory, France under the Consulate, or France

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63. Bentley, Diary, May 8, 1808, III, 357.

64. Salem, Gazette, May 21, 1811.

65. Bentley, Diary, Apr. 27, 1805, III, 154.

66. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Receipt for bookbinding, B. B. Macanulty to John Crowninshield, Dec. 1, 1805.

under the Empire. Probably the admiration held over from the time of the Revolutionary War. It is certain that no little amount of the admiration for France stemmed from a continuous hatred of England. The other main source of Crowninshield political feeling was the fact that Federalist Salem hated Jefferson and France and the Crowninshield hated the Derbys and Federalist Salem. It was only natural for them to turn to the enemies of their worst foes for associates and friends.

Opponents of the Jeffersonian system persisted in associating it with French radicalism during the entire period under study. They were mistaken in this association. Perhaps no better indication of their error need be cited that that John Adams and John Quincy Adams were included in this thought.[67] But political mistakes are rarely acknowledged. In the desire for invective to hurl at their opposition, the Federalists lumped their opposition together under the category of evil French radicalism. The constant and widespread application of the term destroyed any meaning it may have held so far as indicating certain political beliefs. The Crowninshields were among the opponents of the Federalists, and so were Jacobin radicals.

There is no indication that the political ideas of

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67. Bentley, Diary, July 8, 1808, III, 375; and Mar. 29, 1809, III, 425.

the French Revolution influenced the Crowninshields one way or the other. Their feeling for France, which at first glance one might have assumed to mean radicalism, could more reasonably have come from their hatred of England or their hatred of the French-hating Federalists. The Wars of the Revolution gave them prominence and wealth, but the political changes in France did not appear to have made an impression upon the political beliefs of the Crowninshield family.

Chapter VI

AFTERMATH - THE CROWNINSHIELDS AFTER 1815

The Crowninshield family continued to separate after the breakup of the firm, which had served as a unifying element. The old animosities continued to irk, and the old debts were retained. The unity which had characterised the family down to the beginning of the War of 1812 never returned.

George Crowninshield continued to excite Salem. After the end of the war, and following the decision of Benjamin to get out of the shipping industry, George set out to build a yacht which would take him to Europe. The Cleopatra's Barge was the grandest thing Salem had seen in the way of a pleasure yacht, for George was not one to avoid grandiose play-things. Dr. Bentley implied disapproval when he wrote, "George is expending a fortune upon a hemaphrodite Brig, which he is preparing for a visit oo (sic) Europe, in a manner to us before unknown as to expence & project."[1] Salem gossiped that George was actually going to go to St. Helena to attempt to bring Napoleon back to the United States.[2] The event was

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1. Bentley, Diary, Nov. 21, 1816, IV, 422.

2. Francis B. Crowninshield, The Story of George Crowninshield's Yacht Cleopatra's Barge (Boston, 1913), Privately printed. This little book covers the story of the building of the vessel and the account of her trip to Europe.

hardly that extravagant, but George's trip in the year 1817 kept him in the limelight he so dearly cherished.

George Crowninshield, Sr., died in the summer of 1815. Papers in the Essex Institute indicate his estate was worth about $260,000, with each of seven heirs receiving more than $37,000.[3] By the summer of 1815 the ill feeling among the members of the family had become greater; concern over John's and Richard's debts had led to constant recrimination among them, and the death of the father and founder of the firm did nothing to heal the breach among the brothers.

The Crowninshield property in Salem withered away. With Benjamin in Washington and George interested in building an expensive toy, the wharf and merchant property tended to decay.[4] By 1817, it had fallen into such a state of disrepair that Bentley commented that it had depreciated the property around to a great extent.[5] Ten years from the time of their greatest power and wealth as merchants the Crowninshield's marine interest had split, scattered and decayed to a point where it was of no significance.

George Crowninshield, Jr., died on November 26, 1817, at

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3. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Account of stocks belonging to the Estate of George Crowninshield late of Salem deceased, Dec. 31, 1815. Also statement of estate of George Crowninshield dated Aug. 29, 1816.

4. Bentley, Diary, Nov. 21, 1816, IV, 422.

5. Ibid., Feb. 4, 1817, IV, 435.

the age of fifty-one.[6] Even in death, George set tongues wagging. First Richard Crowninshield appropriated George's gaudy carriage, and when he refused to return it to the estate he was threatened with court action.[7] The fund which George left for a mistress and illegitimate child has already been mentioned.

The only member of the Crowninshield family to attempt to retain any commercial interest was John. Although his property had wasted away and he was heavily in debt by the time the war ended, John Crowninshield continued to live with the hope that he could revive his shipping fortunes. His adventure into privateering had not been profitable as had that of his brothers, and John spent the last months of the war as a prisoner of the British at Halifax, returning to Salem in the late winter of 1815.[8] John was still heavily in debt, although the confused records do not give a clear indication of the exact amount. He still owed $10,700 to his father and $13,000 to the estate of Jacob Crowninshield in addition to numerous smaller debts according to an account book dated October 10, 1814.[9] Following the death of his father, John left Salem and travelled to New Orleans "with a view to an

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6. Ibid., Nov. 27, 1817, IV, 488.

