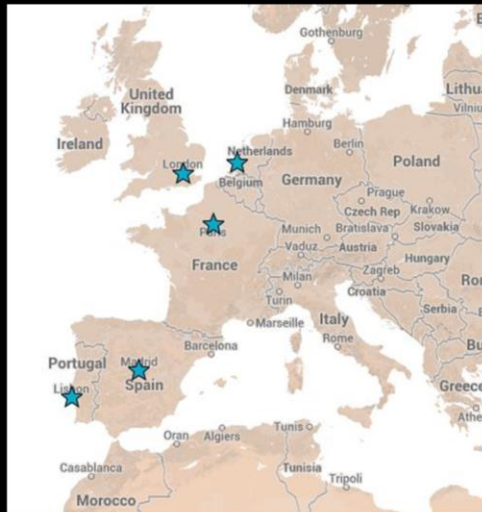


In 2014, the US State Department operated 310 diplomatic and consular posts abroad (not including libraries or cultural centers). These are run by salaried US Foreign Service Officers, as well as Foreign Service Specialists, local (non-US citizen) employees, and, in some cases, politically appointed chiefs of mission. The distribution of posts reflects the consolidation of the diplomatic corps and consular service into the US Foreign Service after 1924, the proliferation of embassies due to decolonization, and the growing ease of communication and travel that allows for the concentration of functions at a relatively small number of physical locations.

The map also represents a culmination of the linear narrative of US engagement with the world, which begins with...

1792: 5 Diplomatic Posts



... a very small and Europe-focused diplomatic service during the Early Republic.



At the service's peak in the 1890s, in any given year the US Government was represented in nearly 800 locations. Over the course of the service's existence, from 1789 to 1924, the service operated in approximately 1400 different locations across the globe. Facilitation and promotion of trade and assistance to ships and sailors in peril was initially the core mission, but consular activities quickly expanded to include a wide variety of other activities, including collecting testimony to be used in courts of law—and, of course, in some countries, actually operating US courts—issuing passports and visas, assisting the growing number of American businessmen, missionaries, students, and tourists abroad, offering notarial services, and, depending on the post, representing the US government at local events, among numerous other tasks. Consular records provide rich source material for scholars seeking to understand role of Americans—both official representatives and private citizens—in international activities. It would be useful, however, to have a better sense of the service as a whole, so the activities of individual consuls could be more effectively contextualized.

SOURCES:

DOS Register

US Register

DOS Cards

NARA guides/catalogs

Walter Burges Smith, *America's Diplomats and Consuls...*
(Foreign Service Institute, 1987).

VISUALIZATION & ANALYSIS:



To that end, I am in the process of constructing a data set of US consular posts and personnel. It combines data from a variety of – sometimes conflicting! – sources, including official registers published by the Department of State and the US government, the index cards maintained by the Department of State for each post, and a variety of guides and catalogs produced by the National Archives and Records Administration. For the period through 1865, there is a (print) dataset constructed by FSO Walter Burges Smith; my data collection efforts so far have concentrated on the post-1865 period. The dataset I am constructing also aims to organize the data so it is compatible with a variety of data visualization and analysis tools, and I am getting involved in the digital humanities aspects of the project, in addition to moving toward a print monograph that uses both quantitative and qualitative data.

The project is very much a work in progress at this point. I'll spend the remainder of my time today sketching some broad outlines of my findings so far. On the whole, the data is raising more questions than it is answering, and I look forward to investigating those questions as the project moves forward.

Before the Civil War...

fee system

salaries: London, Barbary States

1856 reform

expansion from European and Caribbean cores

Mediterranean peak in 1870

consulates and consulates general

commercial agencies

at least 18 percent non-US citizens

My fellow presenters will go into more detail about consular experiences before the Civil War, but I wanted to mention a couple of things. From the creation of the service in 1789 until reform legislation was passed in 1856, consular officials supported themselves financially by retaining the fees they charged for performing their duties (certifying the value of cargo, overseeing the sale of goods from shipwrecks, etc.); they could also engage in private business. From their earnings, they were responsible for paying for their own lodgings and office space, and for any assistants they chose to employ. They also often provided aid out of their own pockets to Americans stranded abroad. Technically, they could be reimbursed for that, but it didn't always work out. A handful of posts came with salaries before 1856; London, Tangier, Tripoli, and Tunis were consistently salaried posts.

