

Lincoln's Man in Liverpool: Consul Dudley and the Legal Battle to Stop Confederate Warships

Kevin Dougherty

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cwbr>

Recommended Citation

Dougherty, Kevin (2007) "Lincoln's Man in Liverpool: Consul Dudley and the Legal Battle to Stop Confederate Warships," *Civil War Book Review*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 4 , Article 11.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cwbr/vol9/iss4/11>

Review

Dougherty, Kevin

Fall 2007

Cross, Coy F., II *Lincoln's Man in Liverpool: Consul Dudley and the Legal Battle to Stop Confederate Warships*. Northern Illinois University Press, \$28.95 hardcover ISBN 9780875803739

Foreign Diplomacy and the War Against the Confederate Navy

Although most Americans consider the Civil War to have been largely a struggle between Union and Confederate land armies on American soil, the war certainly had a significant global component. Various authors have explored both broad and specific themes relating to these international aspects. Frank Lawrence Owsley focuses on the diplomatic/economic phenomenon in *King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America* (1931). The diplomatic and international law crisis caused by the Trent Affair is a popular subject in works such as Norman Ferris's *The Trent Affair: A Diplomatic Crisis* (1977). Geopolitical implications are represented by Kenneth Bourne's *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (1967). Occasionally a scholar focuses on an individual personality such as *John Slidell and the Confederates in Paris, 1862-65* (1932) by Beckles Willson.

Coy F. Cross II's *Lincoln's Man in Liverpool: Consul Dudley and the Legal Battle to Stop Confederate Warships* is one of the latest contributions to this growing body of literature devoted to the international aspects of the Civil War. It fills an important niche as part biography, part detective story, part international law primer, part military-industrial complex case study, and part naval military history. As such it has enough different subthemes to appeal to just about any reader. The author cites this broad treatment to distinguish his book from David Milton's *Lincoln's Spymaster: Thomas Haines Dudley and the Liverpool Network* (2003) which Cross argues focuses primarily on Dudley's espionage efforts.

Cross, a historian for the United States Air Force and author of *Justin Smith Morrill: Father of the Land-Grant Colleges* (1999) has produced a thorough and

well-documented monograph, and his passion for his subject is readily transferred to the reader. The twists and turns of Thomas Haines Dudley's legal struggles sometimes slow down the prose, but like Dudley, Cross works his way through the challenge and delivers an enjoyable and informative book.

Dudley was appointed by President Abraham Lincoln as political consul in Liverpool, the central location of Confederate overseas shipbuilding activity. Lacking the necessary domestic capability to build its own ships to counter the Federal blockade, the Confederacy turned to England where there were both the prerequisite shipyards and sufficient Confederate sympathy. However, British law stood in the way of this neat arrangement; the British Foreign Enlistment Act of 1819 forbade the equipping and arming of ships in British ports for use of belligerents with whom Britain was at peace.

For its part, the Confederacy had appointed James Bulloch as its representative in Liverpool to try to find ingenious ways of sidestepping the Foreign Enlistment Act and to procure ships for the fledgling Confederate Navy. British sympathies and a complicated legal process seemed to give Bulloch an advantage, but Dudley was not deterred in aggressively pleading his case. While Dudley experienced less than complete success during the war, his vigilant collection of evidence was sufficient to tip the scales of justice in the Federals' favor on the ultimate day of reckoning for which he faithfully prepared. This event finally occurred on September 14, 1872, some seven years after Appomattox, when an international tribunal awarded the United States \$15 million in reparations for the British government's failure to enforce its own neutrality laws.

To achieve this victory, Dudley exhibited patience, perseverance, legal and political acumen, and much personal energy. He was the consummate government professional; a true hero in a struggle he waged almost completely alone and against long odds. While perhaps a mere footnote in the larger story of the Civil War, Dudley's tale is nonetheless a compelling account of one man who made a difference. Cross concludes his book with what would be a fitting epitaph: Camden and New Jersey had lost a leading citizen, Thomas Haines Dudley, a zealous Quaker who thwarted Confederate shipbuilding in England, a lawyer whose evidence gained the United States a fifteen million dollar claim settlement, and a diplomat whose contributions helped create an enduring peace with the country that had been our greatest rival (156).

Kevin Dougherty, an instructor in the Department of History at the University of Southern Mississippi, is the author of The Peninsula Campaign of 1862: A Military Analysis and Civil War Leadership and Mexican War Experience.