7. Ibid., Jan. 15, 1818, IV, 496.

8. Ibid., Mar. 16, 1815, IV, 320.

9. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Account book, dated Oct. 10, 1814.

establishment,"[10] according to Bentley. John did not receive a full share of the estate of his father; probably the difference in amounts represented the amount deducted for debts which John owed his parent.[11] In 1818, Bentley said that John was hiring a ship builder by the day in an attempt to put a vessel to sea in the New Orleans trade.[12] An 1818 account book shows that John listed as assets one-fourth of a brig and cargo, one-tenth of a ship and cargo, and one-eighth of a bark.[13] It also indicated that John was still heavily in debt, although the exact amounts were not quoted.

The old debts stayed with John Crowninshield. Although he was listed as the owner of a brig and owner of one-third interest in another brig and cargo in 1820, he signed a contract in September of 1821 acknowledging debts of $21,359.95 to Jacob Crowninshield's heirs and $9,000 to B. W. Crowninshield and Nathaniel Silsbee jointly.[14] A letter from John to his wife in November of 1821 spoke of his losing money

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10. Bentley, Diary, Nov. 21, 1816, IV, 421.

11. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Account of stocks belonging to the Estate of George Crowninshield, late of Salem deceased, Dec. 31, 1815.

12. Bentley, Diary, Jan. 5, 1818.

13. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Account book, John Crowninshield, 1818.

14. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Contract John Crowninshield with Benjamin W. Crowninshield and Nathaniel Silsbee, Sept.6, 1821; also orders for brig Eunice and brig Wild Goose.

in New Orleans because his credit was not good.[15] The only payments John received during these years to compensate for his heavy losses in the years of trading between the ending of the Embargo and the beginning of the War of 1812 was an occasional four or five hundred dollars from the insurance companies on the policies of Richard's ship Sylph, which he had accepted in lieu of payment for notes from Richard. He was still receiving driblets of money from this source as late as 1839.[16]

Richard made the transition from sea to factory successfully, although he had had some hazardous times. After the financial cleansing of the bankruptcy suit, Richard inherited a full share of his father's estate. The factory which he had built at the end of the war years burned before he managed to get it into production, but Bentley commented that Richard would be able to rebuild the plant with what money he received from the estate of his brother George.[17] In 1833 Richard gave his occupation as a woolen manufacturer.[18]

After years of negotiating over the losses to the Continental System the American government concluded the Rives

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15. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John to Maria Crowninshield, New Orleans, Nov. 23, 1821.

16. EI, Crowninshield Ms., See letters from B. Bailey to John Crowninshield between 1824 and letters from Thatcher Payne to John Crowninsheild in 1838 and 1839.

17. Bentley, Diary, Nov. 25, 1817, IV, 487 and Dec. 8, 1817, IV, 490.

18. NA, Claims, Traveller.

Treaty with France in 1831. Article I of this agreement read:

> The French Government, in order to liberate itself completely from all the reclamations preferred against it by citizens of the United States, for unlawful seizures, captures, sequestrations, confiscations or destructions of their vessels, cargos or other property, engage to pay a sum of twenty-five millions of francs to the Government of the United States, who shall distribute it among those entitled in the manner and according to the rules which it shall determine.[19]

The merchants who had lost vessels to the regulations of Bonaparte were to submit their claims to the American government for consideration.

The two members of the Crowninshield family who had suffered losses at the hands of France began to compile information which would lead to restitution of their property. Ship manifests, bills of lading, instructions to ship captains, protests at seizures, consular records and reports, types and terms of compromises which were made, decisions which were handed down by prize courts, all these were gathered by John and Richard Crowninshield for each of their vessels which they thought might stand a chance of receiving payment.

John and Richard each had one of his claims against the government allowed. The Margaret, which had been seized at Naples on her first trip to Europe after the Embargo, was the basis for John's claim. Her captain had obtained half of the value of her cargo by a compromise and the ship had been released after being detained for several months. She had been caught in a storm and sunk on her return voyage to

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19. U. S. Treaties, I, 524. For entire treaty I, 523-26.

