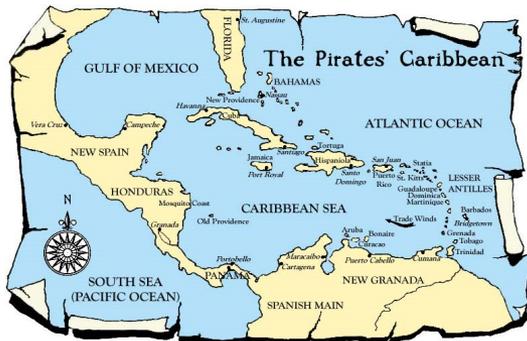




# Sephardic Pirates of the Revolutionary War

Presenter: Jim Harlow

Co-sponsored by



# Friendship - Jews and George Washington



Aaron Lopez



Michael Hays



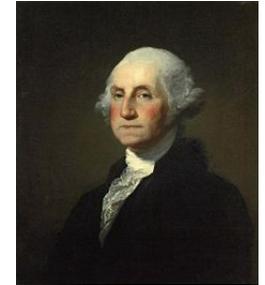
Rabbi  
Gershom Seixas



Jacob Hart



Moses Myers



To the Hebrew Congregation in  
Newport Rhode Island.

Gentlemen,

While I receive, with much satisfaction, your Address replete with expressions of affection and esteem; I rejoice in the opportunity of assuring you, that I shall always retain a grateful remembrance of the cordial welcome I experienced in my visit to Newport, from all classes of Citizens.

The reflection on the days of difficulty and danger which are past is rendered the more sweet, from a consciousness that they are succeeded by days of uncommon prosperity and security. If we have wisdom to make the best use of the advantages with which we are now favored, we cannot fail, under the just administration of a good Government, to become a great and happy people.

The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent national gifts. **For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.**

It would be inconsistent with the frankness of my character not to avow that I am pleased with your favorable opinion of my Administration, and fervent wishes for my felicity. **May the children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid.** May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy.

G. Washington

# Organization of this presentation

- × First Jew to arrive on the shores of what will become United States.
- × When expelled, where did the Jews go?
- × How, what, when and why Sephardim came to Western Hemisphere.
- × First Synagogues in Western Hemisphere
- × First Synagogues in America
- × 1775-1815 Constant conflict and combat
- × Condensed history of Jewish Piracy on the high seas
- × Notable pirates of 1600's
- × Bartholomew the Jew
- × Jean LaFitte
- × The Seixas Family
- × Aaron Lopez
- × Freemasonry



# First Jew in what will become America

**The first documented Jew in America was from Prague, named Joachim Gans, son of David ben Solomon Gans.** David ben Solomon Gans (1541-August 25, 1613) was a Jewish mathematician, historian, astronomer, astrologer, and is best known for the works *Tzemach David* (1592) and *Nechmad ve'naim*. He studied under Moses Isserles. In 1564, he moved to Prague. In Prague, he came into contact with Johannes Kepler and Tycho Brahe, and became a student of the Maharal. His grave is in Prague, is marked with a "Magen David" and a goose (Gans meaning goose in German).

**Queen Elizabeth of England enabled this famed Prague metallurgist to come to America in 1585 to study the copper and iron smelting techniques of the natives.** In 1584, Britain was preparing for war with Spain and desperately needed copper, a critical element in the production of bronze from which the English manufactured the accurate cannons that gave their warships an advantage over the Spaniards' inferior cast iron cannons.

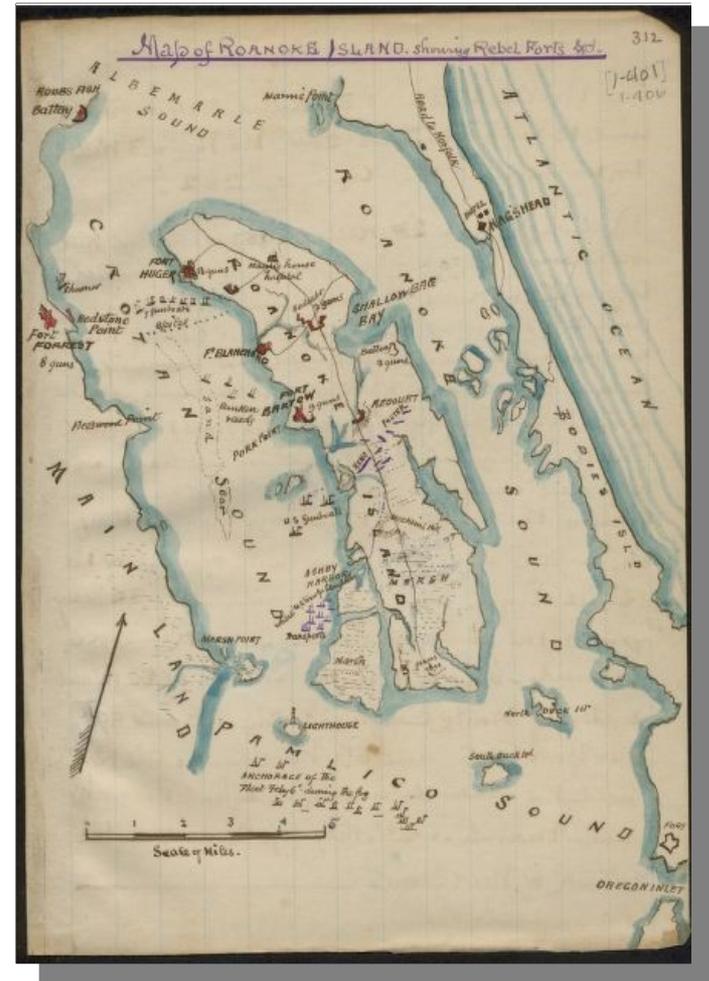
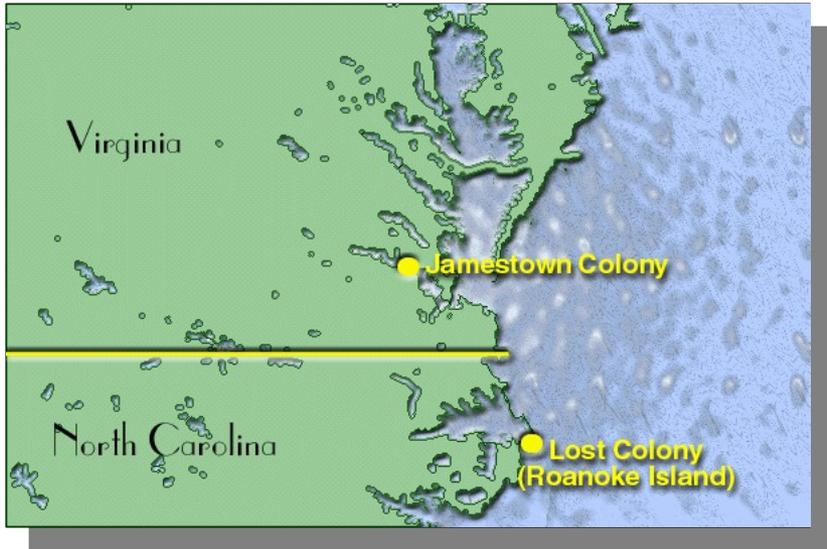
**Sir Walter Raleigh brought him here on his second trip to Roanoke Island, North Carolina.** Gans stayed one year to complete his research into speeding the processing of metals necessary to England's military success. Luckily **Sir Francis Drake landed at Roanoke Island June 19, 1586, so Gans got a trip home with Drake before the settlement of 117 men, women, and children disappeared to become the mysterious Lost Colony of Roanoke.**

During his busy year in The New World Gans observed mining and refining by the Tuscarora Indians in east-central NC — along the Roanoke, Neuse, Tar and Pamlico rivers — and by the Cherokees in the west. There he saw copper activity in what is present day Alleghany, Ashe, Jackson, and Swain counties of NC and Carroll, Floyd and Grayson of VA. Among the ruins at the Roanoke site, archaeologists have discovered lumps of smelted copper and a goldsmith's crucible attributed to Gans' work at the colony.

Unbelievably, fate brought this first Jew to Roanoke Island, saw him perform his remarkable research alone among strange people, live briefly among the ill-fated Lost Colony and escape successfully to England with only a few survivors. Before his innovations, English smelters required a minimum of 16 weeks to purify a batch of copper ore. Gans's process reduced that time to 4 days. As an added bonus, Gans found a way to use the impurities removed from the ore in textile dyes.

**Sir Walter Raleigh fell into Queen Elizabeth's disfavor, in part at least because many believed that he did not accept the divinity of Jesus.** As a member of Raleigh's circle, Gans attracted unfavorable attention. Having moved to the town of Bristol, Gans gave Hebrew lessons to gentlemen who wanted to read the Bible in its original tongue.

# Roanoke Island, NC, the Lost Colony 1584



Roanoke Island was the site of the century Roanoke Colony, the first English colony in the New World in what was then called *Virginia*, in honor of England's ruling monarch, Queen Elizabeth I-the *Virgin Queen*. There were two major groups of settlers who attempted to establish a permanent settlement at Roanoke Island, and each failed. When John Smith and the Jamestown colonists arrived in 1607, Smith took up the search for the colonists and discovered that they probably had been in the area. In his dealings with the hostile Indian chief Powhatan, he learned that the colonists had lived among the friendly Chesapeake Indians on the south side of the Bay. Threatened by the intrusion of white men into the region, **Powhatan claimed to have attacked the colonists and murdered most of them. As proof of his claim, he showed Smith "a musket barrell and a brass mortar, and certain pieces of iron that had been theirs."**

