Consulate of the United States
Jerusalem, Syria
January 2, 1899.

Hon. the Thomas W. Cridler
Asst Secretary of State
Washington, D.D.

Sir

I have the honor to enclose herewith the accounts and returns of this office with the necessary vouchers for the quarter ending Dec. 31, 1898 and advise my two drafts No 9/10 for the amounts of $291.89 and $91.05 respectively in favor of Messrs. Th. Cook & Son.

I remain, respectfully

Your obedient Servant
(Signed) Selah Merrill

Enclosures:-
1, Account Salary of Interpreters & Guards
2, " Contingent Expenses
3, Record Notarial Service
4, Digest of Invoice books
5, List of persons employed at the U.S. Consulate

United States Consulate
Jerusalem, Syria
January 3rd 1899

Hon. Thomas W. Cridler
Assistant Secretary of State
Washington, D.C.

Sir,

I present herewith the following Report as called for by Circular from the State Department, dated Oct. 12th 1898, entitled

Description of Offices

Place

Jerusalem, Lat. 31° 46', Long. 35° 18'. is situated on

on the mounted ridge of Western Palestine, which slopes 3,800 feet eastward to the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea, and 2,500 feet westward to the Mediterranean from which it is distant thirty nine miles. Its only sea port is Jaffa with which it is connected by a carriage road, and by a narrow guage railroad fifty four miles in length. It is the capital of the province of Palestine and the residence of the Turkish governor. It has a Turkish garrison which numbers usually about eight hundred men. The City is surrounded by walls which were built in 1540, but within twenty years past it has extended greatly beyond the walls to the northwest and west; - deep valleys prevent its extending to the east or south. The houses of Jerusalem are all built of stone, the streets are narrow, sanitary conditions are neglected, the filth is unbearable, and the large majority of people are poor. The population is estimated at 50,000 souls of which 8,000 are Christians, 12,000 Mohammedans, and 30,000 Jews. Over forty languages are spoken here and there are representatives from nearly every country.

The year has two seasons, the dry from April to November when no rain falls, and the wet from December to March during which period there falls at intervals, twenty five to thirty five inches of rain. There is seldom any frost although occasionally a little snow falls.

The principal imports are household goods, family supplies, clothing, and other articles of ordinary merchandise. Such goods as comes from the United States have to undergo re-shippement at some European port

port through some European house, to the great detriment of American trade.

The principal exports are articles of olive wood, mother of pearl, and wine.

The gross amount of goods shipped to the United States during the year ending June 1898 was $13,221,95, and for the year ending June 1897, $20,034,75. Anxiety on account of the war caused a falling off in such exports to America during 1898.

The number of Invoices of goods sent to the United States for 1898 was 23

The number of American citizens residing in Jerusalem is. —

Naturalized	628
Children of do born in America	107
Americans	28
So called "Jaffoites"	31
Total	794

Some of those mentioned as Jaffoites are naturalized, and in that community there are other naturalized Americans who are not recorded in our books and whom we do not know. Likewise amongst the Jews there are naturalized American citizens who have failed to report, so that the entire number of American citizens is considerably above 800, and counting those at Jaffa, over 900 in this district. The number of American travellers in what we call a "good year", that is when there is no war, cholera, or quarantine, ranges from 1,000 to 1,500.

Duties

The chief duties are the protection of American citizens; the next item is the preparation of commercial and other reports called for by the Department and various mercantile firms in America, made

made a difficult matter because of the absence of commercial and other statistics in this country; settling estates invoices. Office hours are nominally from ten A.M. to twelve and a half P.M., but practically both the Interpreter and myself are busy with consular duties from nine o'clock in the morning until four o'clock in the afternoon. Our rule is to do the business of the consulate whether few or many hours are required.

As to duties, see further under "Remarks".

Office

The consulate is centrally located, and the building has been occupied as the United States Consulate for nearly thirty years with two brief intervals, namely, during a portion of the time on Mr. Wilson, and again of that of Mr. Wallace. It is fifty yards from the Grand Hotel, and five hundred yards from Howard's Hotel, at which places most of the American travellers stop. Of the nine consulates in Jerusalem no other is so favorably located as ours, the others being half a miles to one mile from the city. On two sides our consulate are streets, on one side an alley, and on the remaining side only do houses touch it. The house is of stone, with stone roof and floors, it embraces the entire upper story of a two story building, has all the windows barred with iron, and has but one entrance which is controlled only by the consulate.