America. John claimed losses of $27,981.90 which were chargeable to French action; the claim was allowed, but John received $4,569 rather than the huge sum he had anticipated.[20]

Richard Crowninshield's only recovery from the losses of the Continental System came in the case of the Belisarius, which had sunk from natural causes. Her cargo had been rescued only to be confiscated from the Tunisian vessel which had saved the goods from the sea. This vessel had been condemned in October, 1810. Richard's claim for $14,905 was allowed.[21]

The other instances of damage directly traceable to the decrees of Napoleon were not allowed by the claims commission. The confiscatory tariff which seized two-thirds of the cotton of the Hind in 1810 was apparently considered a legitimate tariff by the claims commission, as they rejected John's claim.[22] John's only other possible claim, that which aimed at a recovery of the money lost on the cargo of pilchards carried by the Golden Age to Naples in 1812, became involved in difficulty when the American consul in Naples suggested that the captain, William Fairfield, had accepted a deal in connection with the lost fish.[23] Furthermore, this voyage had so obviously violated

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20. NA, Claims, Margaret. John had been paid $2760. Claimants were paid 59.8 per cent of the money awarded them.

21. NA, Claims, Marbruska.

22. NA, Claims, Hind.

23. EI, Crowninshield Ms., Alex. Hammett to John Crowninshield, Naples, May 6, 1833.

the letter and the spirit of the Continental System by carrying British good to Naples without a permit that it was difficult to make the claim appear plausible.

Richard's other claims against the government received similar handling. He claimed that his ship Traveller, captured by the British en route from Bordeaux to America, had been seized by the British ship only because of a delay forced upon her in a French port. His only claim on the government, he said, was for $9,676.01 which he had been forced to pay while being delayed in Bordeaux. He said he had spent this amount for freight, wages, provisions, and miscellaneous other charges in France. The claim was refused.[24] Similarly claims on the cargo of the Emeline, where the captain had made a deal for a share of the cash received on the shipment, were not allowed.[25] Another claim, on the cargo of the Success, was also refused.[26]

The major losses to the blockade of the continent, those of delay and uncertain markets, of higher insurance rates and forced sales of cargoes, of hiring a position in a convoy and seeking out marginal markets which could be depended upon to return a loss, were not collectable. There was no adequate method of determining the loss that resulted from the ventures

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24. NA, Claims, Traveller.

25. NA, Claims, Emeline.

26. NA, Claims, Success.

into Russian markets, for example. The greatest losses to the Continental system, which John Crowninshield described as "a plan laid in fraud a secret system for deliberate plunder,"[27] were of such a character that no settlement was made for them. The curse of the Corsican hit heavily on the Crowninshields, and ironically so, for they had been his consistent admirers.

The meteoric career of the Crowninshield firm paralleled the career of Salem itself as a great port of the United States. In 1790 Salem had had 5 ships, 41 brigs, 76 schooners, and 2 sloops for a total registered tonnage of 13,726. In 1800 the figures had changed to 34 ships, 45 brigs, and 59 schooners, representing a total registered tonnage of 19,636. In 1810 there were 71 ships, 60 brigs and 90 schooners and a total tonnage of 36,272.[28] The tendency toward larger vessels and more vessels, reflected in the development of the Crowninshield firm, also appeared in the general picture for Salem. The decline of the Crowninshields was shared by Salem even as their rise had been. "In 1809-10, fifty-one of our ships were seized in the ports of France, forty-four in the ports of Spain, twenty-eight in Naples, and eleven in Holland, worth a total loss to helpless American owners of at least ten million dollars."[29]

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27. EI, Crowninshield Ms., John Crowninshield to Virgil Maxey, Boston, Jan. 20, 1835.

28. J. D. Phillips, "Who Owned the Salem Vessels in 1810," Essex Institute Historical Collections, LXXXIII, 3.

29. Ralph D. Paine, The Ships and Sailors of Old Salem (Chicago, 1912), p. 483.

Like the Crowninshield fleet too, the fleets of Salem were sadly depleted as a result of the War of 1812. A Salem chronicler reported that of 126 Salem vessels registered in 1812, only 57 remained by the end of the war with Great Britain.[30] The foreign commerce of Salem dwindled with the years following the war, until by 1878, no vessels entered Salem harbor from any foreign port other than the British provinces. The brothers Crowninshield who had left commercial activity behind them following the War of 1812 had correctly estimated the wave of the future. The one brother who attempted to fight it was still bemoaning his poverty in 1835.

The turning to manufacturing, and particularly textile manufacturing, by Richard Crowninshield, was also a harbinger of things to come for the New England area. Bentley noted as early as January 1816 that there were less traders and more trades (craftsmen) in Salem than in previous times.[31] The development of the textile industry in New England in the period following the Embargo is a well-known story. The shifting of emphasis from commerce to manufacturing placed Richard Crowninshield in a position to ride the new crest of

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30. Ibid., 484. J.D. Phillips, Salem and the Indies, p. 422, uses the figures 200 vessels of which 57 remained. Neither Paine nor Phillips deals with the economic hardships that must have come to the merchant firms with such a drastic reduction of their fleets. Surely many of Salem's merchant families were reduced financially as were the Crowninshields.

31. Bentley, Diary, Jan. 29 and 30, 1816, IV, 371-72.

manufacturing as he, his father, and his brothers had ridden the crest of commerce in an earlier period.