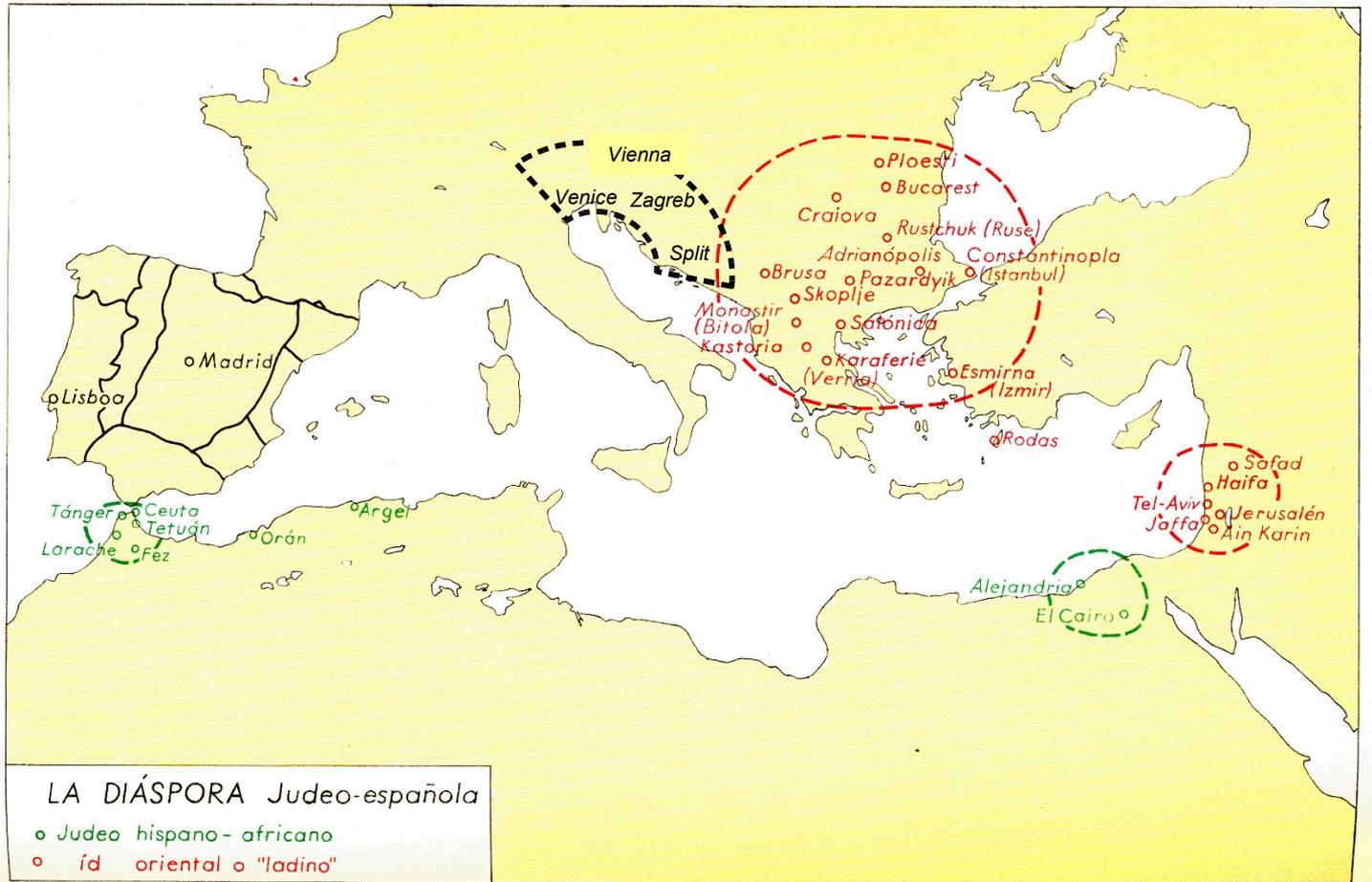
Let's shift gears for a bit and discuss

Expulsion from Spain

# Where did Sephardim go after expulsion?

Depends upon whether you harbor a Balkan/Greek Orientation, a Levantine Orientation or a North African orientation.

Those who landed on Adriatic Shore of present-day Croatia, Macedonia, and Albania pushed inland with relative freedom under Ottoman Empire protections.



# Historians/scholars say they went in waves...

To Suriname,  
Curacao  
Recife  
and  
Barbados



# Others note “...they also went here”

The Caribbean



When Christopher Columbus arrived in **Haiti**, he had an interpreter, **Luis de Torres**. **Luis was one of the first Jews to settle on Haiti in 1492**. When Haiti was conquered by France in 1633, many Dutch Jews came in from Recife, Brazil

It was a few years ago when archaeologists discovered a synagogue of Crypto-Jews in Jérémie, Haiti.

There have been Jews in **Mexico** dating back to as early as 1521. We have such people within our San Jose community today.

**Suriname** has the oldest Jewish community in the Americas. During the Inquisition in Portugal and Spain around 1500, many Jews fled to Holland and the Dutch colonies to escape torture and condemnation to the stake. When Portugal retook control of Suriname, the King of Portugal gave those who wanted to depart some time to let them settle, and supplied them with 16 ships and safe-conduct to leave for Holland. The Dutch government gave them an opportunity to settle in Brazil. Most found their a in Recife, and merchants became **cocoa growers**. But the Portuguese in Brazil forced many Jews to move into the northern Dutch colonies in the Americas, The Guyanas. Jews in settled in Suriname in 1639.

Jews, have lived on the island of **Cuba** for centuries. Some Cubans trace Jewish ancestry to Marranos who fled the Spanish Inquisition.

**Curaçao** has the oldest active Jewish congregation in the Americas - dating to 1651 - and **the oldest synagogue of the Americas, in continuous use since its completion in 1732 on the site of a previous synagogue**. The Jewish Community of Curaçao also played a key role in supporting early Jewish congregations in the United States in the 1700's & 1800's, including Shearith Israel in New York City and the Touro Synagogue of Newport, Rhode Island. The history of **Venezuela** Jews began in the middle of the 1600's – a small collection of records suggests that groups of marranos lived in Caracas and Maracaibo.

In the early 1800's, Venezuela and Colombia were fighting against their Spanish colonizers in wars of independence. Simon Bolivar, Venezuela's liberator, found refuge and material support for his army in the homes of Jews from Curaçao.



# Sephardim - 500 years in The New World

- Jews first arrived in Recife, Brazil, when the Inquisition took hold Portugal in 1497, the Portuguese landed at what is now Brazil. The Jews primarily arrived as **New Christians** or **Marranos**, names designated to describe Jews (or Muslims) who were forced to convert to Christianity. They began to colonize the land and to secretly practice Judaism.

- One of the first Jews to set foot on Brazil was **Gaspar da Gama**, a Jew by birth who was kidnapped as a child and forced to convert, went with Pedro Alvares Cabral in the discovery of what is now Brazil in 1500. Recife, capital of the State of Pernambuco in northeastern Brazil, became a prosperous center for sugar production in the 1500's & 1600's.

- Jews of Newport Rhode Island arrived in America first from Recife then from Barbados, in 1677.

- Jews first started arriving in West Indies in 1628 fleeing Brazil. The first Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue was built in Barbados in 1654. Jews of Barbados were granted permission to take an oath on the *Old Testament*, 1674. This was a first for the New World.

- The first Jews in Jamaica arrived in 1530 They made their homes in Spanish Town, then known as St. Jago de la Vega - the only operating town on the island at the time. After many years, groups of Jews approached their Spanish governor and requested permission to settle on the island. Permission was duly granted.



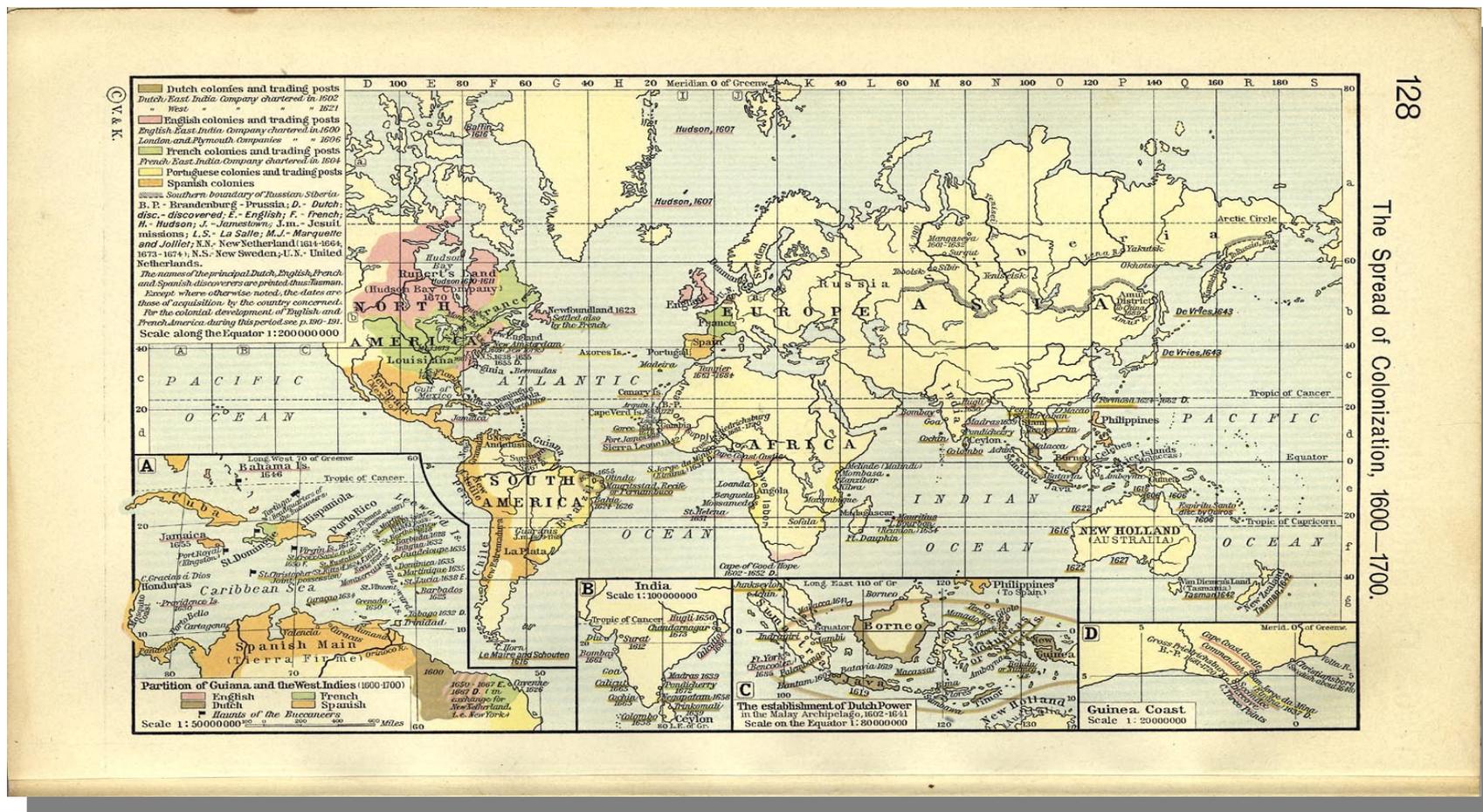
# Conversos, Marranos, Crypto-jews, Anusim

- **Conversos** ((Spanish and Portuguese for "a convert", from Latin conversus, "converted, turned around") referred to Jews or Muslims or the descendants of Jews or Muslims who had converted or, in most cases, were forcibly compelled to convert to Catholicism in Spain and Portugal, particularly during the 14th century and 15th century. Those who freely converted to Christianity, for expedience, considered themselves Christians, and raised their families as such. There were many who, in displaying their new zeal, persecuted their Jewish neighbors
- **Marranos** maintained their ancestral traditions as crypto-Jews by publicly professing Roman Catholicism but secretly observing Shabbat, Kashrut and Mitzvot. The term in (Spanish and Portuguese meant "pigs", and was derived from a derogatory word in Arabic محرّم muharram meaning "ritually forbidden". It stemmed from the ritual prohibition against eating pork among both Jews and Muslims). In both Portuguese and Spanish, the term marrano acquired the meaning of "swine" or "filthy" (*but in contemporary Spanish it has no association with Jews*).
- **Crypto-Jews**- "Judíos Escondidos". Preserved the traditions of their forefathers; and, in spite of the high positions which some held, they secretly attended synagogue, and fought and suffered for their religion. Many of the wealthiest Marranos of Aragon belonged to this category, including the Zaportas of Monzón, who were related by marriage to the royal house of Aragon; the Sanchez; the sons of Alazar Yusuf of Saragossa, who intermarried with the Cavalleria and the Santangel; the very wealthy Espes; the Paternoy, who came from the vicinity of Verdun to settle in Aragon; the Clemente; the sons of Moses Chamoro; the Villanova of Calatayud; the Coscon; and others.
- **Anusim** ('coerced ones' or 'forced ones'). Anusim is a general word for forced converts from Judaism and is not specific to this period.