Furniture: — Consul's room, stove, plain table, writing desk, case for official stationery, bookcase for consular books, special cupboard for new flags, three plain rugs

rugs, and half a dozen chairs. The walls and roof are of stone and the floor also of stone, is covered with cheap manufactured tiles.

(2) Dragoman's room; stove, two desks clock, plain table, bookcase for consular books, four deep alcoves in the stone walls of the room fitted with shelves where the files of consular documents are kept. Consular record books are kept locked up in cupboards in the writing desks in this room. Stone walls, roof, and floor as in the Consul's room.

(3) Kawasses room; table, chair bed, and cupboard for clothes. A cheap reed mat on the floor in winter. Their swords and silver sticks are hung upon the wall. Stone walls, roof and floor.

(4) Store room, water, wood lamps, boxes old stove pipes, and broken chairs.

The furniture is fairly good; two writing desks, bookcase, in Consul's room, and clock were new during the time of my predecessor Mr. Wallace.

The Consulate has a type writing machine which is the property of the present consul.

The consulate is provided with a good official seal and letter press, but has no safe of any description.

The flagstaff stands in the alley already mentioned, rises from the ground, and is attached to the exterior face of the wall of the building.

The price paid for rent is two hundred and forty dollars a year, which the consul, according to the universal custom here, is obliged always to pay in advance for the entire year.

The amount paid for office expenses, exclusive of salaries and rent, for the year 1898 was $

Officers

Officers

Consul:— Selah Merrill, born at Canton Centre, Conn., May 2nd 1837; educated at Williston Seminary, East Hampton, Mass., Yale College, and the New Haven Theological Seminary; degree of A.M. from Yale College, D.D. from Iowa College, and LL.D. from Union College, N.Y.; was Chaplain of the Forty Nine Regiment of United States Colored Infantry at Vicksburg; is a member of General Wm. F. Bartlett Post No 99, G.A.R., Department of Massachusetts; is a member of the American Oriental Society; spent two years in the study of Oriental languages in Berlin, Germany; taught Hebrew in the Theological Seminary at Andover, Mass. Spent two years in the work of exploration in the country east of the Jordan among the wild Arabs by whom he was twice shot but not seriously wounded;— the Scribners in New York and the Bentleys in London published a large illustrated volume describing these explorations (1881); has lectured and written a great deal upon Oriental matters; has made a special study for many years of the language, history, archaeology, natural history, resources, and prospects of Palestine. Was appointed to the Jerusalem Consulate March 31st 1882 turned over the office September 20th 1886; reappointed February 27th 1891 turned over the office January 17th 1894; reappointed January 22nd 1898.

Vice-Consul:— Herbert E. Clark, born in New Hampshire July 20th 1857, Protestant, came with his parents who belonged to the Adams Colony, to Jaffa in 1866, and since has always resided in Palestine. For many years he was manager in this

this country of the important business of Thomas Cook & Son, and is now in business for himself. He was appointed Vice Consul in 1888, is intelligent, scholarly in his tastes, and universally esteemed as an upright citizen. He receives no salary.

Interpreter or Dragoman:— Antonio Thomas Gelat, age forty four, Catholic by religion, educated in the common school of Jerusalem resided twelve years in England where he was engaged in mercantile business, and was appointed to his present position in 1895. His salary is $600 per annum.

Second Interpreter or Dragoman:— David Feinstein, age forty eight, Hebrew, born in London, resided in Jerusalem since the age of twelve. Business, cloth merchant. Appointed to present office in 1883. He does a large amount of excellent service and receives as salary $100 per annum.

Consular Guard or Kawass:— Assad Kassas, age fifty one, Mohammedan, born in Jerusalem, reads and writes his native language which is Arabic and has served the United States Government faithfully for nearly thirty years. He has given the best of his life to the Consulate and since 1889 has received $200 per annum salary.

Second Consular Guard or Kawass:— Francis Tarsha, age twenty nine, Chatolic, born in Jerusalem, and appointed to his present position in 1897. His salary is $200 per annum.

Consular Agent: Ernest Hardegg, age fifty eight, Protestant, nationality German, appointed in 1871. He is a man of irreproachable life and habits, one of the most efficient officers in the service of the Government, and also does for it a large amount of faithful

service

service almost entirely without compensation or reward.

Interpreter at the Agency:— Shukry Moussa, age twenty eight, Protestant, born in Jaffa, appointed in 1896 Clerk the father of this man was for 24 yrs Interpreter and Dragoman at the Jaffa Consular Agency.

Second Interpreter at the Agency:— Kaisser Ghorezib, age thirty eight, Protestant, physician, appointed to present position in 1883. Is a Medical Doctor of the Syrian Protestant Medical School (American) at Beirut.