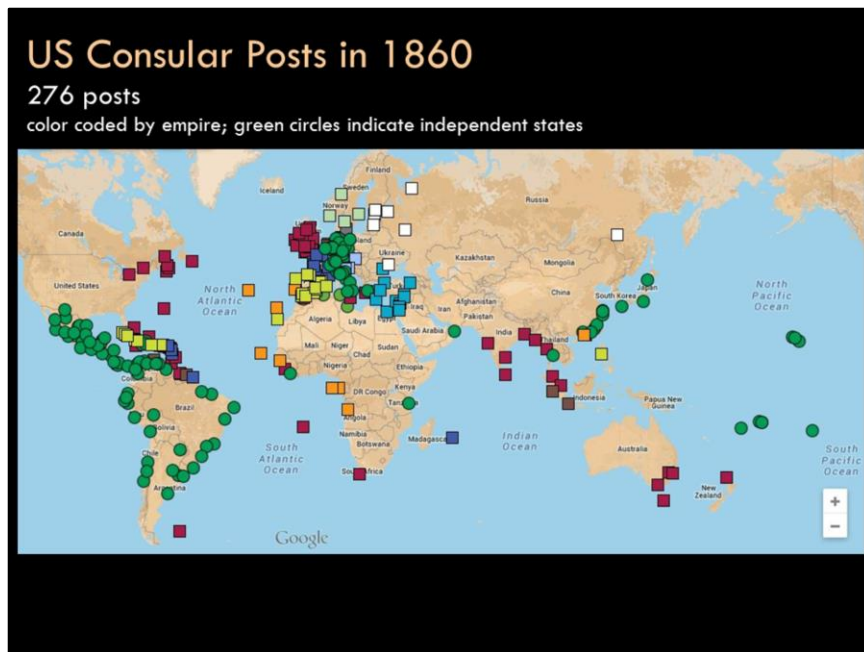
The service grew at a fairly steady pace, expanding to 276 posts by 1860. Initial posts were located in Europe and the Caribbean, with a broader range of locations added over time. Reflecting the importance of the Mediterranean to early US trade, the number of posts there climbed rapidly, then fell off after 1870 as US involvement in other parts of the world intensified.

Before the Civil War, US posts were typically consulates or (higher ranking) consulates

general. As we will see, the use of consular agents—always unsalaried, often not US citizens, but still representatives of the US government available to assist—was relatively rare. (For example, in 1857, there were 192 consulates, 7 consulates general, and 24 consular agencies.) This period did see a heavier use of commercial agents, however. Typically, these were posts in which staff members carried out many consular functions, but in places where the US did not have a consular treaty; indeed, commercial agents could operate in countries where the US government didn't recognize the legitimacy of the local government, as in Haiti and Liberia.

According to Walter Smith's study, at least 18 percent of those appointed to consular posts were not US citizens. Given the spotty data and considering the patterns emerging from the post-Civil War data, it's probably higher. As a very, very rough ballpark, I'd be willing to entertain the idea that it was as high as 40 percent.

The 1856 reform did alter the structure of the service in important ways, in that it introduced salaries, rather than fees, for a larger number of posts, prevented employees at some posts from engaging in private business, and capped the income consular officials who still worked for fees could pocket. It didn't really have an impact on the size or deployment of the service, though. (Neither did the reforms carried out by executive order in 1895, 1905/6, or the 1924 Rogers Act, for that matter.) Wars look to have been much more important than professionalization measures in achieving structural change. The Civil War certainly marked a dramatic shift in the consular service.



This map shows the 276 consular posts operated by the US government in 1860. As with diplomatic posts, many were held by Southerners, creating problems once the war started. Also, we should be thinking about the Civil War as a conflict with significant international components, and Union efforts to curtail Confederate trade, travel, and communications demanded an on-the-ground presence that could react quickly to local conditions.