Let's shift gears for a bit and discuss

Geopolitics of Caribbean

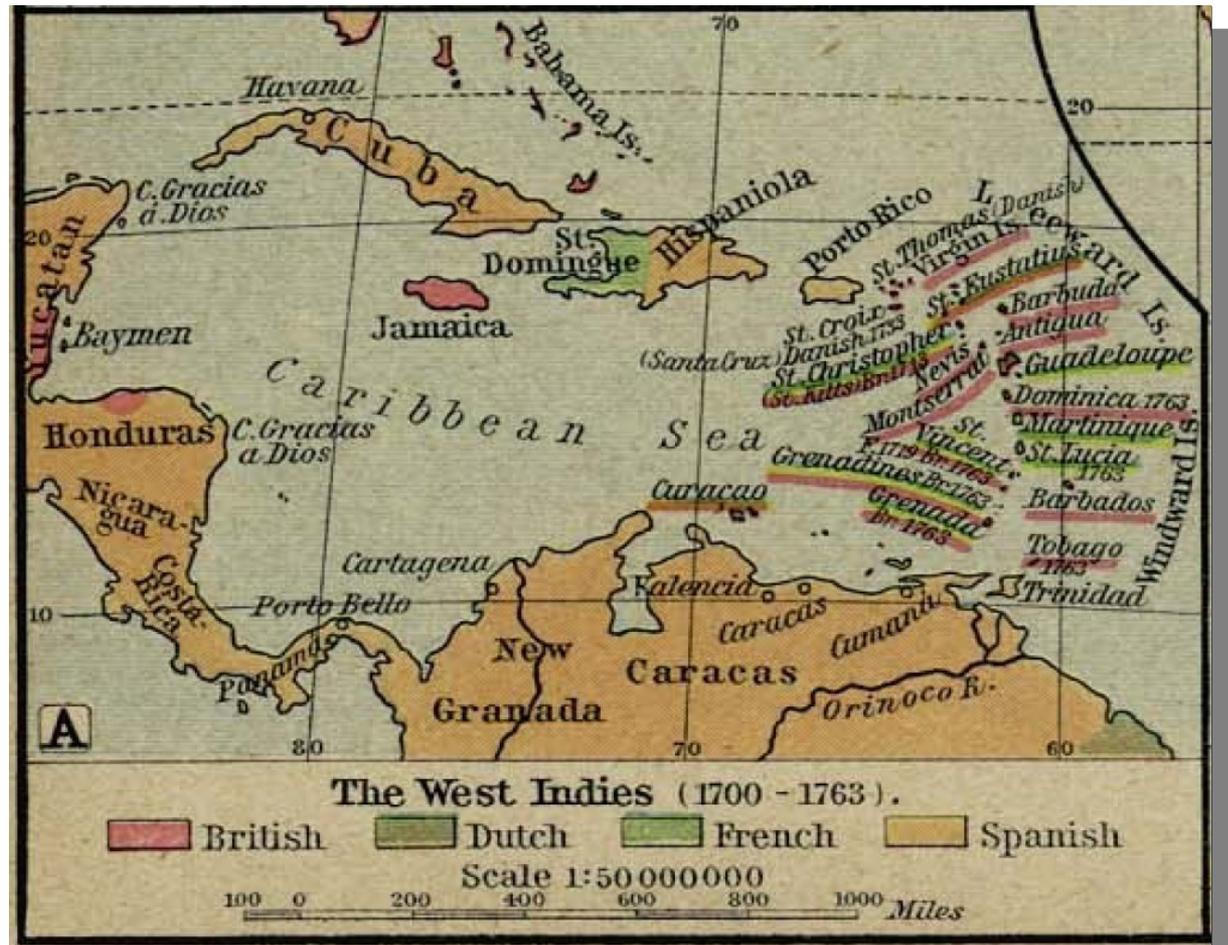
# England, France, Spain and Holland, masters of the world (1600-1700)





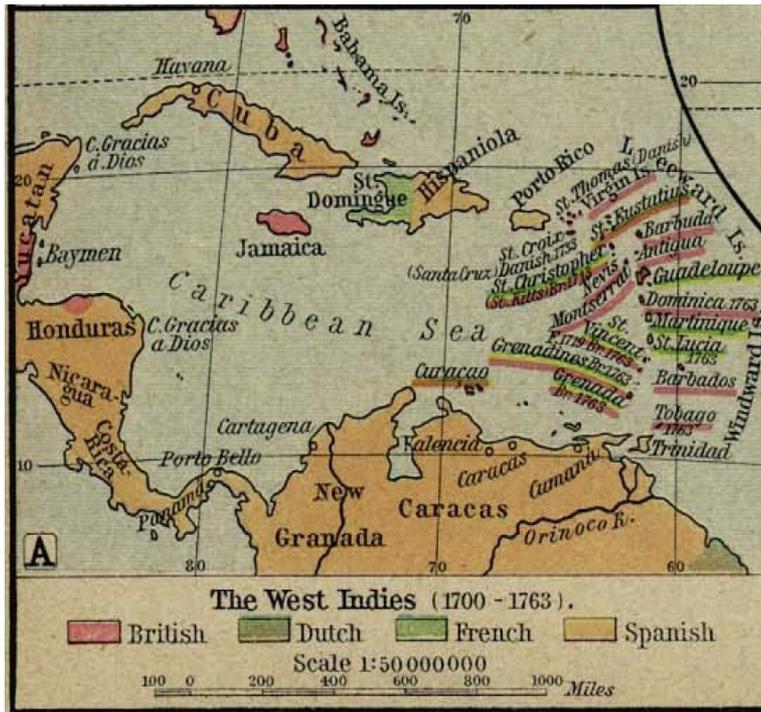
# Control of Caribbean leading up to Revolutionary War

Pirates have “gone legit” in an attempt to leverage competition among the imperialistic expansion of European nations.

