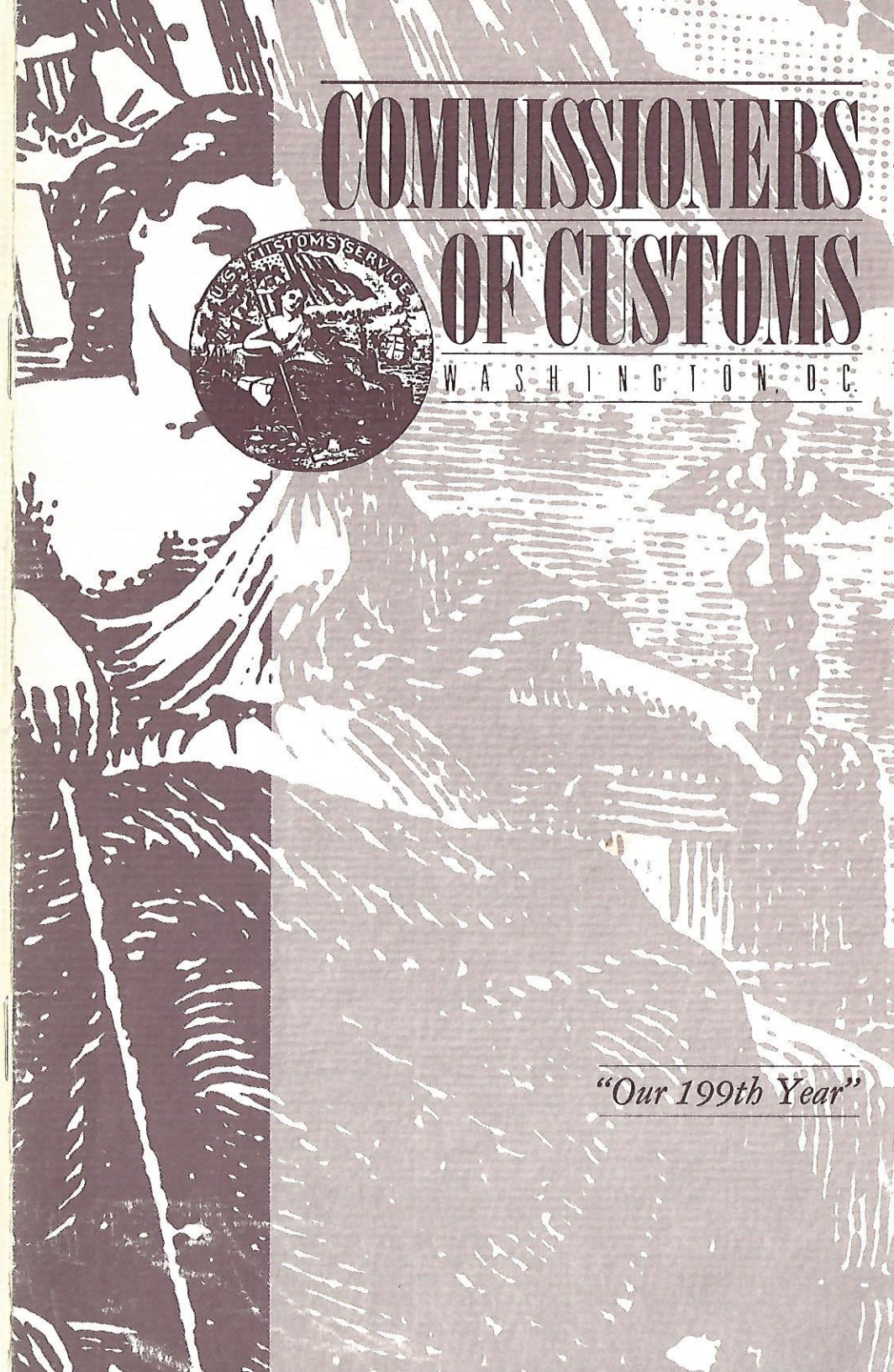
Department of the Treasury
U.S. Customs Service
Historical Study #3
December 1987

Customs Publication No. 591



COMMISSIONERS OF CUSTOMS

WASHINGTON, D.C.