Guard or Kawass at the Agency:— Ali Ibrahim es Saut, age thirty Mohammedan, appointed in 1883. Boatman.

Second Guard or Kawass at the Agency:— Ibrahim Imbergi, age thirty six, Mohammedan, appointed in 1895. Postman.

Remarks

I wish to add something relative to the specific duties of the different officers mentioned in this Report and to ask the Department to give it careful attention since it throws light on the peculiar work of this Consulate.

When Jews arrive at Jaffa the question arises at once between them and the local authorities as to their right to land; the Consular Agent is appealed to who frequently spends the entire day in running back and forth from the Custom House officials, to the Chief of Police, and the local Governor before the matter is decided, and sometimes the case has to be referred by letter or telegram to Jerusalem. The authorities at Jaffa frequently take from such people their passports and the Agent has to spend a part of a day,

sometimes

sometimes parts of two or three days, in recovering the passport. This work is difficult, requiring much skill to manage it successfully, and the task is thankless since naturalized Jews consider that the United States Government exists for the sole purpose of helping them out of trouble.

(2). Of the two Guards at the Jerusalem Consulate, one is on duty all the time, day and night; they carry official messages and despatches, look after the post (there are two post offices here), serve warrants for arrests, carry orders for summoning people to the Consulate, attend on the Consul in making official visits which in Jerusalem are many, go with persons making complaints to make the preliminary investigation (this happens almost every day), and one of them always accompanies the Interpreter of the Consulate on official business to the local authorities and to the Turkish Court.

(3). The second dragoman, Mr. Feinstein, keeps the accounts, keeps the record of letters received and sent, attends to filling consular documents, does miscellaneous writing and copying, but his chief duties relate to Naturalized Jews. We have, as reported, nearly 800 of this class, a large number of whom never saw America and know nothing about it, half of whom do not speak a word of English and their complaints and troubles made in Hebrew or Jewish Jargon, must be translated. This is no small item and I sometimes think that the Department does not appreciate either its bulk or burden. The question has been raised from time to time as to the necessity of a second dragoman; it was by our Consul General during his visit in April last; but the facts that I have stated must convince any one that his services are absolutely necessary. Although I am obliged to call upon him for work out of office hours I [illegible] to do so since he is very poorly paid for his valuable services.

(4) Mr. Gelat the Interpreter attends to all correspondence in French, Turkish, chiefly in Arabic with other Consulates and with the local authorities. The amount of this correspondence, especially with the local Government is large and requires special ability to do it well. He has also to make out all applications for Teskeras which amount to several hundred during the year. All complaints to the local authorities, petitions of many kinds, applications for transferring land and many other official and semi-official matters ~~that~~ require his attention first in our Consulate and after that in the local Court. What we call "Court Business" requires a great deal of his time, carrying on suits on behalf of American Subjects, helping Jews out of trouble, pressing petitions and complaints, so that on the average he spends four afternoons of each week, generally from noon till night, in the Turkish Court. We never before had so much Court business to do as now owing to the constant influx of naturalized Jews, and we never had our Court business attended to so promptly and efficiently as under the ~~ski~~ excellent and skillful management of Mr. Gelat.

I have reported that nominally our office hours were from 10 A.M. till 12:30 P.M., but the Consul and his assistants could not possibly in that time do more than a fraction of the volume of business on our hands. There are on an average during this time from ten to thirty people, chiefly naturalized Jews, in our office, sometimes a dozen of them at once, clamouring for attention; papers are to be made out, petitions transmitted, complaints listened to, quarrels are to be settled, Kawasses must be sent to look after some trouble these people have had with their neighbors, there has been a fight, somebody has been beaten, somebody spit upon, something stolen, somebody has trespassed, contracts and agreements have been broken, wives have been ill-treated or turned out of doors, rent has not been paid, a great variety of similar matters, some of them important and others very trivial, which besides patience required consume a great deal of time. Did we not make long days our accounts, correspondents, reports and many other important official matters would never be attended to.

The class of citizens who, as will be seen from what I have said, make the greatest demands upon us, are very ungrateful; they are of no service to our Government; they pay no taxes; they regard the United States Consulate as their protector and slave they are a source of anxiety since they are liable at any moment to involve our Government in serious complications with the Turkish government; their number is increasing; and the pressure of the dead weight upon this Consulate is becoming heavier every year.

I remain respectfully, Your obedient Servant (Signed) Selah Merrill
U.S. Consul