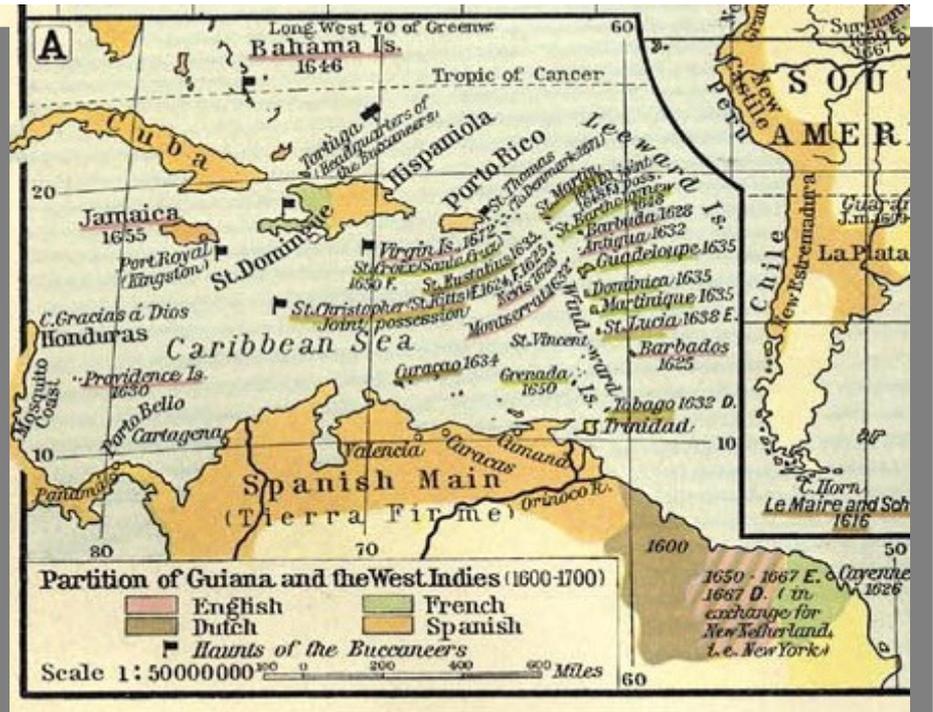


# Comparison Contrast of Control of Caribbean

1700-1763

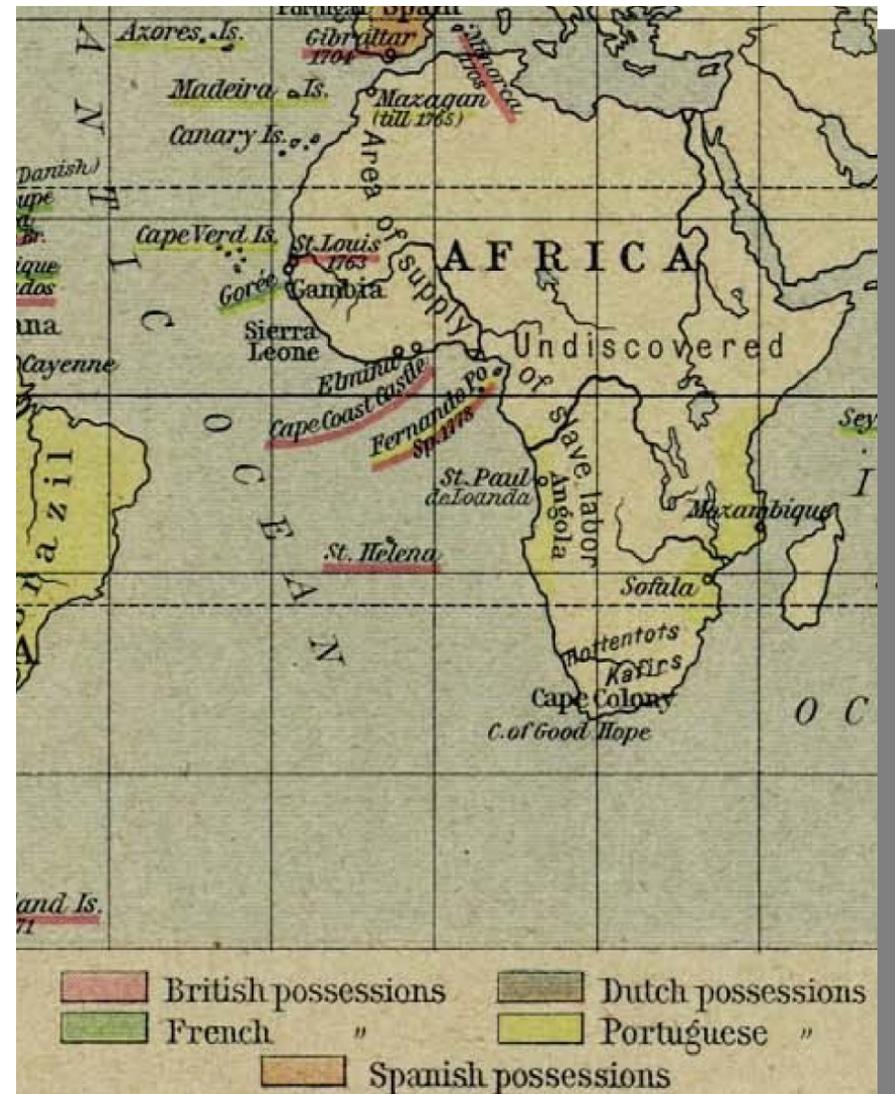


1600-1700

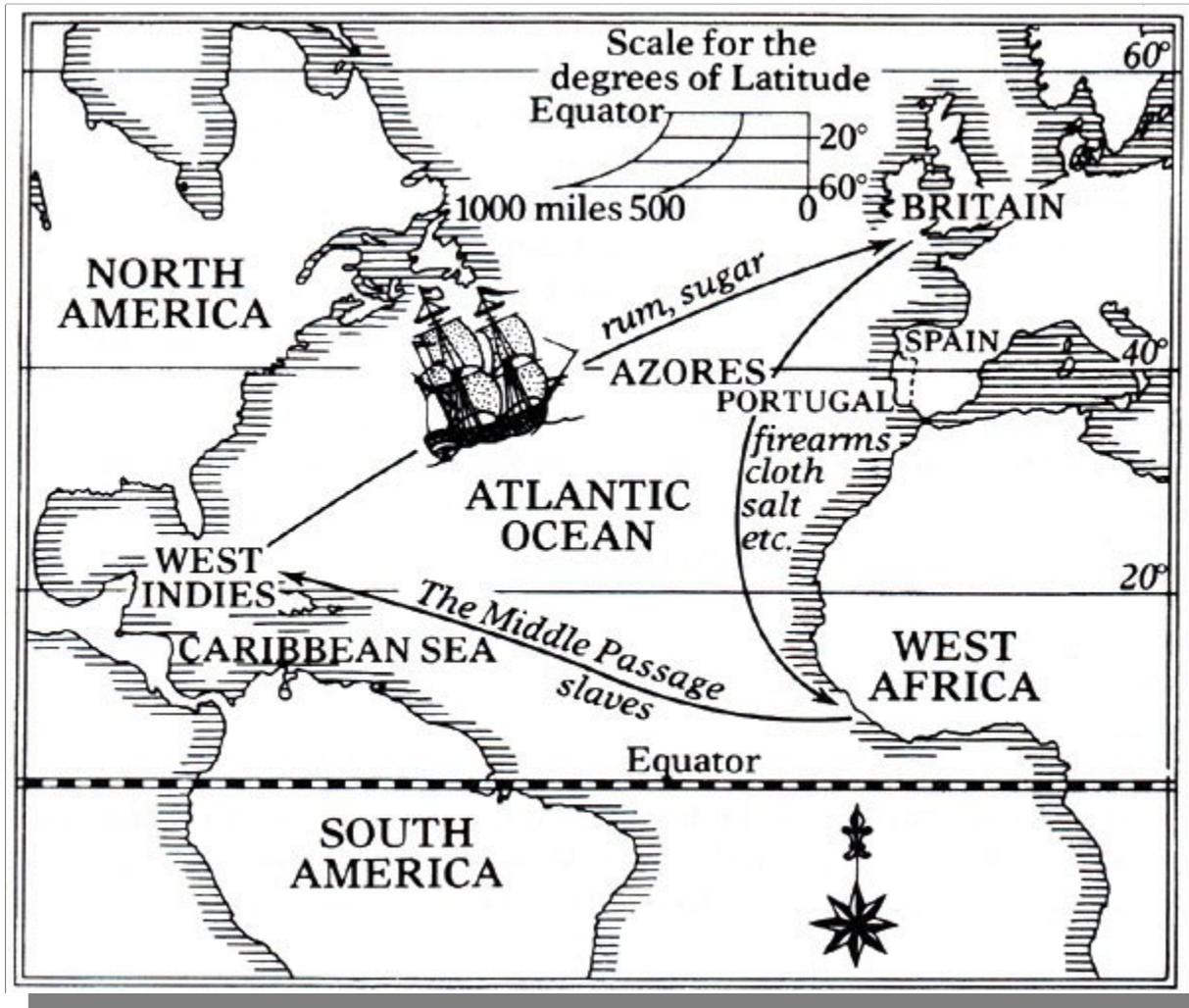


# Control of African Coast 1700-1763

Slavers (Arabs, Dutch, English, Moors, Spaniards, French) were capturing slaves under license from various companies (Dutch West India Company) who controlled the lands on behalf of European Monarchies.



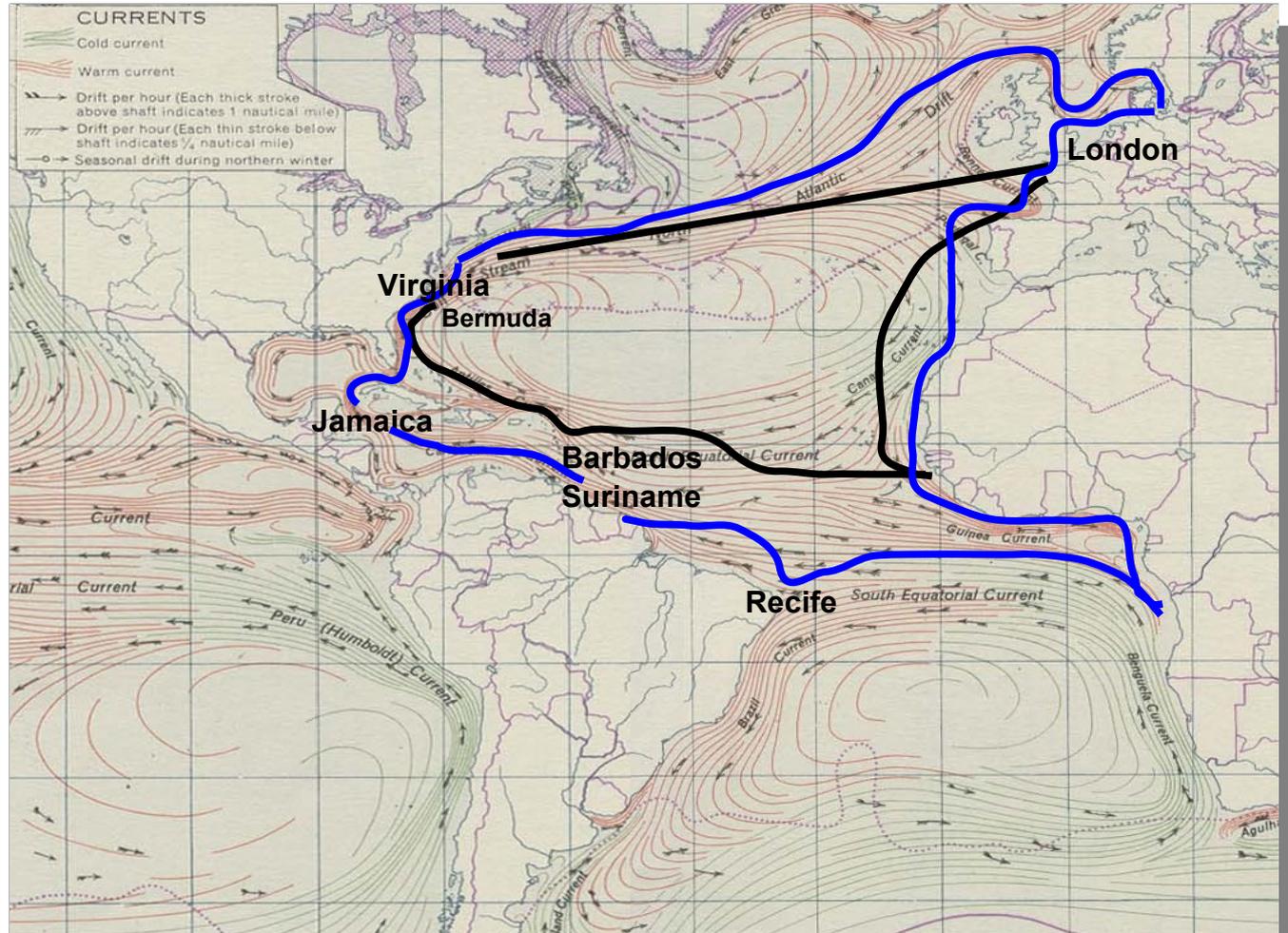
# So how do Atlantic Economies function?



# How to get to new world?

— Extent of Dutch West Indies Trading Company

— Extent of English traders



Let's shift gears for a bit and discuss

Recap

# Recap - Who were first Jews in America?

- 1585 – Joachim Gans learns smelting techniques from Native American Tribes on Roanoke Island, Virginia Colony (present-day North Carolina).
- 1654 – Portuguese recapture Brazil from Dutch Monarchy and commence renewed Inquisition against Jews. A ship with twenty-three (23) Sephardic Refugees from Recife, Brazil arrive in New Amsterdam (later New York).
- 1658 – First Sephardic Jews of Newport, Rhode Island, arrive purchase cemetery in 1678.
- 1695 – Sephardic Jews settle in Charleston, South Carolina.
- 1733 – Sephardic Jews settle in Savannah, Georgia.
- 1760 - to put this in context ----- Ba'al Shem Tov dies-----
- 1775 – Francis Salvador (Jessurum Rodriguez, of Bevis Marks), Sephardic Jew, elected to Provincial Congress of South Carolina.
- 1799 – France emancipates Jews, granting full citizenship.
- 1802 – First Ashkenazi Synagogue established in Philadelphia – Rodeph Shalom- 220 years after first Ashkenazim arrived in America.

# Recap - First Synagogues in America

## •**Oldest Synagogue, Touro Synagogue, Newport Rhode Island**

completed for Chanukah 1763.

**Founding families were Touro, Hays, Myers, Lopez, Hart, Seixas and Rivera.**

•*Note – Moses Michael Hays was brother-in-law of Rabbi Isaac Touro and a prosperous merchant. **Hays introduced the Order of the Scottish Rite Masonic Order to America.** He was the Grand Master of Massachusetts Masonic Lodge with Paul Revere and friend of Patriot Thomas Paine and he helped organized the King David Lodge in 1769. Hays moved from Newport to Boston in 1780. He is credited as being one of the founders of the Massachusetts Fire and Marine Insurance Co., which grew to become the Bank of Boston. At the Old Colony House, one of the oldest existing government buildings in America, in June, 1776, Hays delivered a now famous letter to Rhode Island General Assembly protesting the requirement that Jews sign loyalty test before the fledging government.*

## •**Oldest Congregation, Shearith Israel, New York**

since 1730 the Congregation has worshipped in five synagogues 1) Mill Street, 1730, 2) Mill Street re-built and expanded, 1818, 3) Crosby Street, 1834, 4) 19th Street, 1860, 5) **West 70th Street, 1897 (present building.).**



Let's shift gears for a bit and discuss

Run-up to Revolutionary War

# US Allies during the Revolutionary War

- **France** Congress had initially invited the French Canadians to join them as the fourteenth colony, but when that failed to happen, Congress authorized an invasion of Canada. The goal was to remove British rule from the primarily francophone province of Quebec (comprising present-day Quebec)...bad move.
- **Spain** it convenient for France and Spain to advance the cause of the American revolutionaries, was among those who drafted the terms of the Treaty of Paris (1783) that ended the war. By the treaty, Spain officially regained East and West Florida from the British.
- **Dutch Republic** American Revolutionary War and Napoleonic Wars removed any pretense of Holland being a world power due to over-extension of economic resources.
- **Polish Volunteers** led by General Thaddeus Kosciuszko – Polish military strategist & genius
- **Quebecois** French trappers and guides
- **Prussian Volunteers led** Gen. Frederick William Ludolf Gerhard Augustin (Baron von Steuben)
- **Oneida Indian Tribe** one of the five founding nations of the Iroquois Confederacy in the area of upstate New York who broke with other tribes to fight with Continental Army against their Iroquois brothers.
- **Tuscarora Indian Tribe** Southern Native American Tribe in North Carolina who suffered horrific treatment under the British and taught Joachim Gans how to smelt copper on Roanoke Island 200 years earlier.