"Our 199th Year"

INTRODUCTION

Lady Liberty, featured on the cover, was discovered on an old form used in the 1880's by the Commissioner of Customs. She has become a symbol of the events celebrating the bicentennial of the U.S. Customs Service in 1989.

President Zachary Taylor created the office of Commissioner of Customs in 1849, 60 years after Congress had established the U.S. Customs Service.

Why was there no such position in the early days of the Republic? The answer to that may lie with the nature of Customs in Colonial America.

*The hated Townshend Act, passed by the British Parliament in 1767 to reorganize and provide enforcement teeth to the American Customs Service, created the American Board of Commissioners of Customs.**

The King appointed five commissioners and directed them to set up headquarters in Boston. One of the five was Charles Paxton, who had been Surveyor of Customs in Salem from 1750 to 1752 then in Boston from 1752 until his appointment to the board.

Paxton had so aroused the enmity of the merchants in Boston that his superiors feared for his safety. In 1766 he went to England. His relationship there with the author of the Townshend Act is said to have led to placement of the Board of Commissioners in Boston and greatly influenced the severity of the Act.

So influential was Paxton that one scholar suggests that "Charles Townshend, in England, and Charles Paxton, in America, were among the most

* The American Board of Commissioners of Customs is thoroughly covered in several monographs: "The American Board of Commissioners of Customs," *Proceedings*, Massachusetts Historical Society, volume XLIII, October 1909-June 1910, 477-490. Clark, Dora Mae, "The American Board of Customs, 1767-1783," *The American Historical Review*, volume XLV, number 4, July 1940, 777-806. Smith, Maurice H., "Charles Paxton, Founding Stepfather," *Proceedings*, Massachusetts Historical Society, volume 94, 1982, 15- 36.

efficient in producing the Revolution."

Many years were to pass before the Commissioner of Customs assumed his current duties. From 1849 until 1894 the Commissioner acted as an auditor of Customs officials' accounts. At no time during this period did his activities include overall administration of the Customs Service or of its officers.

Then in 1875 the Congress gave Customs some degree of independence from the Secretary of the Treasury by creating a Division of Customs, headed by a Chief, whose office ran parallel to that of the Commissioner.

This in turn was abolished on March 3, 1927, ushering in the modern era of Commissioners of Customs.

This publication incorporates the flyer Customs produced for the 197th anniversary of the U.S. Customs Service on July 31, 1986. The original photographs are hanging outside the office of the Commissioner of Customs in Washington, D.C.

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William von Raab
Commissioner of Customs

THE EARLY YEARS (1849-1894)

COMMISSIONERS OF CUSTOMS

Charles William Rockwell (1849-1852)

Teacher . . . banker . . . railroad president . . . Mayor of Norwich, Conn. . . . related to Jedediah Huntington, first Customs Collector appointed by George Washington at New London, Conn. . . . Rockwell's resignation was accepted personally by President Millard Fillmore.

Hugh Johnston Anderson (1853-1857)

Lawyer . . . Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, 25th and 26th Congresses . . . Governor of Maine . . . Presidential Elector . . . Reorganizer of Mint at San Francisco . . . Sixth Auditor of the U.S. Treasury.

Samuel Ingham (1857-1861)

Lawyer . . . Member of Vermont House of Representatives and Senate . . . judge of Vermont courts . . . Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, 24th and 25th Congresses . . . unsuccessful candidate for reelection to the U.S. House and to the U.S. Senate.

Nathan Sargent (1861-1871)

Lawyer . . . judge . . . newspaperman, founder of a Whig newspaper . . . wrote under pseudonym, "Oliver Oldschool" . . . Sergeant-at-Arms, U.S. House of Representatives . . . Register General of U.S. Land Office . . . author, *Public Men and Events in the United States, 1817-1853*.

William T. Haines (1871-1873)

Little is known about Haines except that he was born in Pennsylvania and that he was Commissioner of Customs.

Henry Clay Johnson (1874-1884)

Little is known about Johnson except that he too was born in Pennsylvania and that he was also a Commissioner of Customs.

