Preface

This book examines the development, role and influence of the United States consular service in Ireland in the period 1790 to 1913. It is a history of America's official presence in Ireland (see appendix 1.1). The existence of this consular network has been largely ignored in the historiography of US foreign policy and US–Ireland relations, except for Francis Carroll's recent study of US–Ulster diplomatic relations and occasional references to US consuls in studies on other themes.¹ Yet, the consular presence represents a continuity of contact and an official link that still exists, although somewhat altered in status. The Belfast consulate was upgraded to a consulate general in 1923 while its Dublin counterpart became a legation in 1927 and a full embassy in 1950.² These changes reflected the political realities of twentieth-century Ireland as it moved towards independence just as the establishment of the consular offices reflected the same process in the American colonies in the late eighteenth century. The consular presence represented, to use Carroll's words in the context of the Belfast consulate, a 'bridge linking two worlds' day in and day out and year in and year out.³ This study is also a history of the men who filled posts as consuls, vice consuls, deputy consuls and consular agents. It reveals their identities, how they interpreted and implemented US foreign policy, it uses their words to examine their outsider perspective

- 1 Francis M. Carroll, *The American presence in Ulster: a diplomatic history, 1796–1996* (Washington, DC, 2005), vii. For works where consular reports were used as one source see Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and exiles: Ireland and the Irish exodus to North America* (Oxford, 1985); Susannah Ural Bruce, *The harp and the eagle: Irish-American volunteers and the Union army, 1861–1865* (New York, 2006); Deirdre M. Mageean, 'Emigration from Irish ports', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 13:1 (1993), 6–30; A. C. Davies, 'Roofing Belfast and Dublin, 1896–98: American penetration of the Irish market for Welsh slate', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 4 (1977), 26–35.
- 2 See Bernadette Whelan, *US foreign policy and Ireland, 1913–29: from empire to independence* (Dublin, 2006).
- 3 Carroll, *The American presence*, vii.

on seminal events in both Ireland and America and, it examines their contribution to the expanding transatlantic relationship.

There were many differences between Britain's Irish and American colonies, but in the period 1760 to 1800, at the very least a shared history underpinned by transatlantic migration and the imperial context, existed.⁴ Political subjugation from London was matched by an economic equivalent whereby the economic development of both regions was aligned with English needs. Up to 1775, these political and economic concerns linked Irish and American patriots albeit in a fitful way.

During the revolutionary period, Ireland's usefulness to the American leaders was three fold; as a source of propaganda to convince opponents of the revolution of its merits, as a source of skilled labour and for trading and commercial opportunities. But the impact of the American Revolution on Ireland remains problematic with Morley concluding that similarities of interest should not imply direct American influence in Ireland. However, there is an acknowledgement that the example of the revolution combined to the international war hastened the process of change in Ireland.⁵ In the interim, Britain's counter-revolutionary strategy that condemned the 1798 insurrection to failure, extended to removing Ireland's parliamentary independence.

When the American colonists' insurrection turned into a continental-wide revolution, many thought of themselves as American and part of an independent nation. The war to win that status lasted until 1781 by which time key foreign policy concepts had developed along with the machinery and leadership of the new state. Although interpretations of the birth of the nation's foreign policy remains a matter for debate and discussion, the themes of democracy, free trade and independence had emerged.⁶ Twenty years after gaining independence, America found itself

4 Homer L. Calkin, 'American influence in Ireland, 1760 to 1800', *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 71 (April, 1947), 103–20; Kerby A. Miller, Arnold Schrier, Bruce D. Bolling, David N. Doyle (eds), *Irish immigrants in the land of Canaan: letters and memoirs from colonial and revolutionary America, 1675–1815* (Oxford, 2003), 5; Maurice Bric, *Ireland, Philadelphia and the re-invention of America, 1760–1800* (Dublin, 2008); Vincent Morley, *Irish opinion and the American revolution, 1760–1783* (Cambridge, 2002), 330. See also Miller et al (eds), *Irish immigrants*, 4; David Fitzpatrick, *Irish emigration 1801–1921: studies in Irish economic and social history 1* (Dundalk, 1984); David T. Gleeson, *The Irish in the South, 1815–1877* (Chapel Hill and London, 2001), 11, 12; Patrick J. Blessing, 'The Irish' in Stephan Thernstrom (ed.), *The Harvard encyclopedia of American ethnic history* (Cambridge, 1980), 524–45; Kerby A. Miller, *Ireland and Irish America culture, class and transatlantic migration* (Dublin, 2008).