# United States in 1775

## TERRITORIAL GROWTH

### COLONIAL PERIOD: 1775

- Original Thirteen Colonies
- Other British territories

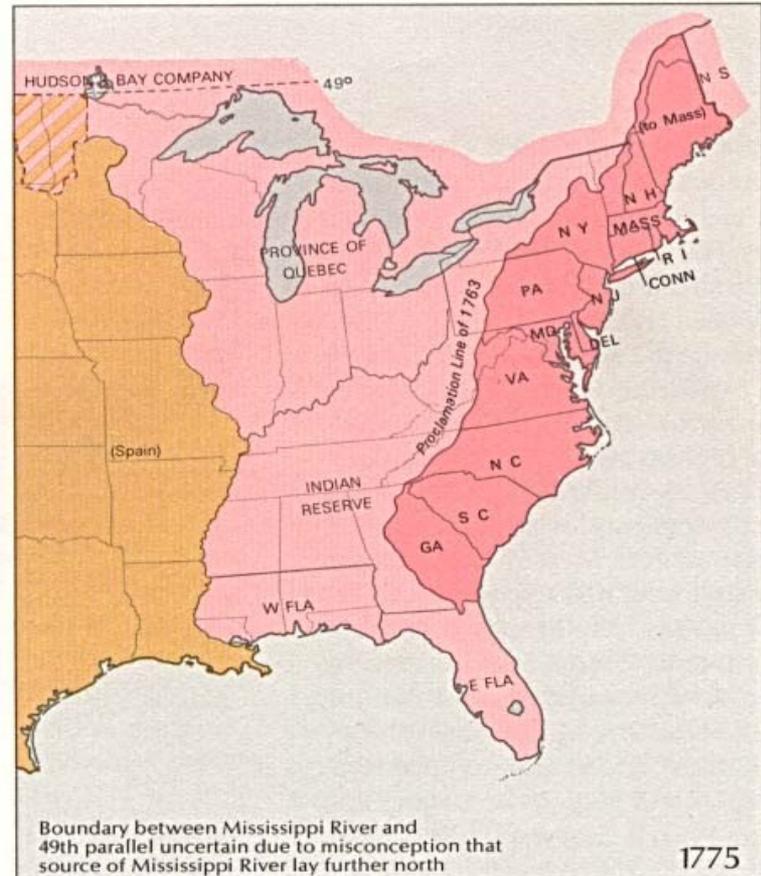
### UNITED STATES: 1790–1920

- States
- State claims
- Special status areas
- Territories
- Unorganized territories
- Claimed areas
- Foreign areas

- 1803** Dates of territorial acquisitions
- 1805** Dates of initial territorial organization
- (1809)** Dates of latest change within given time period
- 1812** Dates of admission to the Union

Map scale 1:34,000,000

Compiled by H. George Stoll, Hammond Incorporated, 1967;  
rev. by U.S. Geological Survey, 1970



# After 1783 until 1800?

- In 1778, France signed the ***Treaty of Alliance*** with Second Continental Congress. - It stated that the two countries agreed to aid each other into the indefinite future in the event of British attack. Further, neither country would make amends with London until the independence of the Thirteen Colonies was recognized. The treaty also stated that neither the Americans nor the French would conclude treaties with other nations unless diplomats from both countries were present during negotiations. It was mutually beneficial for only five years, from the years 1778 to 1783.
- US Revolutionary War bubbled into an international war in 1778
- 1789, French Revolution occurred largely due to economic burden of financing resulting from ***Treaty of Alliance***;
- 1799, France abrogates the ***Treaty of Alliance due*** to the “XYZ Affair”. Relations between France and America have never been the same.
- ....the stage is set for the Louisiana purchase...open warfare in Caribbean involves United States in order to protect its interests...the American Revolutionary War is still being fought in skirmishes with foreign powers.

# United States in 1790

## TERRITORIAL GROWTH

### COLONIAL PERIOD: 1775

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- Other British territories

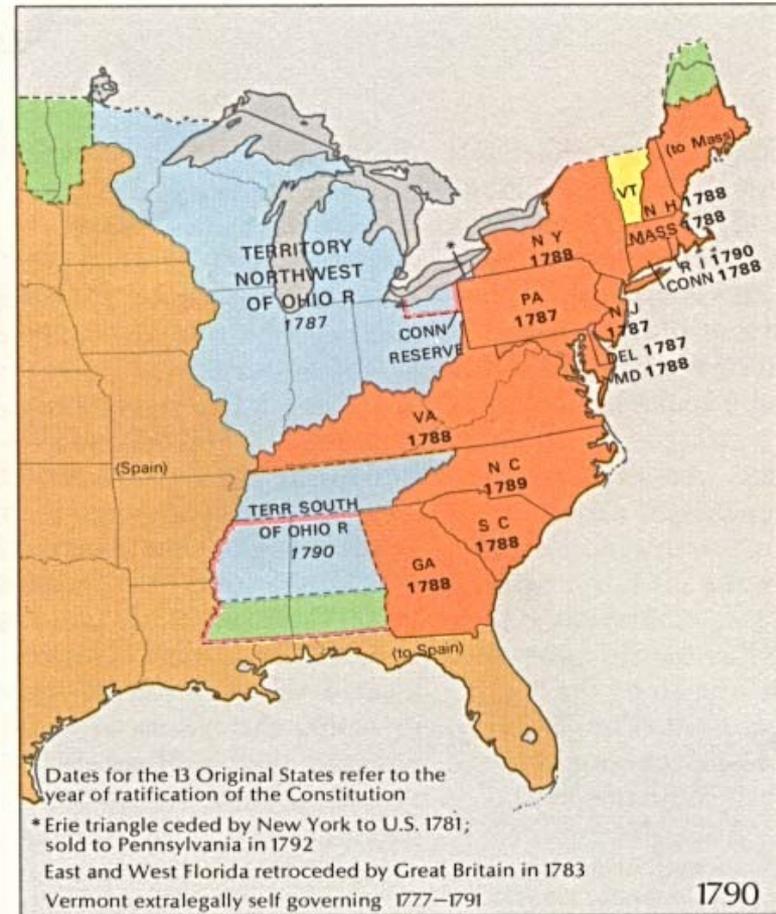
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Compiled by H. George Stoll, Hammond Incorporated, 1967;  
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# United States in 1810

## TERRITORIAL GROWTH

### COLONIAL PERIOD: 1775

-  Original Thirteen Colonies
-  Other British territories

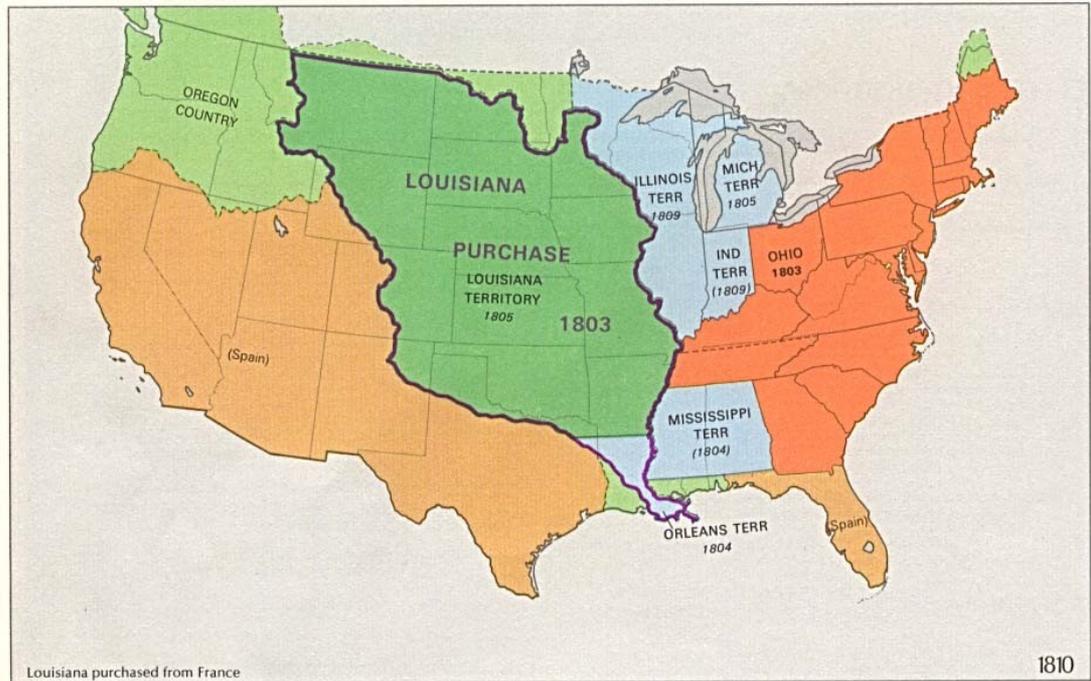
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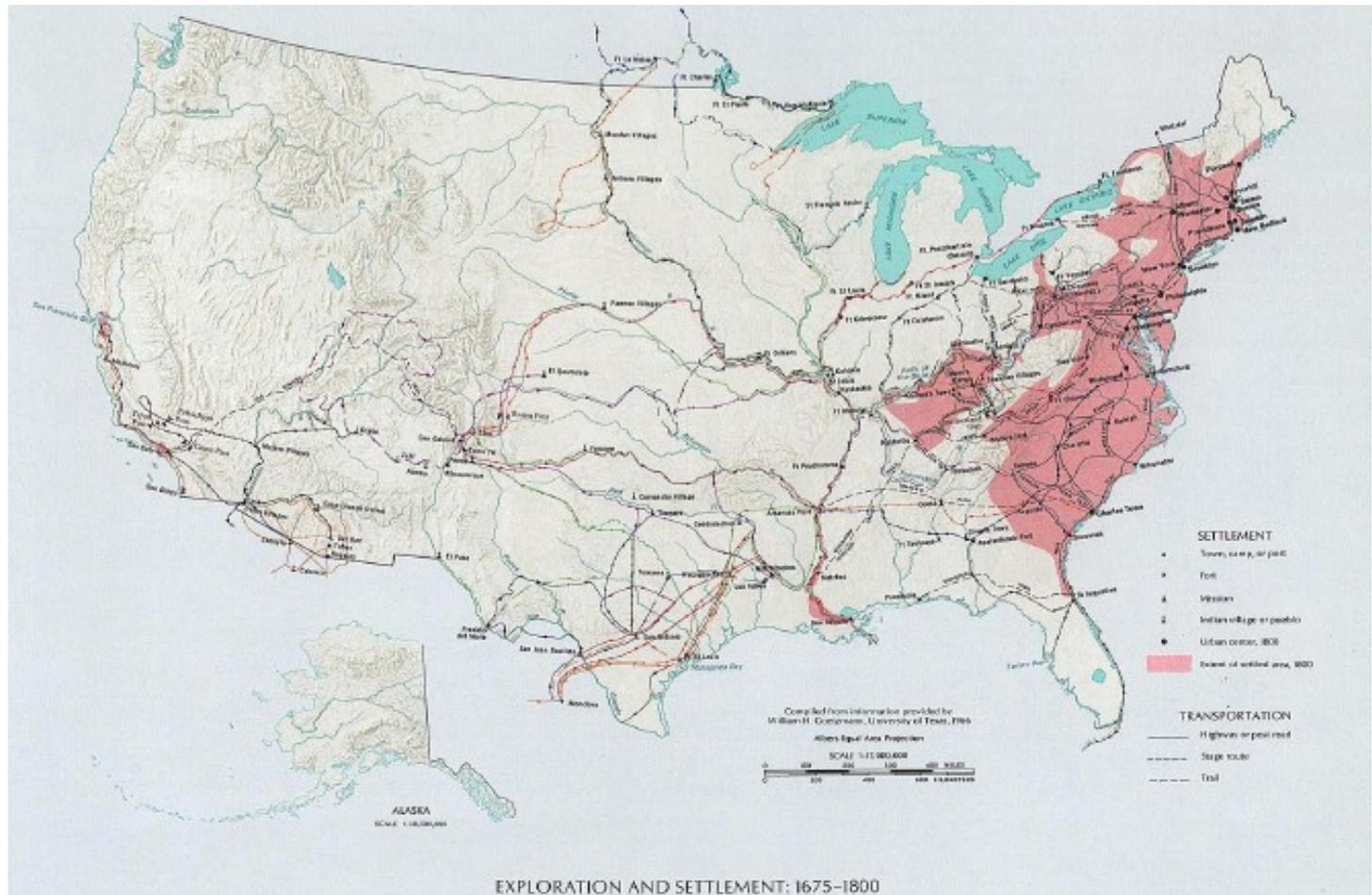
Map scale 1:34,000,000