The Crowninshield family continued its position of leadership in Salem and in the nation following the War of 1812. Benjamin W. was Secretary of the Navy until 1818 and a member of Congress during the 1820's. Nathaniel Silsbee, who married a sister of the five brothers, served as United States Senator from Massachusetts for an extended period. The commercial boom brought on by the Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, which had brought them wealth and prominence, saw them eliminated from trading activities when the European powers decided to fight the war in the area of commerce. The War of 1812 had then provided the coup-de-grace to Crowninshield commercial activities.

Chapter VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The story of the Crowninshield fortunes is a boom and bust chronicle. The dominance of European affairs in the story of the Crowninshields is perhaps the most significant general observation that can be made from this study. That dominance in the economic development of the Crowninshield merchant firm continued throughout the period 1793-1815.

European affairs were responsible for the boom period which created the Crowninshield fortunes. Between 1793 and 1800, when the family firm was in its formative years, it was the legislation from European capitals or war by European states which provided the major stimulation for the firm's growth. The opening of French and Dutch colonial trade to neutrals and the gradual taking over of a sizeable proportion of the British carrying trade by Americans during those years were two highly important factors in the growth of Crowninshield trade. The signing of the Jay Treaty likewise brought its influence to bear on the Crowninshields. Peaceable relations with Great Britain brought harsh relations with France, and during the Quasi-War with France, 1798-1800, the Crowninshields armed their vessels and fled at the sight of sails at sea. Through it all they prospered, and by 1800 the five brothers, the oldest of whom was thirty-four and the youngest twenty-six,

had all retired form the sea to the merchant's counting-table or the politician's bench.

The cessation of the war between France and Great Britain in 1801 and the period of truce following the treaty of Amiens brought home to the Crowninshields how completely their activity was dependent upon European affairs. A new emphasis upon the pepper trade with Sumatra kept them from feeling the full impact of the end of hostilities immediately, but by the end of 1802 their merchandizing activities were suffering from the buyer's market in Europe which peaceful seas brought. Probably only the fact that the peace was short and not too well observed by either side kept the Crowninshields from witnessing even harder times. Also, many of the wartime restrictions remained throughout the period of the Amiens peace, particularly the hostile treatment of British goods by the French. The Crowninshields therefore, were able to cut their losses at the expense of the British.

When the war broke out again in 1803 the Crowninshields had been anticipating such a development and were well prepared to take advantage of it. They had been building up supplies of goods and had sent out several vessels in the spring of 1803 in the hope of reaping the harvest of inflated prices which would naturally result from the war. Although money shortages continued for the first year after the war broke out, the firm continued to expand, and the years 1803, 1804, and 1805 brought new wharf space, new stores and several

new vessels into Crowninshield possession. The period between 1803 and 1807 saw the greatest prosperity for the Crowninshield family in its entire career.

The years which developed Crowninshield prosperity to its zenith also brought the legislation which was to destroy that prosperity. In November, 1806, Napoleon's Berlin Decree set off a chain reaction of measures and counter-measures which set the pattern for the economic battle for supremacy in Europe. When these measures were enforced by the French and British, normal commerce with Europe was impossible.

The Crowninshield's commerce was mainly of the broken voyage variety which supplied the continent of Europe with goods from the East Indies, by way of America. During the years down to 1805 they had found it most profitable to bring the goods to America and sell them, allowing others to re-ship them to European markets. By late 1805 a new British interpretation of the broken voyage system had made European prices for Indies goods enough higher than American prices for the same goods to justify the Crowninshields shipping their own merchandise to Europe. Throughout the fifteen year period from 1792 to the end of 1807 it was this war-induced trade which made money for the Crowninshields.

The enforcement of the belligerent powers' economic systems led to a self-imposed embargo by American merchants in the fall of 1807. In December, 1807, the Jefferson administration made the Embargo mandatory. These events combined to

interrupt the profitable trade of the Crowninshields. Jacob Crowninshield, a member of Congress from 1803 to 1808, voted for the Embargo. The dry rot of Embargo lasted for nearly fifteen months. Its effects on the Crowninshields were certainly not beneficial. The tying up of their ships and the cessation of business activity could not help but hurt the merchants. The Embargo did not come in a vacuum however. Its harm or benefit has to be measured in terms of the alternatives which were available. Considered in that light later events show that the Embargo was wise. The Crowninshield firm emerged from the Embargo in the summer of 1809 with enough vigor to send its ships to Europe and the Indies. Jacob, the director of the firm who had cautioned against European waters and who, in Congress, had voted against allowing American merchantmen to travel the high seas at all, had died in 1808. Without his council the Crowninshields entered whole heartedly into European trade. The results of trying to conduct a commercial enterprise under the rules imposed by two blockade systems were disastrous for the Crowninshields.