5 Morley, *Irish opinion*, 95, 331.

6 Mary A. Giunta (contributing ed.), 'The diplomacy of the American Revolution' in

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surrounded by British, French and Spanish colonies and, therefore, was keenly interested in bilateral diplomacy and European inter-state rivalries.⁷ However, America's defeat of the British in New Orleans in 1815 which ended the War of 1812 combined with the collapse of the Spanish empire in central and southern America in the 1820s initiated a period of expansion of its authority and growing aloofness from European political affairs. Trade, military force and treaty-making were all used to expand the country and protect its interests. For much of the nineteenth century, US governments concentrated on creating a continental sphere of influence and an overseas commercial empire of modest territorial ambitions, all the while enjoying protection from a generally friendly British navy.⁸ The Spanish–American war of 1898 which brought the country's imperial intentions to the fore, represents for some scholars of late nineteenth-century US foreign relations, the emergence of America as a 'Great Power' with an overseas empire.⁹

Protecting and pursuing these interests necessitated having representatives and posts abroad. Even though discussion of the foreign service often focuses on the diplomatic service, the consular service was a distinct unit. Indeed Steiner suggests that within republican America, prejudices existed against the concept of professional diplomacy but consuls were regarded as appropriate representatives for a nation whose interest in the wider world was largely commercial.¹⁰ By the time the American Revolution broke out, the tradition of a country with significant commercial and maritime interests, supported by a consular service was well established. Ireland as part of the British empire would be graced by the presence of American consuls while American diplomats would be resident in London.

The shared history of the US and Ireland, economic links and formal and informal political ties did not always account for specific appointments. Against the background of American state-building and the expanding foreign service, a focus is placed on the individual consul's motives for seeking a post in Ireland. In order to identify their path

Robert L. Beisner (ed.) *American foreign relations since 1600: a guide to literature* (Santa Barbara, 2003), 142–57.

7 Hugh De Santis and Waldo Heinrichs, 'The Department of State and American foreign policy' in Zara Steiner (ed.), *The Times survey of foreign ministries of the world* (Westport, 1982), 576.

8 Quoted in LaFeber, *The American age*, xx.

9 Edward P. Crapol, 'Coming to terms with empire: the historiography of late-nineteenth century American foreign relations', *Diplomatic History*, 16:4 (autumn, 1992), 573–97.

10 Zara Steiner, 'Introduction' in Steiner (ed.), *The Times*, 22–4.

to consular office, the lives of individual consuls is reconstructed and the process through which they obtained the post. The manner of their appointment by individual presidents and congresses reveals much about the evolution of the US political system, how patronage and clientélism worked and uncovers another avenue through which Irish immigrants and their descendants could enter the US polity. Uncovering the ‘spoils system’ that existed within that political system reveals some unsuitable appointments and improper consular practices along with the response of congress and the executive. The consular service in Ireland was not free from weaknesses: some consuls engaged in bribery, corruption and other nefarious practices.

Many were hard-working, however. American sailors, masters and passengers looked for assistance and advice arising from accidents or incidents such as impressment. Death from natural causes of American citizens resident in Ireland or those with Irish connections in America, involved the consul in testamentary work while the loss of life during American wars brought the additional duty of securing and dispensing pensions for wives and parents of soldiers and sailors. Beyond the duty of protecting US citizens, consuls had to avail themselves of every opportunity to expand American trade and commerce, not least during the calamity of the 1845–51 famine.

Although often thought of as a derided commercial functionary located abroad, the consul was more than that. The consul had sufficient political skills and connections in the US to get the job, and in Ireland, at least, his world included not just merchants and businessmen but members of the civil service, the judiciary, police, military and the public. Throughout the nineteenth century, these skills were tested. Some consuls conducted their work within the wider diplomatic framework. Protecting American national interests in Ireland brought defining events such as the War of 1812 and the American Civil War to their door. The presence of the US minister and consul general in London meant that at times the consul’s work in Ireland attained a political, diplomatic and intelligence complexion. Ireland’s strategic location and transatlantic ties gave it an importance during the impressment controversy of the early nineteenth century and to both the Confederate and Federal sides in the American Civil War. Consuls engaged in intelligence, recruiting and propaganda work during the 1861–5 period. An additional theme, namely the challenge of Fenianism, brings into focus Ireland’s role in the American–British relationship. At these times of crisis, the minutiae of the individual consul’s daily work elucidates the interconnectedness of America’s foreign interests, Irish nationalism and British imperialism. The routine and reactive nature of their work in Ireland involved consuls

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in political upheavals, risings, wars, economic and social events and the unexpected, such as famine, maritime accidents and incidents.

Yet, all the while they supervised and managed the flow of emigrants from Ireland to the US. Consular work arising from the transatlantic migration underpinned the US–Ireland relationship. Keeping American interests to the fore, consuls commented on the circumstances surrounding departures, implemented the growing body of immigration legislation and noted the consequences of departure throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries.

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