John Swayze McCalmont (1885-1889)

West Point graduate, class of 1842 . . . served in Seminole War . . . lawyer, Deputy Attorney General of Pennsylvania . . . member of Pennsylvania House of Representatives . . . .Presidential Elector . . . District Judge . . . Civil War Colonel in Pennsylvania Volunteers, resigned because of ill health . . . practiced law in the District of Columbia with his son.

Samuel V. Holliday (1889-1893)

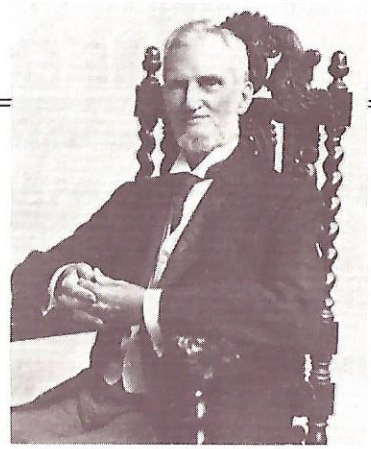
Little is known about Holliday except that he was a Republican from Erie, Pennsylvania . . . ex-soldier, Civil War, attained rank of major.

William Henry Pugh (1893-1894)

Lawyer . . . Civil War veteran with Ohio Volunteers . . . Deputy Clerk, Court of Common Pleas . . . Prosecuting Attorney, Ohio . . . actually applied for the Cabinet position of Attorney General, but was given appointment as Commissioner of Customs . . . last of this line . . . held series of minor appointments in Treasury.

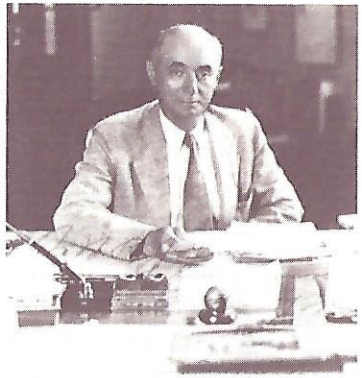
COMMISSIONERS OF CUSTOMS

Ernest W. Camp



John Swayze McCalmont

James Henry Moyle



Francis Xavier A. Eble

Basil Harris

William Roy Johnson

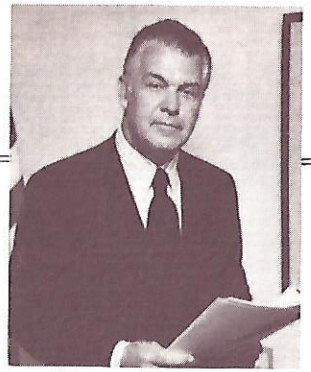
Frank Dow

Ralph Kelly

Philip Nichols, Jr.

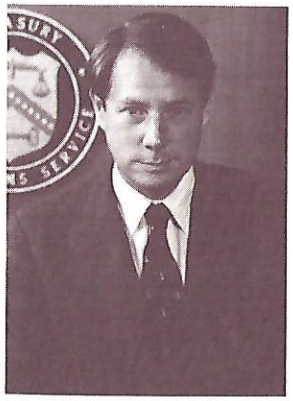
Lester D. Johnson

Myles Joseph Ambrose



Vernon D. Acree

Robert E. Chasen



William von Raab

CHIEFS, DIVISION OF CUSTOMS

(Office created March 3, 1875 . . . Abolished March 3, 1927)

Henry B. James, 1871-1875
W.F. Clarke, 1875-1879
Henry B. James, 1879-1885
James G. Macgregor, 1885-1893
John M. Comstock, 1893-1899
Andrew Johnson, 1899-1903
John R. Garrison, 1903-1905
James L. Gerry, 1905-1909
Charles P. Montgomery, 1909-1911
Frank M. Halstead, 1911-1919
George W. Ashworth, 1919-1922
Ernest W. Camp, 1922-1923
Ernest W. Camp, Director 1923-1927

THE MODERN ERA (1927-)

COMMISSIONERS OF CUSTOMS

Ernest W. Camp (1927-1929)
Career employee . . . Chief, Division of Customs . . . Director, Division of Customs . . . first "modern" Commissioner of Customs.