Between 1809 and 1812 the two members of the Crowninshield family who continued to trade in the markets controlled by France and Great Britain were completely ruined by the actions of those two powers. Several of their vessels were seized and condemned for violations of the two opposing systems. However, the Crowninshields suffered even more disastrous losses. Uncertainly, the bane of any commercial enterprise, was the keynote of

European trade. Tariffs were raised and lowered and port restrictions and regulations fluctuated from day to day. Privateers, those licensed pirates, struck even those who tried to obey all the rules and regulations that were in existence. Delays were forced upon the shipowner for both unloading a vessel or loading a return cargo. If marginal markets were sought out by the merchant he found the competition so keen that profits were out of the question. Losses were the pattern for such trade.

Under these circumstances, the French action was the more harmful, although the Crowninshields refused to admit it. The nature of the British system, which included the desire to get goods onto the continent as well as a retaliatory blockade of France proper, made the British at least part time accomplices in the Crowninshields attempt to trade with Europe. British controlled ports like Lisbon were relatively safe and British ships provided convoys for goods along the Baltic and North Sea areas. Crowninshield ships that traded with France were confiscated by England as violating her orders; but the Crowninshield goal, trade with non-French Europe, was also a goal of Great Britain. The uncertain regulations, the high tariffs, the long delays, the rigged courts, and the privateers who made "deals" all added to the problem of the merchant and it was here that the French action took its toll. The merchant at least could insure against British seizure, although at high rates. There was no insurance to cover a tariff which

confiscated two-thirds of a cargo, or a regulation which forced one to delay ten or twenty days or even three months before unloading a cargo. These factors combined to make the shipping that did get through unprofitable. Sea losses or occasional confiscations could have been offset by profits on goods which did get through. It was in this taking away of the profit of commerce that the French system hurt the Crowninshields.

Because of such actions, Richard Crowninshield went bankrupt in 1812. John Crowninshield accrued debts which he retained throughout his life. The parent firm was not finanially able to prevent the loss of property by the two brothers. By 1812, the same two belligerent states whose action had created the Crowninshield wealth had destroyed it by shifting their field of battle to the arena of international commerce. The parent Crowninshield firm recovered its fortune by privateering during the War of 1812, but John and Richard Crowninshield never returned to the maritime prosperity they had known. Richard become a woolen goods manufacturer, while John attempted unsuccessfully to rebuild his shipping fortunes.

The effect of the French Revolution and Napoleon on the political affairs of the Crowninshields is far less direct and distinct than the effect on economic affairs. The Crowninshields were Jeffersonians from the time they expressed any political opinions, but there was little of the radical in them. The opposition continued to describe them as Jacobins (the word

Jacobin was hurled in Jefferson's day very much as the word Communist is today) throughout the period, although any adherence to Jacobin principles was not indicated in their writings. They were unquestionable pro-French in an America where political affiliation demanded that one be either pro-French or pro-British, but their feeling for France lasted long after the Jacobins had given way to the Directory and the Consulate and the Empire. It may well have been motivated by hatred for Great Britain or an even greater hatred for the Anglophile Federalists of Salem. There is more reason to suppose that the Republicanism of the Crowninshields came from these negative tendencies than from any doctrinaire political creed. Indirectly the wealth, which was developed in the favorable soil of European war conditions, contributed to the political fortunes of Jacob, and later Benjamin Crowninshield, but the revolutionary political theories made little or no creative impact; the effect of these theories was to intensify old oppositions rather than to create new ones.

In describing the impact of European affairs on the Crowninshields I have perhaps tended to underemphasize the abilities of the men being discussed. Undoubtedly the five Crowninshield brothers were extraordinarily capable or they would never have achieved the success they did in their merchant ventures. Jacob Crowninshield, probably the most capable of the brothers, showed a variety of talents, whether as a merchant captain, a director of a firm, or a skillful politician and statesman. All the

brothers were certainly far above average in ability. The favorable conditions presented by European affairs provided that ability with friendly developmental conditions, and the Crowninshields became wealthy. Affairs in Europe then proceeded to destroy those friendly conditions and, like a healthy plant on soil suddenly deprived of water, the Crowninshield fortune wilted away.

The significance of the Crowninshield story lies in the fact that the family represents the two phases of American life most affected by events of the period of the French Revolution and Napoleon in Europe - the economic and the political. The close conformity of Crowninshield shipping activity with the general pattern of the commerce of Salem and the United States as a whole shows that the Crowninshield story is more than an isolated family history. The Crowninshields and the United States rose to commercial significance on the strength of war-generated trade, a trade that began with the French Revolutionary Wars and continued until the belligerent European powers came to grips on the battle ground of neutral commerce in 1807. The Crowninshields and the United States saw their commercial prosperity vanish when European regulations forced that commerce out of existence.

In light of Crowninshield experience, the Embargo was a sound measure for the merchants of the United States. A self-imposed embargo had caused a stagnation of American commerce prior to the passage of the Embargo by Congress in 1807, and

disastrous Crowninshield attempts to cope with European commercial regulations in the three years following the lifting of the Embargo support the notion that Jefferson's measure was wise.