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1810

# So...where is everybody in 1800?



# “The XYZ Affair”

- The French seized nearly three hundred American ships bound for British ports in the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean and Caribbean Seas. Federalist leaders such as Alexander Hamilton called for war, but President Adams sent a diplomatic delegation (Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, John Marshall, and Elbridge Gerry) to Paris in 1797 to negotiate peace. Three French agents, Jean Conrad Hottinguer (X), Pierre Bellamy (Y), and Lucien Hauteval (Z), demanded a large cash bribe for the delegation to speak to French foreign minister Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, a huge loan to help fund the French wars as a condition for continuing negotiations, and a formal apology for comments made by US President John Adams.
- Thomas Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party, sensing that the American delegates were to blame for the failure, demanded to see the key documents. John Adams released the delegation's report—with the names of the French agents changed to X,Y,Z, hence the popular name of both the affair and the correspondence—setting off a firestorm of anti-French sentiment as Americans blamed the French. France's refusal to receive the accredited U.S. representatives, let alone negotiate with them, without bribes for its leading members and a loan for its military incursions in Europe seemed an extreme insult to Americans. The public learned that the American delegates had rejected the demands of bribe. "The answer is no! No, not a sixpence!" was their response (translated by newspaper editors as "Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute!")
- The *Quasi-War* erupted (1798-1800), with American and French warships and merchants ships fighting in actual combat in the Caribbean and off the east American coast. (It was called "quasi" because there was no formal war declaration.) The Americans abrogated the Franco-American Alliance. President John Adams began to build up the navy, and a new army was raised. Full-scale war seemed at hand, but Adams appointed new diplomats led by William Murray. They negotiated an end to hostilities through the 1800 *Treaty of Mortefontaine*. The XYZ Affair significantly weakened the affection Americans had for France... not much has changed in the ensuing 200 years....

# 1775 through 1812 – constant conflict

- 1775-1783 – United States engaged in hot warfare with England
- 1789 – French Revolution occurs...relations between France and United States begin to decline.
- 1791 – Indian wars break out between USA and Tribes Loyal to England.
- 1798-1800 – “Quasi-War” a/k/a the Pirate's War - open warfare between USA and France. By the autumn of 1800, the United States Navy and the Royal Navy, combined with a more conciliatory diplomatic stance by the government of First Consul Napoleon Bonaparte, produced a reduction in the activity of the French privateers and warships. The Convention of 1800, signed on September 30, 1800, ended the Quasi-War but news of this did not arrive in time to help John Adams avert failing in his bid for a second term.
- 1799 – the “XYZ Affair” relations between France and United States sour over demands by French Diplomats of bribes from American Diplomats.
- War of 1812 – 1812 thru 1815 -- was fought between the United States of America, the *United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland* and its colonies, including *Upper Canada (Ontario), Lower Canada (Quebec), Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Bermuda*. *Battles were fought in Caribbean, Canada, Michigan, and New England States*.
- According to Winston Churchill, "the lessons of the war [of 1812] were taken to heart. Anti-American sentiment in Britain ran high for several years, but the **United States was never again refused proper treatment as an independent power.**

Time to shift gears again....  
back to Jewish Piracy

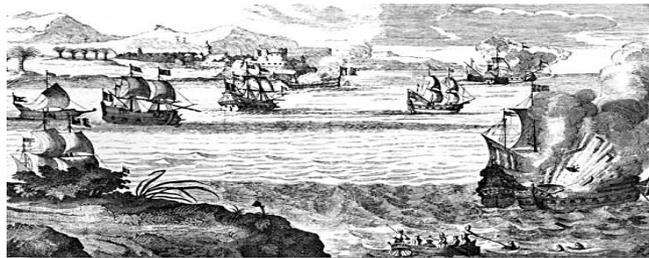
# Motives of Jewish Piracy

- Spanish Sephardic pirates were generally attempting to reclaim what was stolen from Jews in 1492.
- One particular Pirate simply sunk Spanish Galleons preferring to watch the Spaniards drown.
- French Sephardic Pirates, on the other hand were in it for the money...personal fortune.



# Overarching motives...

- The Spanish Inquisition forced many Jews to flee the country. The most adventurous among them attacked and plundered Spanish fleets while forming alliances with other European powers to ensure the safety of Jews living in hiding in the New World.
- The major role of Jews and pirates was “we were like the brains behind their brawn...we advised and financially backed them. “



# Names you have probably never heard...

- **Abraham Cohen Henriques**, an arms dealer who used his cunning and economic muscle to find safe havens for Jews.
- **Moses Cohen Henriques**, Abraham's brother, who helped plan one of history's largest heists against Spain. In 1628, Henriques set sail with Dutch West India Co. Admiral Piet Hein, whose own hatred of Spain was fueled by four years spent as a galley slave aboard a Spanish ship. Henriques and Hein boarded Spanish ships off Cuba and seized shipments of New World gold and silver worth in today's dollars about the same as Disney's total box office for "Dead Man's Chest." - worth about \$1 billion in today's money.
- Moses Cohen Henriques went on to lead the Jewish contingent in Brazil and established his own pirate island off the Brazilian coast. After the recapture of Brazil, by Portugal in 1654, Moses ended up as an advisor to Henry Morgan, the leading pirate of the time. Even though his role in the raid was disclosed during the Spanish Inquisition, he was never caught...and he taught other pirates how to be pirates... notably Captain Henry Morgan.
- Dr. Marilyn Delevante, author of a history of the Jews of Jamaica entitled ***The Island of One People***, is quoted as saying "**the Jews of Jamaica were the first permanent inhabitants of the island.**" Jews began coming here after the Expulsion from Spain in 1492. She mentioned Moshe Cohen Henriques, a Jewish pirate known for his cruelty; yet, as the legend goes, Henriques would never harm anyone on shabbat...good man.



# Run-up to Revolutionary War - Jamaica



- “They are good and useful spies,” said Oliver Cromwell of the Jews who when the Inquisition threatened, advised him in the conquest of Jamaica. Welcomed by the English, Jews from all over the New World shed their *converso* cloaks and moved to Jamaica.
- The community soon included ship owners from Mexico and Brazil, traders from Peru and Columbia, and ship captains and pilots from Nevis and Barbados. Together their knowledge of New World trade was unsurpassed. By 1660, Jamaica had become the Jews’ principal haven in the New World.
- Situated in the middle of the shipping lanes, Jamaica was an ideal base from which to strike at Spanish shipping, and engage in contraband trade with the Main. Jamaica’s Jews were major players in both activities.

# Jamaica...and unsung Jewish haven

- The Great Earthquake of 1692 brought a climatic end to the pirate port when the sea swallowed two-thirds of Port Royal. From an infamous pirate capital, Jamaica, by 1698, had become a sugar island worked by 40,000 slaves, and after 1713, “the centre for slave distribution in the Caribbean and North America.” It was then that England’s Royal African Company was awarded by the *asiento* – the monopoly right Spain granted to conduct the slave trade with Spanish America.
- A few Jamaican Jews did participate in the trade, but most dealt in dry goods. This fact was noted in a London petition in 1735 that protested the on-going effort of rival merchants to exclude Jews. Their defenders (92 Jewish and non-Jewish merchants) wrote: “The Jews [in London] are almost the only persons that send any dry, fine goods to Jamaica, at their own risk, and on their own account...for the supply of the inhabitants of the island, and for making proper sortments of goods for the Spaniards...”

# Audacious!

- In the ascendancy of the Buccaneer Sir Henry Morgan (ca. 1635 – August 25, 1688), the Jews found their “Joshua.” His six raids on Spanish ports, financed by Sephardi merchants, and culminating in the burning of the “Golden City of Panama,” brought the Spanish Empire to its knees. Sephardim financed his raids.
- In the Treaty of Madrid in 1670, Spain acceded to Europe’s right to settle the New World...and Jews were finally free to be Jews in the New World.



# Impact- Sephardim upon America's enemies

- As Jewish involvement with piracy petered out in the Caribbean, the rovers and their Sephardi sponsors disbanded, only to reunite when in the following century a budding new nation would enlist them in its fight for liberty.
- In the American Revolution, a dozen prominent Jews sided with the rebels as privateers (Pirates). Celebrated as founders of early Jewish congregations, it is not commonly known that these men owned and operated more than a few of the pirate ships that captured or destroyed over 600 British ships and took cargoes and prizes with an estimated value of \$18 billion.

# Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean during the Revolutionary War

- ***Bartholomew - the Portuguese Jew***, a successful failure, famous not for his successes but for his escapes.
- ***Jean LaFitte*** - the hero of the battle of New Orleans who once wrote

***“my Jewish-Spanish grandmother, a witness at the time of the Inquisition, inspired in me a hatred of the Spanish crown”***

# Bartholomew “The Jew” Portuguese

- “Keystone Pirates”
- With 30 sailors attacked a Spanish vessel with 310 sailors.
- After numerous assaults Bartholomew's crew, now 25, had killed all but fifty Spaniards; the Spaniards surrendered their vessel and booty.
- Bartholomew departed with his winnings
- The Spaniards sailed after and caught up with Bartholomew and captured his boat...temporarily.
- Bartholomew escaped, only to steal the same Spanish vessel, weeks later, at night under the guns of a Spanish Garrison in Campeche.
- Bartholomew made a name for himself as an expert at thievery by stealth and daring escapes...but he was not a pirate you'd invest your money into.

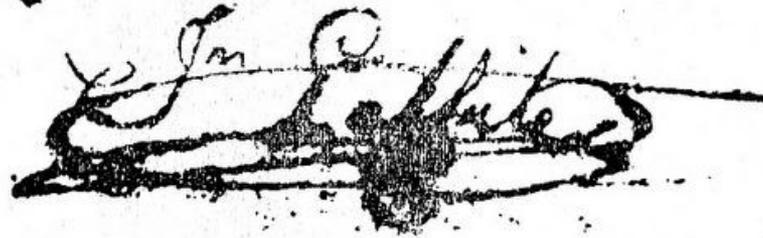
# Jean LaFitte

- Jean Lafitte, aka, *the Corsair* or *the Buccaneer*. He was born on the Caribbean Island of Santo Domingo in 1782 to a Sephardic Jewish Family. His mother died in 1783 which left his grandmother, Zora Nadrimal, to raise he and his brother. (The brothers later falsely claimed the Bordeaux region of France as their birthplace to snag French privateering credentials.)
- Along with his 'crew of a thousand men', Lafitte sometimes receives credit for helping free Louisiana from the British in the war of 1812, with his nautical raids along the Gulf of Mexico.
- In his journals, Lafitte describes childhood in the home of his Jewish grandmother, who was full of stories about the family's escape from the Inquisition into France. Raised in a kosher Jewish house, Lafitte later married Cristiana Levine, from a Jewish family living in Danish Virgin Islands.
- After four profitable years of pirating Jean LaFitte packed up his family and left for France with everything they owned. On the way their ship was taken by a Spanish 'Man of War'. They were stripped and dumped on a sand cay; days later an American schooner picked them up and took them to New Orleans where Cristiana shortly died of exhaustion and fever...Jean never forgot or forgave the Spanish for this.



# Jean Lafitte - in his own prayerbook

J'ai dû toute mon ingénuité à la grande  
intuition de ma Grand'mère Juive  
Espagnole, qui a été un témoin aux  
temps de l'Inquisition.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jean Lafitte". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the main text. It features a prominent initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

On a flyleaf of the Bible, Jean wrote: "I owe all my ingenuity to the great intuition of my Grandmother, a Spanish Jewess, who was a witness at the time of the Inquisition."