Francis Xavier A. Ehle (1929-1933)
Served with U.S. Army Medical Department . . . owned drug firm in Pennsylvania . . . World War I caption of infantry . . . member of War Loan Staff, U.S. Treasury . . . Treasury Attache, Berlin . . . vice president, the American Foundation . . . co-author, *The Bureau of Internal Revenue, Its History, Activities, and Organization.*

James Henry Moyle (1933-1939)
Lawyer . . . County Attorney . . . member of the Utah House of Representatives . . . chairman of Utah Democratic committee . . . Democratic nominee for Governor and U.S. Senate . . . Assistant Secretary of the Treasury . . . and Assistant to the Secretary . . . named Commissioner of Customs at age 75.

Basil Harris (1939-1940)
Businessman . . . shipping . . . partner, Roosevelt Steamship Co. . . . vice president, International Mercantile Marine . . . vice president, senior vice president, U.S. Lines . . . Assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury.

William Roy Johnson (1940-1947)
Lawyer . . . served with the U.S. Army Medical Department, in World War I . . . began Customs career as clerk in New York City, 1926 . . . transferred to Washington, rose to Deputy Commissioner . . . again became Deputy Commissioner after his tour as Commissioner . . . went into private practice in New York City and in the District of Columbia . . . retired from second career at age 74.

Frank Dow (1949-1953) (Acting, 1947-1949)
Lifetime Federal employee . . . began as teacher in Puerto Rico . . . joined Customs in 1913 . . . appraiser at Philadelphia . . . served in Customs Information Exchange, New York City . . . Customs Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury . . . Assistant Commissioner . . . Acting Commissioner . . . 43 years of service.

Ralph Kelly (1954-1961)
Businessman . . . served in U.S. Navy, World War I, as lieutenant . . . worked for Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company 39 years in sales, achieved vice presidency of the East Pittsburgh plant . . . vice president and president, Baldwin Locomotive Works . . . retired to local political offices.

Philip Nichols, Jr. (1961-1964)	Lawyer . . . worked for Justice Department . . . War Production Board . . . Office of the General Counsel . . . officer in U.S. Navy during World War II . . . served in Treasury Department . . . General Counsel for the Renegotiation Board . . . Commissioner . . . Judge, U.S. Customs Court.
Lester D. Johnson (1965-1969)	Career Customs employee . . . started as clerk and examiner in the San Francisco office . . . served as appraiser; Treasury Attache in Japan; Assistant Deputy Commissioner; Regional Customs Representative in Italy; Deputy Commissioner; Assistant Commissioner . . . reorganized the Customs Agency Service.
Myles Joseph Ambrose (1969-1972)	Lawyer . . . New York Bar . . . practiced before U.S. Supreme Court, U.S. Customs Court, U.S. Court of International Trade . . . Assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury . . . executive director, Waterfront Commission, New York Harbor . . . Special Consultant to the President and Special Assistant to the Attorney General.
Vernon Darrell Acree (1972-1977)	Career Federal employee . . . began career as clerk-messenger, Treasury Department . . . deputy marshal, U.S. Marshal's office . . . investigator, U.S. Civil Service Commission . . . investigator, U.S. Army (Europe) . . . Assistant Commissioner, Internal Revenue Service . . . 41 years of service.
Robert E. Chasen (1977-1980)	Federal employee . . . businessman . . . special agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation . . . 25 years service with the International Telephone and Telegraph Company . . . began career as coordinator of plant security and assistant to the vice president for industrial relations . . . held many executive positions at ITT until retirement . . . began new career as executive vice president and director, Wackenhut Company, after Customs Service.
William von Raab (1981-)	Lawyer . . . public servant . . . corporate lawyer in New York City . . . director, Pay Board, Cost of Living Council . . . consultant, Bureau of East-West Trade, Department of Commerce . . . Executive Assistant to the Administrator, Federal Energy Administration . . . financial consultant and Vice President for Administration, New York University . . . private legal practice.