In the battle of conflicting regulations, the policies of France proved more harmful to the United States than the British Orders. The French system aimed at self-denial, but its vagaries and its fundamental dishonesty of operation made commerce a dangerous game of blind man's bluff for the merchant. The British Orders, on the other hand, developed a consistent policy which aimed at forcing their trade onto the continent, a policy which paralleled that of the Americans.

Politically the Crowninshields were also strategically located and significantly active so as to reflect European influences. Political opinions in the United States tended to split along lines represented by a feeling for either France or Great Britain during the 1790's. The political battles in which the Crowninshields were involved fail to show the impact of Revolutionary doctrines. Names associated with radical French thought were hurled for purposes of vilification; this use of names as invective terms intensified existing differences, but in time made those same terms meaningless so far as indicating a pattern of political thought. Issues which indicated doctrinal differences between Jacobin and Junto were not apparent in the continuous struggle for political power in Salem.

Bibliography

Bibliographical aids

In a study of this nature, which includes both European and American events for the period concerned, but concentrates on a specific family in one city the normal bibliographical aids are not significantly useful. A good starting place was Ward, Leathes, Prothero, eds., The Cambridge Modern History, Vol. IX Napoleon (New York, 1906). W. E. Linglebach, "Historical Investigation and the Commercial History of the Napoleonic Era," in the American Historical Review, XIX (1914), 257-281, gives the student of Commercial history of this period encouragement with its bibliographical and topical suggestions.

Extremely useful as guides to the American picture were Samuel F. Bemis and Grace Gardner Griffin, Guide to the Diplomatic History of the United States, 1775-1921 (Washington, 1935), and the bibliographical notes at the ends of the related chapters in Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People (New York, fourth edition, 1950). For materials pertaining specifically to Salem and the Crowninshields the two most useful guides were James Duncan Phillips, Salem and the Indies (Boston, 1947), and Samuel Eliot Morison, The Maritime History of Massachusetts (Boston, 1921). Especially

useful in work on the Crowninshields also were the suggestions that came from the helpful staffs at the Essex Institute and the Peabody Museum at Salem, Massachusetts.

Primary Material

The heart of the material used in this study came from the manuscript collections of Crowninshield papers located at the Essex Institute and the Peabody Museum in Salem Massachusetts. Each of these collections is composed of letters and papers of the family during the years between 1789 and 1839, with the vast majority of the material pertaining to the period 1792-1815. These collections were particularly useful in tracing the economic life of the Crowninshield firm, as they are mainly letters concerning the activity of these merchants in dealing with ship captains or commercial contacts throughout the world. These materials were mainly boxed, uncatalogued manuscripts in both museums. There was also a sea chest of assorted material in the Peabody Museum. In addition the sizeable collection of ship logs at the Essex Institute was useful when it was necessary to trace the wanderings of a specific vessel. The records of the Salem Custom House are also available at the Essex Institute.

In the National Archives in Washington, D. C., manuscript material in the Department of State archives relative to spoliation claims submitted by the Crowninshields following the Rives Treaty of 1831 was useful. The merchants concerned

compiled all available information which would assist the settlement of their claims and included imformation on ships and cargoes, and especially the circumstances under which losses were suffered. In connection with this study these papers gave some of the details of the capture of Crowninshield vessels and information as to the amount paid as a result of the claims. In addition two volumes of bound manuscript documents, entitled Department of State, Miscellaneous Letters, January - December, 1806, and Department of State, Miscellaneous Letters, January - December, 1807, contained letters from Jacob Crowninshield to members of the Jefferson administration.

The manuscript material cited above was well supplemented from three contemporary printed sources from Salem. First and most important was The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., 1784-1819, 4 Vols.(Salem, 1905-14). Dr. Bentley was the minister of the East Church in Salem, the confidante of Jacob Crowninshield, and a thorough-going Jeffersonian. In addition, Bentley's interest in science and his remarkably broad interests for one who travelled little add to the stature of his work. These characteristics, combined with the ability to write clearly and pointedly, make Bentley's Diary both readable and of primary significance as a source for the Salem of his day. The two Salem newspapers of the period, the Salem Gazette and the Essex Register gave the opposing points of view politically, and there was little that these two papers reported that was not influenced by political feeling. The Federalist Gazette

and the Republican Register asked for and gave no quarter in the hard politics of the Jeffersonian period. Both of these biweekly papers were available at the Essex Institute.

French source publications which proved useful in this study were the Correspondance de Napoléon Ier, 32 Vols. (Paris, 1858-69), and the Gazette nationale ou le moniteur universel. These were used for the commercial regulations of France during the period. Useful also on French laws governing commerce was C. M. Galisset, Corps du droit français ou recueil complet des lois, décrets, ordonnances, senatus-consultes, reglements, avis du conseil d'état, rapports au roi, instructions ministerielles, etc., publiés depuis 1789 jusqu'à nos jours, 9 Vols. (Paris, 1843-47).