# Citizen LaFitte.

Jean's brother Pierre, also a privateer, was busted for smuggling. The now indigent brothers briefly worked for U.S. Customs and then got back into pirating. Jean bought this blacksmith shop (built 1772) to front his evil businesses. Pierre and Jean were joined by their brothers René/Renato Béluche and Dominique You, former artillery gunner for Napoleon. They built a headquarters in Baratavia Bay.

Captured Spanish vessels were maneuvered into the bay and, by 1811, Baratavia was a thriving community with 32 armed warships, more ships than in the entire US navy. Businessmen from New Orleans arrived at night to buy pirates' loot. The operation was so huge, it affected the economy of the whole Gulf. "New Orleans banking declined and it was apparent that Laffite was monopolizing Louisiana's import trade and the commerce of the entire Mississippi Valley."

Some of the pirates began peaceful lives along the shores of Baratavia Bay. The Lafittes, however, went back to piracy. **Jean's brother Dominique You was hired to rescue Napoleon from St. Helena and bring him to New Orleans, though Napoleon's death interfered with this plan** substantially. Pierre and Jean sailed to Texas and established a colony of privateers off the coast of Galveston.

Later, Jean became a labor leader in St. Louis. In 1847 he met with Marx and Engels and, admiring their work, opened an escrow account in Paris to help them. **There is evidence that Laffite tried to introduce Marx to the young Abraham Lincoln.**

Jean, who had substantially financed one of the earliest synagogues in Louisiana, is buried (perhaps) in a Jewish cemetery in Metairie.

New York le 27 Janvier 1848

Mes Chère femme,  
et Mes Chers enfants,

Je suis arrivé à New York et  
naturellement je suis enthousiasmé par les dernières con-  
férences en Europe. Mon dernier séjour à Paris  
fut avec le jeune homme M<sup>r</sup> Louis M. Bertillon et ses  
familles. J'ai apprécié les vues D'Amsterdam, ses rues  
semblent comme celles des Bayous intérieurs de la  
Louisiane fortifiées et pavées avec des murs briques.

J'ai les manuscrits et d'espère qu'ils ser-  
ont présentés à M<sup>r</sup> Abraham Lincoln. Il fait  
partie du Sénat nous pourrions espérer M<sup>r</sup>  
Goffman. Il y a cet autre ami intime de lui,  
M<sup>r</sup> Nathaniel Tristram. Personnellement, je ne désire  
pas devenir actif, ni montrer M'importe quoi à  
M<sup>r</sup> Lincoln. Je me sens étiré et sans Desprit  
et conscient qu'il s'occupe d'imprimer quelques  
principes sur le Champ politique de cette Grande  
Nation. Son esprit pense toujours plus vite  
qu'il me peut agir. Il est sceptique, mais un  
peu plus rapide lorsque il est provoqué et  
convaincu complètement par des faits appor-  
tant aux principes de ceux qui gagnent, ont  
raison de gagner.

Je suis sur mon chemin de retourner  
d'espère que les deux petits garçons font des progrès  
dans leurs études à l'école.

Votre Mère et père famille.

Jean Laffite

# Lafitte's world

This is a map of Louisiana in 1814. Jean LaFitte proved essential in navigating the area circled

Below is an example of why you need experts in the area....



# LaFitte – saved our Southern Flank

- He was a personal friend of Andrew Jackson and Napoleon Bonaparte.
- In 1814 Great Britain dispatched an armada and 8,000 men to take Louisiana. Sure of success, they brought along a complete civil governmental staff to rule over the soon-to-be established Crown Colony. The officers offered Lafitte 30,000 pounds sterling and a commission in the British Navy if he would guide their troops through the maze of waterways to New Orleans. Lafitte had traveled the bayous for years and knew them better than anyone; he had even mapped the navigable waterways within 10,000 square miles of delta.
- Lafitte pretended to accept the British offer but instead sent word to New Orleans that invasion was imminent. In exchange for a governor's pardon he and his buccaneers would help defend the city.
- With more than two thousand men under his command, Lafitte could perhaps have turned back the British himself. But instead of accepting Jean's help, governor Claiborne let a Commodore Patterson attack Barataria. Patterson destroyed the settlement and stole loot worth half a million dollars, claiming it as spoils of war -- though none of it was ever seen by the government. He rounded up and imprisoned all the pirates he could find.
- The governor's smugness was brief: reliable sources confirmed that the British were coming; within days their Armada arrived. Andrew Jackson, Commander in Chief of New Orleans, had almost no men or ships and so, amusingly, Claiborne was forced to free the imprisoned pirates (the "Hellish Banditi" as Jackson called them). He needed them desperately.
- Jean and Pierre guided the American forces through the marshland maze. An assortment of 4,000 Tennesseans, Choctaw tribesmen, free blacks, Creoles and of course pirates defeated the British in the Battle of New Orleans. Although James Madison gave presidential pardons to Jean Laffite and the buccaneers, their loot, surprisingly, was not returned. They were penniless yet again...

# New Orleans Jewry

- The religious history of the Jewish people in New Orleans had its beginning early in the 1800's. Although there had been some Jews in the city previous to the Louisiana Purchase, there had been no organization among them; but by 1828 the number of Jews had increased considerably, and in that year Shaaray Chesed (Gates of Mercy), the first synagogue, was built. In 1846 the Portuguese Jews, of whom there was a small number in the city, founded a second congregation known as Nefutzoth (Dispersed of Judah), and this was followed by several other organizations.
- Touro Synagogue, 4338 St. Charles Ave., corner General Pershing St. and St. Charles Ave., was named in honor of Judah Touro, wealthy and prominent local Jewish philanthropist of the 1700's.
- The origin of New Orleans Touro Synagogue dates back to 1828, when Congregation *Shaarai Chesed* was incorporated. One of the founders of this congregation was **Jacob da Silva Solis**, who, while on a business trip to New Orleans, was unable to buy Matzah for Pesach and was forced to grind his own meal and bake his own bread.
- There are today three orthodox and three reformed Jewish congregations in New Orleans.



Rabbi  
Gershom Seixas

# Seixas Family

- American family, the founder of which removed from Portugal to the United States in 1730.
- **Abraham Seixas:**
  - American merchant and soldier; born in 1750 in New York city. He served in the American army and carried despatches for Gen. Harry Lee between Charleston, S. C., and Georgia. In 1782 he took the oath of allegiance to the state of Pennsylvania, where he settled at the close of the war.
- **Benjamin Mendez Seixas:**
  - Fourth son of Isaac Mendez Seixas; born in Newport, R. I., 1747; died in New York city Aug. 16, 1817. He was a prominent merchant in Newport, Philadelphia, and New York, and was one of the founders of the New York Stock Exchange.
- **Gershom Mendez Seixas:**
  - American rabbi and patriot; born in New York city Jan. 14, 1745; died there July 2, 1816; son of Isaac Mendez Seixas (1708-80) and Rachel Levy, daughter of Moses Levy, an early New York merchant. Seixas became the Rabbi of Shearith Israel, the Spanish and Portuguese congregation of his native city, in 1766, and occupied the rabbinate for about, half a century. At the outbreak of the American Revolution he at once espoused the Patriot cause, though many of the Christian ministers of the city sympathized with the English. It was largely due to his influence that the Jewish congregation closed the doors of its synagogue on the approach of the British, and decided to leave the town rather than continue under British rule.
  - During his entire stay at Philadelphia, Seixas showed himself a public-spirited citizen, figuring also as a zealous defender of religious liberty. Thus when Pennsylvania adopted the religious test as an indispensable qualification for office, he and several members of his congregation addressed the Council of Censors on the subject (Dec., 1783), characterizing the test as "unjust to the members of a persuasion that had always been attached to the American cause and given a support to the country, some in the Continental army, some in the militia, and some by cheerfully paying taxes and sustaining the popular cause." Westcott, the historian, expressly calls attention to this protest, stating "that it doubtless had its influence in procuring the subsequent modification of the test clause in the Constitution."
  - After the war Seixas returned to New York (March 23, 1784) and resumed his former position as rabbi of Congregation Shearith Israel.

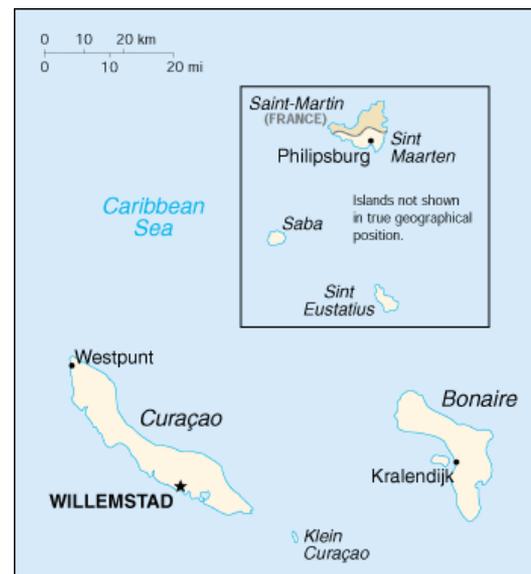


# Aaron Lopez

- Born, raised and married in Portugal. Came to America in 1752, age 21 years old. Sensing renewed Spanish inquisitorial zeal he fled Spain for Newport, Rhode Island.
- Quickly set up business trading rum, furniture, candles and slaves.
- Had a fleet of ships harvesting whale oil.
- He is credited with introducing Sperm whale oil to America (because he knew Jews needed smokeless candles for Shabbat). and building Touro Synagogue...the first Synagogue in America.
- Businesses that revolved around each other were sugar, rum, slaves, and piracy.
- Author Jay Coughtry in his book *The Notorious Triangle* estimates that a hundred thousand Africans were taken aboard more than nine hundred ships registered to Jewish Rhode Island ship owners.

# St Eustatius and its Jews

- The island was seen by Christopher Columbus in 1493 and claimed by many nations over the next 150 years.
- In 1636, it was colonized by the chamber of Zeeland of the Dutch West India Company. As of 1678, the islands Sint Eustatius, Sint Maarten and Saba fell under direct command of the Dutch West India Company. At Sint Eustatius a commander was stationed, who also governed over the islands Sint Maarten and Saba. At the time, the island was of some importance for sugar cultivation.
- The island was also home to one of the first Jewish settlements in the New World, dating back at least to the early 18th century. The Honen Dalim Synagogue, built in 1739, now stands in ruins, burned by Admiral Rodney in 1781 out of spite for Jewish support of American Rebels.
- Shortly after the Declaration of Independence had been approved in Philadelphia, a copy was sent to Amsterdam, but the British intercepted the ship carrying the Declaration. A letter accompanied the copy of the historic document and both were sent to London. It was assumed that the letter was seditious, because it appeared to be written in some secret code. The letter that needed to be deciphered was a written in Hebrew script — American Jews were simply communicating with their Dutch brethren.
- Sephardim of Newport and New York owned small fleets of merchant vessels. Now that the United Colonies were at war, a few of these merchant traders converted their ships into privateers (pirate vessels) to harass the British at sea. Others Jewish merchant vessel owners engaged in the arms smuggling trade transporting weapons and powder from the West Indies, especially from the Dutch colonies. This dangerous venture was made easier because of ancestral and cultural ties between the Sephardic Jews of Dutch island colonies and those of the American colonies. **The Revolutionary War might have failed except for risks taken and the financial capital given by Sephardic Jews in support of the rebel cause.**



After Admiral Rodney confiscated all the ships and goods stored in the island's warehouses, there was less cash and valuables than he expected.