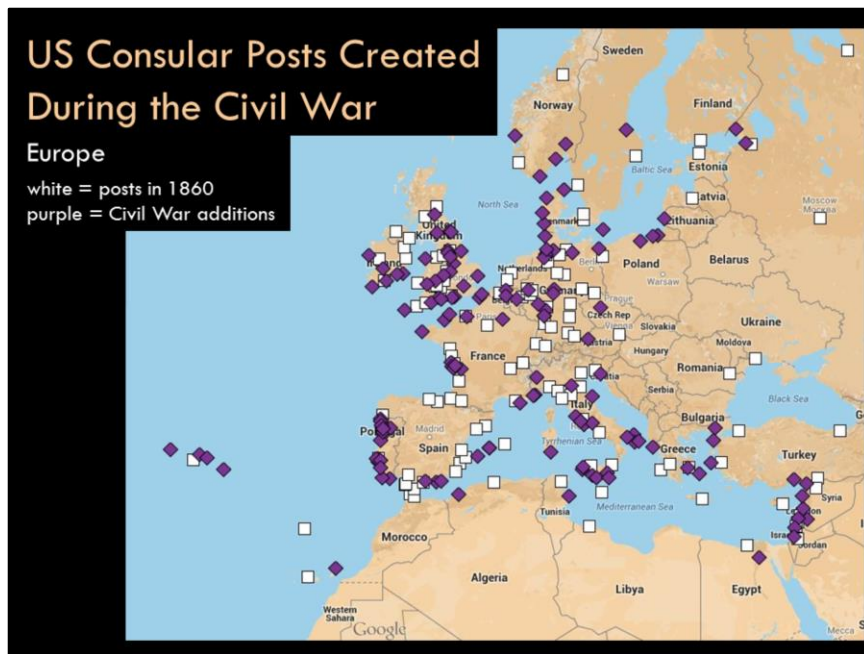


The Union met this challenge by nearly doubling the number of posts over the course of the war, adding 258 posts. The growth came in large part by embracing the use of consular agencies, whose occupants worked for fees and were generally recruited and supervised by nearby consuls and consuls general. The expansion also strengthened the ability of the US government to protect and advance American interests abroad and to more effectively police its physical and social borders.

Let's look more closely at three parts of the world.



In the Caribbean, where many British officials favored the Confederacy, the number of posts doubled, largely on British-held islands.



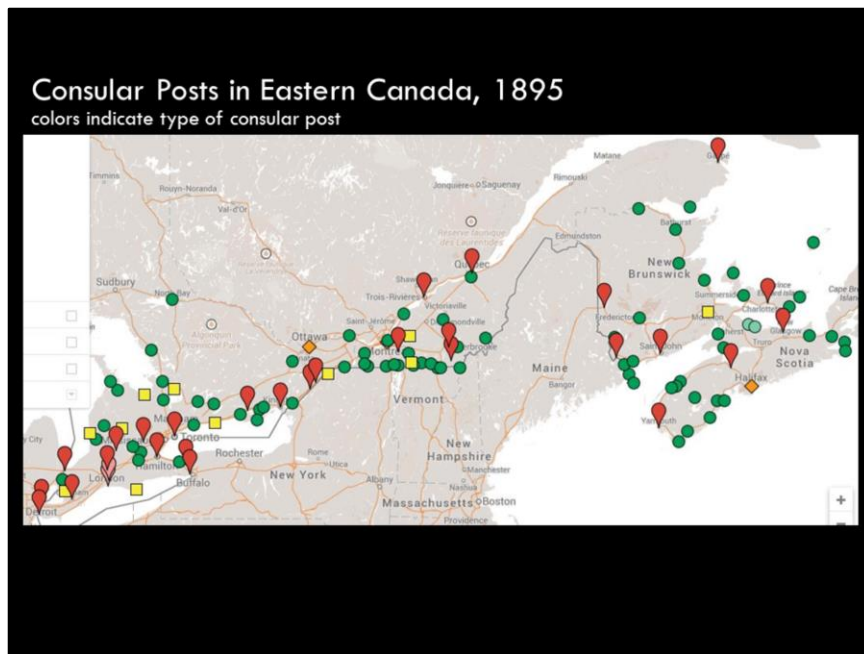
In Europe, the number of posts in the British Isles more than doubles. There are substantial increases in Denmark and Norway, Italy, and along the Mediterranean coast of the Ottoman Empire as well. Perhaps most dramatically, the number of posts in Portugal—including the Azores—rose from 5 to 28 during the war. The situation in Portugal has likely been particularly difficult to see because most of the DOS cards related to Portugal seem to be missing.

purple = Civil War additions



The other exceptionally dramatic transformation came in US relations with Canada. Before the Civil War, the US government operated a meager handful of posts there, but during the war the number shot up, presumably in an attempt to prevent Confederate activity on Canadian soil.

