

United States ship's Mediterranean passport

Descriptive Summary

Repository:	Georgia Historical Society
Creator:	United States. President.
Title:	United States ship's Mediterranean passport
Dates:	circa 1796
Extent:	0.05 cubic feet (1 folder)
Identification:	MS 0817

Biographical/Historical Note

Prior to the Revolutionary War, American merchants were protected from pirates from the Barbary Coast region of North Africa by Great Britain. After the war, however, the United States' vessels found themselves vulnerable to pirate attacks and raids while in the Barbary region. As a result, many treaties were signed and payments made to the region in order to procure the safe passage of U.S. ships. After the 1795 treaty with Algiers, a federal law was passed requiring all U.S. ships to carry a Mediterranean passport when traveling in this region. The passport, only available to vessels proven to be solely and completely owned by a U.S. citizen, had to be signed by the President, Secretary of State, and Collector of the city from which the ship was departing. In most instances, the Collector received the formed pre-signed by the President and Secretary of State. In similar fashion to the passports used by Great Britain for the same purpose, the top portion of the passport was cut off in a scallop-pattern. This top piece was then sent to U.S. Consuls along the Barbary Coast. All vessels with matching documents could proceed through port. Any ship caught without the passport was fined \$200.00.

Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of a Mediterranean passport signed by John Adams, President, and Timothy Pickering, Secretary of State. The passport was not completed with a ship's information. While most U.S. Mediterranean passports have two engravings at the top of a ship and a lighthouse respectively, early versions (circa 1796) contain a single engraving of both a lighthouse and a ship. This passport is torn in many places, including a hole in the center that destroyed part of Adams' signature.

Index Terms

Adams, John, 1735-1826.
Maritime law.
Mediterranean passport.
Pickering, Timothy, 1745-1829.
Shipping.
Ships--Nationality.
United States--Foreign relations--Africa, North.
United States--Foreign relations--Algeria.
United States. President.

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Unknown.

Preferred Citation

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Acquisition Information

Unknown.

Restrictions

Access Restrictions

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Sponsorship

Encoding funded by a 2012 Documenting Democracy grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

Container List

Item 1: Mediterranean passport, circa 1796 (Form not completed.)
signed by John Adams, President, and Timothy Pickering, Secretary of State.