**Rodney noticed that the Jews were having an unusual number of funerals. He ordered one of them to stop and had the coffin opened. It contained a cache of coins and jewelry. He then ordered his men to do some digging in the graveyard and found more valuables that had been stashed away.**

**Infuriated, Rodney deported all Jewish males to surrounding islands**

# How the Jews of St Eustatius saved the American Revolution

- in Philadelphia, July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was written. A copy was sent to Amsterdam via the small Dutch Caribbean Island of St. Eustatius. The Declaration was intercepted by the British at sea. An accompanying letter with the Declaration of Independence was also intercepted and sent to London as being a secret code about the document that needed to be deciphered - the letter was written in Yiddish.
- The war was not going well at first for the young American army. Though facing hard times and even defeat, Jews stood and fought along with their neighbors. Into the terrible dark cold winter at Valley Forge, Abraham Levy and Phillip Russell stood their watch. Joseph Simon from his frontier forge at Lancaster, Pa. supplied the Army with the famous Henry Rifles. Jewish trading merchants, peaceful before the war, outfitted their ships to become privateers and ravage the British at sea. The cost to many was great, the great merchant traders of Newport, Rhode Island saw their fortunes lost.
- **Men such as Aaron Lopez were bankrupted supporting the Revolution when their ships were lost to the British.** In the area of finance the young American government might have foundered too except for the financial genius and personal financial risk and support taken on by *Hayim Solomon. Solomon was to die bankrupted by his total support of the American cause. Though small in number the Jews chose to caste their fate with America.*
- While Rodney was distracted in St. Eustatius ravaging Jews, Lord Cornwallis and his army of British regulars were forced out of the Carolinas and retreated to the small port of Yorktown, Virginia on the James Peninsula. He needed to await critical re provisioning and fresh reinforcements being brought by the British fleet. The weakened British fleet, with Cornwallis's reinforcements, was intercepted at sea by the French fleet under Admiral DeGrasse and soundly defeated. Degrasse took up positions at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay blockading Yorktown from the Sea.
- If the Jews had not helped turn St. Eustatius into a major arms center for the Revolution and if Admiral Rodney had not spent so much time destroying St. Eustatius and particularly the Jews, the war might have ended differently. **There is little doubt that Admiral Rodney's anti-Semitism helped squander his time and played a role in delaying and weakening the British fleet. Ironically it was the Jews of St. Eustatius who helped win the American Revolution.**

# First reference to a Jewish State in House of Commons

- By the end of November 1781, news of Admiral Rodney's act of singling out the Dutch Jews for the harshest punishment reached the British Parliament. Edmund Burke, a Member of Commons and eloquent sympathizer of the American cause, was known for uncharitable statements toward Jews. Yet he reproved Rodney for his mistreatment of the Jews of St. Eustatius. **Burke said, "If Britons were so injured, Britons have armies and laws to fly to for the protection and justice. But the Jews have no such power and no such friend to depend upon. Humanity then must become their protector." [xvii] Burke was likely more concerned with Britain's image of ethical lapse as seen by Rodney's actions rather than the plight of the Jews. Still, in recognizing Jewish vulnerability, Burke implied that the plight of the Jews might be solved if they had a state of their own.**
- One hundred and thirty-six years after Burke's rebuke of his countryman, British Foreign Minister Lord Arthur James Balfour wrote the following note to Lord Lionel Walter Rothchild: **"His Majesty's government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this objective, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which might prejudice the civil rights of the non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."**
- .....the rest is history.....

# Sephardim and Freemasonry



- Aaron Lopez, Abraham Redwood, Abraham Pereira Mendes, Jacob Riveras, Jacob Polock, and the De Wolfs  
The slave trade was not the province of Jews, Episcopalians, or Huguenots. It did, however, pay to band together and operate in secrecy.
- Christian or Jewish, the slave traders had to be connected, at least to each other. Religious affiliation was often the tie that bound. But not every slave trader was from a persecuted sect. For this reason it was very important to be accepted into a lodge. The lodge system, which was composed of the elite shipowners, made navigating the treacherous waters of both the Atlantic Ocean and New England political life easier.
- The Newport Lodge was founded by a merchant from Boston, and once it was established it was populated mostly by Jews from Portugal and the Caribbean. **Moses Seixas served as grand master for Rhode Island from 1791 to 1800"; he went on to become one of the founders of the Bank of Rhode Island.** Intermarriage among Newport's first families tightened the bonds, as it did among the Boston merchant elite. But intermarriage did not mean marrying within one's race or religion; it meant marrying within one's caste. ....letter sent by George Washington to Moses Seixas, president of the Newport Hebrew Congregation on August 17, 1790, and inscribed on a stone at the Touro Synagogue (Newport R.I.), stating the inalienable human rights for Jews, as opposed to tolerance
- A Protestant could marry a Jew as long as they were both from the same station in life. Shipowner, sea captain, and merchant were three titles within the higher caste of Rhode Island life. In America, Jews in general did not suffer the degree of hostility that they encountered in Europe. While in many countries Masonry rejected Jews, and at least one still does, in America Masonry welcomed them. **Moses Michael Hays, a Portuguese Sephardic Jew, was instrumental in bringing Scottish Rite Masonry to America, and Paul Revere, a Huguenot, was his deputy grand master. Hay was also instrumental in founding the Bank of Boston.**
- The first Jewish Masons officially in the Carolinas were Simon Nathan and Benjamin Seixas, designated to represent Masonry in Charlotte and Charleston in June, 1781.

# Why did Sephardim get involved in Freemasonry?



- During the Revolutionary Period, Freemasonry served as a unifying influence. Relations among the American colonies had often been characterized by jealousies, territorial disputes, and widely diverse ethnic, social and religious groups. By 1775, Masonic lodges established in each of the 13 colonies served as a common denominator to help bring the divergent groups within the colonies into a single national entity.
- At least nine of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and many of the military leaders of the Revolution were Freemasons.
- George Washington's Masonic affiliation was an important ingredient in his role as military and political leader of the new nation.
- Masonic ties and patriotism were so closely entwined during this period that they virtually merge in popular usage. The ideas of equality, reason, and brotherhood of man, inherent in Freemasonry, had been translated into American independent and democracy.
- Fraternal organizations played a particularly important role among German-Jewish immigrants. Traditional Jewish life had centered around the synagogue and the village. In America these institutions were disrupted by assimilation, religious reform, and cultural differences among Sephardic and German Jews. Jewish relief societies first operated under the auspices of individual synagogues, but often found their efforts fragmented and ineffective.
- In the 1840's secular fraternal orders developed: B'nai B'rith in 1843, the Free Sons of Israel in 1846, and the United Order of True Sisters in 1849. These organizations provided a way for Jews of various nationalities and sects to help each other while maintaining their Jewish identity....patterned after the framework of Freemasonry.
- Writing in 1878, Charles Wesolowsky, a Freemason and a member of B'nai B'rith wrote that "Thanks to Providence B'B Lodge is now the supplement, and no matter where you are, the same work, the same sign, the same spirit, you are at home and amongst brothers indeed." Wesolowsky offers an interesting example of how a German-Jewish immigrant in the 19th century viewed fraternal organizations in America. **On his tombstone he wanted the inscription to include his Masonic achievement, "Past Grand High Priest of Georgia" because it demonstrated "the extent to which an immigrant Jew living in America could enter into brotherhood with his Gentile neighbours and still retain his identity as a Jew and pride in his Jewish heritage."**

- ...and that's how Sephardi “pirates”, of sea and land, helped America in ways that are not taught in schools today.

The next time you look at a US one dollar bill, look at the back side.....

General Washington's financial advisor and assistant was a Jewish man by the name of **Haim Salomon**.

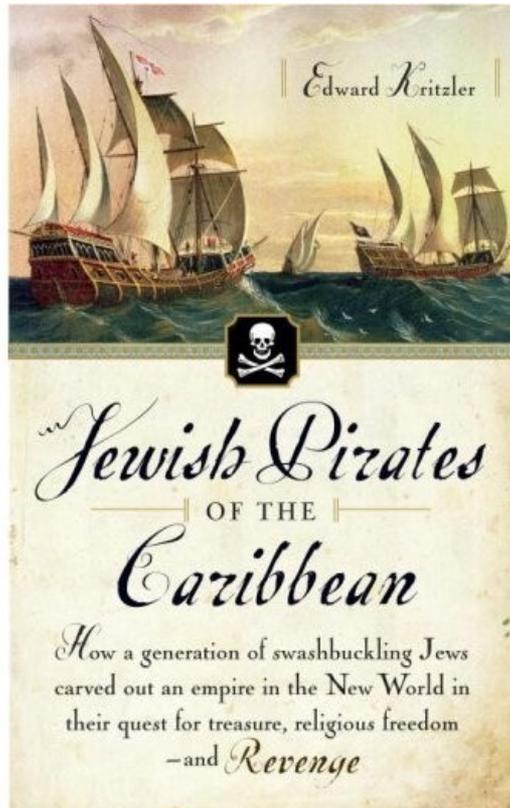
During the cold winter of Valley Forge when American soldiers were freezing and running out of food, it was Haim who marshalled all the Jews in America and Europe to provide money in relief aid to these stranded American troops and turned the course of history.

Without this help, our "Army" would have perished before they could have defeated the British.

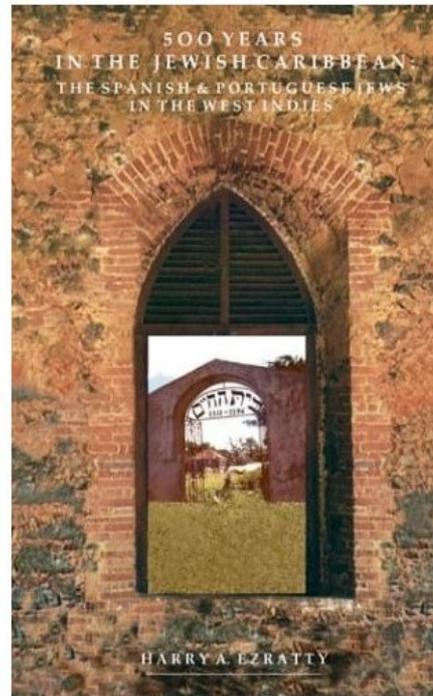
If you take a one dollar bill out of your pocket and look at the back at the Eagle, the stars above the Eagle's head are in the six point Star of David to honor Jews. If you turn the Eagle upside down you will see a configuration in the likeness of a Menorah....both at the insistence of George Washington who said we should never forget the Jewish people and what they have done in the interest of America.



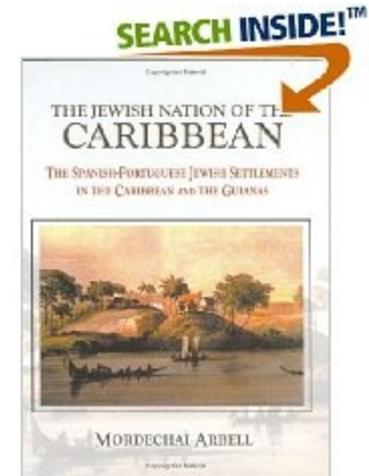
# Further reading



Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean: How a Generation of Swashbuckling Jews Carved Out an Empire in the New World in Their Quest for Treasure, Religious Freedom--and Revenge (Hardcover) by Edward Kritzer (Author)



500 Years in the Jewish Caribbean: The Spanish & Portuguese Jews in the West Indies (Hardcover) by Harry A. Ezratty (Author)



The Jewish Nation of the Caribbean: The Spanish-Portuguese Jewish Settlements in the Caribbean and the Guianas (Hardcover) by Mordechai Arbell (Author)