Three source publications of the United States government were especially useful in this study. Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols and Agreements Between the United States of America and other Powers 1776-1909 (Senate Document # 357, 61st Congress, Second Session), compiled by Wm. M. Malloy, 2 Vols. (Washington, 1910), supplied copies of the several treaties in which the United States was involved that were pertinent to this study. Information dealing with the Embargo period was obtained from State Papers and Publick Documents of the United States from the accession of George Washington to the Presidency exhibiting a complete view of our foriegn relations since that time, 10 Vols., published under patronage of Congress (Boston, 1817). Material relating to Crowninshield participation in the

Quasi-War with France was found in Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War Between the United States and France, 7 Vols., prepared under the direction of the Hon. Claude A. Swanson (Washington, 1935-38).

Paul Leicester Ford, ed., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, 10 Vols. (New York, 1899), and Seth Ames, ed., Works of Fisher Ames, 2 Vols. (Boston, 1854) presented the opposite sides of the political struggle in which the Crowninshields and their opponents in Salem participated.

Genealogical material on the Crowninshield family came from two genealogies in the Essex Institute collection of family histories, one a manuscript document called simply "Crowninshield family" and the second a typewritten "Genealogy of the Crowninshield family."

Secondary Material - Books

The United States

There was little material that dealt directly with the Crowninshields, aside from an occasional incidental reference. The most useful guide followed for the American scene of the period under consideration was Henry Adams History of the United States, 1801-1817, 9 Vols. (New York, 1909). This work was supplemented by John Spencer Bassett, The Federalist System, 1789-1801 (New York, 1906), and Edward Channing, The Jeffersonian System, 1801-1811 (New York, 1906). Also used was Edward Channing, A History of the United States, Vol. 4 (Federalists and

Republicans) (New York, 1935).

Two standard texts were used for the general background for the diplomatic history of the period. They were Samuel Flagg Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States (New York, 1936), and Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the United States, Fourth Edition (New York, 1950). Useful also were Volumes II and III of S. F. Bemis, ed., The American Secretaries of State and their Diplomacy (New York, 1927), and Mr. Bemis' monograph, Jay's Treaty A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy (New York, 1923).

Background material of the War of 1812 was found in J. W. Pratt, Expansionists of 1812 (New York, 1925) and A. L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain, and British North America (New Haven, 1940). Readable and pertinent also is A. T. Mahan, Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812, 2 Vols. (London, 1905). L. M. Sears, Jefferson and the Embargo (Durham, N. C., 1927), gives the background for the Embargo, although it deals mainly with the problem of Jefferson's philosophical consistency in calling for the measure. Allen Johnson, Jefferson and His Colleagues A Chronicle of the Virginia Dynasty (New Haven, 1921), also deals with the diplomacy of the War of 1812 and the Embargo. He considers the Embargo a hopeless failure.

The general picture of American commerce was obtained from the following books. R. D. Paine, The Old Merchant Marine (New Haven, Conn., 1921), is a light treatment of the development of American commerce. The broad picture of the growth of American

commerce is well covered in A. T. Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire 1793-1812, 2 Vols. (Boston, 1893). Anna C. Clauder, American Commerce as Affected by the Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon (Philadelphia, 1932) deals with the continental regulations and statistics on commerce in its coverage of this period. Eli F. Heckscher, The Continental System An Economic Interpretation (London, 1922) has excellent sections dealing with the rise of American commerce following the 1792 period, as well as useful statistics.

Statistical coverage of the growth of American commerce, in addition to Heckscher, came from the following sources: Adam Seybert, Statistical Annals: Embracing Views of the Population, Commerce, Navigation, Fisheries, Public Lands, Post Office Establishment, Revenues, mint, military and naval establishments, expenditures, public debt and sinking fund, of the United States of America: etc. (Philadelphia, 1818): Timothy Pitken, A Statistical View of the Commerce of the United States of America: its connection with Agriculture and Manufactures: and an account of the Public Debt, Revenues, and expenditures of the United States (Hartford, 1816); and William Milburn, Oriental Commerce; containing a Geographic Description of the Principle Places in the East Indies, China, and Japan, with their Produce, Manufactures, and Trade, including the coasting or Country Trade from Port to Port; etc., 2 Vols. (London, 1813).

The political struggles in the United States are covered in

Henry Adams, History of the United States. Eugene P. Link, Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800 (Morningside Heights, N. Y., 1942) shows the development of liberal organizations in the United States in the last decade of the 18th Century. Bernard Fay, The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America, tr. by Ramon Guthrie (New York, 1927), relates political developments in the two nations. Charles Warren, Jacobin and Junto or Early American Politics as viewed in the diary of Dr. Nathaniel Ames 1758-1822 (Cambridge, Mass., 1931) is an interesting account of the hostility developed between two talented brothers in the fever-hot politics of the early United States.