Some of the posts created during the Civil War closed quickly, but the general trend was to keep them and add more. That was the trend for all parts of the world, but no more so than Canada.

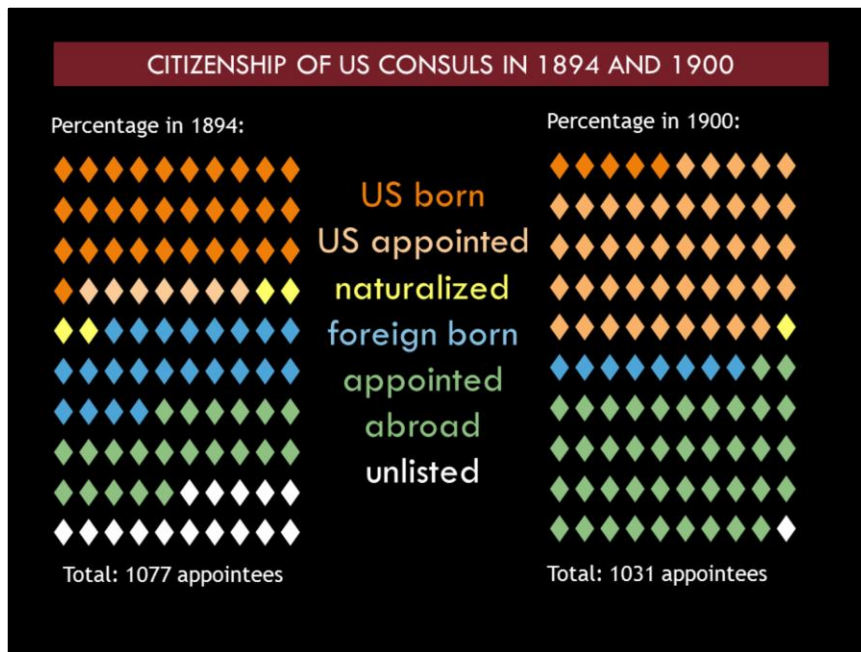


Between the start of the Civil War and the end of World War I, 204 separate Canadian locations had hosted a US consular official, with as many as 135 posts active at one time. (The peak was in 1895.) The “undefended border” was definitely not unmonitored. I am still working through the data about who held these positions, but there seems to be a wide range of people, including native-born US citizens, British subjects from both Canada and elsewhere in the empire, Canadian-born naturalized US citizens, and US-born individuals who became British subjects in Canada.

In Canada, as for the rest of the world, it was World War I that prompted the next major shift in the size and deployment of the consular service, starting it on a downward trend that continued through the confusion of the interwar period and World War II until the 1945-47 reorganizations of the State Department, which were dramatic and created much of what we see today, including the relatively constant, relatively small number of consulates that remain open outside of embassy consular sections. (Mexico is the major exception; the US government kept many of those consular posts open.)



I will conclude with two quick snapshots. To give a rough sense of the busiest posts in the Civil War to WWI period, I looked at the amount of official fees collected at each post. (Consuls could also collect fees for notarizing documents, which would definitely suggest activity in another realm of consular duties. The available data is not as robust, though.) London and Paris are consistently the top two posts, followed closely by Liverpool. Bradford, Manchester, and Lyon are consistently in the top ten. The other posts made the top ten at least once, with the Cuban posts and Honolulu doing so closer to 1870 and the German posts picking up closer to 1900.



Finally, a snapshot of citizenship data. These are the statistics from 1894 and 1900, which are years with the most robust data. The general trend in the period from the Civil War to World War I – the era in which there are so many consular agents – is that approximately half of US consular personnel are either foreign citizens or appointed from abroad with no place of birth listed. In terms of length of service, consuls after the Civil War who are US citizens average approximately 5 years of service per appointment, while non-US citizens average approximately 9 years of service per appointment. The preliminary data indicates that the US Consular Service was cosmopolitan or transnational in its construction, and that non-US citizens were a source of continuity and expertise.