The two most useful books that deal directly with Salem are James Duncan Phillips, Salem and the Indies (Boston, 1947) and Samuel Eliot Morison, The Maritime History of Massachusetts 1783-1860 (Boston, 1921). R. D. Paine, The Ships and Sailors of Old Salem (Chicago, 1912) was of little use although some reference was made to the Crowninshields. Charles E. Trow, The Old Ship-Masters of Salem (New York, 1905), like the Paine book was interesting, but usable for little except background reading. Details on individual ships belonging to the Crowninshields came from Ship Registers of the District of Salem and Beverly Massachusetts 1789-1900, copied by Abijah Frank Hitchings with annotations by Stephen Willard Phillips (Salem, 1906). Interesting accounts of the development of the Salem Gazette and the Essex Register were contained in Harriet Silvester Tapley, Salem Imprints 1768-1825 A History of the First

Fifty Years of Printing in Salem, Massachusetts (Salem, 1927). The story of George Crowninshield's trip to Europe in 1817 is in Francis B. Crowninshield, The Story of George Crowninshield's Yacht Cleopatra's Barge (Boston, 1913).

Europe

Three secondary works on the European scene stand out above the others for the purposes of this study. Ranked in order of their usefulness they are: Eli F. Heckscher, The Continental System An Economic Interpretation, which carefully coveres the development of the opposing economic systems and their effects on Europe; A. T. Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire 1793-1812, which also takes up the problem of control of the seas and the attempt of Napoleon to conquer the sea by the land, with the resultant triumph of England; and Ward, Leathes, Prothero, eds., The Cambridge Modern History, Vol. IX, Napoleon, which was extremely useful for general reference work as well as for the chapter on the Continental System (Chapter XIII) by J. Holland Rose.

Frank Melvin, Napoleon's Navigation System A Study of Trade Control During the Continental Blockade (New York, 1919) is a technical treatment of the decrees and subsequent problems that made up the Continental System. Albert Sorel, L'Europe et la révolution française, 1789-1815, 8 Vols. (Paris, 1885-1904), devotes the first part of Volume VII to a treatment of the Continental System. Louis Adolphe Thiers, History of the

Consulate and the Empire of France under Napoleon, tr. by D. Forbes Campbell and John Stebbing, 12 Vols. (Philadelphia, 1893-94), is less useful because of a tendency to scatter its coverage of the Continental System over much of the twelve volumes. J. H. Rose, The Life of Napoleon I, 2 Vols. in 1 (New York, 1924) was the most useful of the many biographies of Napoleon for this study. Bernard H. M. Vlekke, Nusantara A History of the East Indian Archipelago (Cambridge, Mass., 1945) provided useful information of the results of the British capture of the colonies of the Dutch and French in the East Indies area.

Secondary Material - Articles

The following articles were useful in this study.

Margaret Pardee Bates, "Some Letters of Mary Bordman Crowninshield," in Essex Institute Historical Collections, LCCCIII, 112.

B. B. Crowninshield, "An Account of the Private Armed Ship America," in Essex Institute Historical Collections, XXXVII, 1.

W. Freeman Galpin, "The American Grain Trade to the Spanish Peninsula 1810-14." in American Historical Review, XXVIII (1922), 24.

W. E. Lingelbach, "Historical Investigation and the Commercial History of the Napoleonic Era," in American Historical Review, XIX (1914) 257.

E. W. Lyon, "The Directory and the United States," in American Historical Review, XLIII (1938), 514.

----------, "The Franco-American Convention of 1800," in Journal of Modern History, XII (1940), 305.

J. D. Phillips, "East India Voyages of Salem Vessels Before 1800," in Essex Institute Historical Collections, LXXIX, 117, 222, and 331.

----------, "Salem Merchants of 1800 and their Vessels," in Essex Institute Historical Collections, LXXX, 261.

----------, "Who owned the Salem Vessels in 1810," in Essex Institute Historical Collections, LXXXIII, 1.

G. L. Rives, "Spain and the United States in 1795," in American Historical Review, IV (1898), 62.

Franklin D. Scott, "President Madison's Foreign Policy - the Views of an American Merchant Abroad in 1811," in Journal of Modern History, XVI (1944), 294.

W. M. Sloane, "Napoleon's Plans for a Colonial System," in American Historical Review, IV (1899), 439.

Frederick J. Turner, "The Origin of Genêt's Projected Attack on Louisiana and the Floridas," in American Historical Review, III (1898), 650.

Justus M. van der Kroef, "Indonesia and the Origins of Dutch Colonial Policy," in Far Eastern Quarterly, X (1951), 151.

"Crowninshield Genealogy," in New England Historical and Genealogical Register, CIV (1950), 285.