

The 150th Anniversary of the  
*United States' Expedition*

TO EXPLORE THE

DEAD SEA AND THE RIVER JORDAN

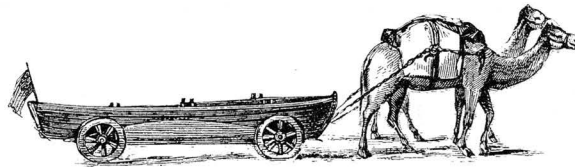
by Robert E. Rook







*The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United States' Expedition to Explore the Dead Sea and the River Jordan*









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**DEAD SEA AND THE RIVER JORDAN**

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American Center of Oriental Research  
Amman, Jordan



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By Robert E. Rook

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## PREFACE

The story of the 1848 United States expedition was widely known at the time, but today is little remembered. The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary is an appropriate occasion to recall both the accomplishments of the survey and to reflect on their era. Their achievements were not insignificant. Their documentation on things such as the territories, population sizes, and relationships of the various peoples of the area is still useful. The information on the Dead Sea, its configuration, depth, and chemical composition, is still used as a standard against which the condition of that fragile body of water can be measured. The maps they created were used far into this century as they were the best maps of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. More importantly, those maps vividly illustrate that those two bodies of water no longer exist as they were 150 years ago.

As both their orders and their actions show, the expedition came in peace.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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H.R.H. Prince Ra'ad bin Zeid and H.E. Senator Leila Sharaf, both ACOR trustees, arranged components the commemoration, as did the Municipality of Greater Amman (Dr. Mamdouh al-Abbadi, Mayor), the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, and Martyn Standen of the Marriott.

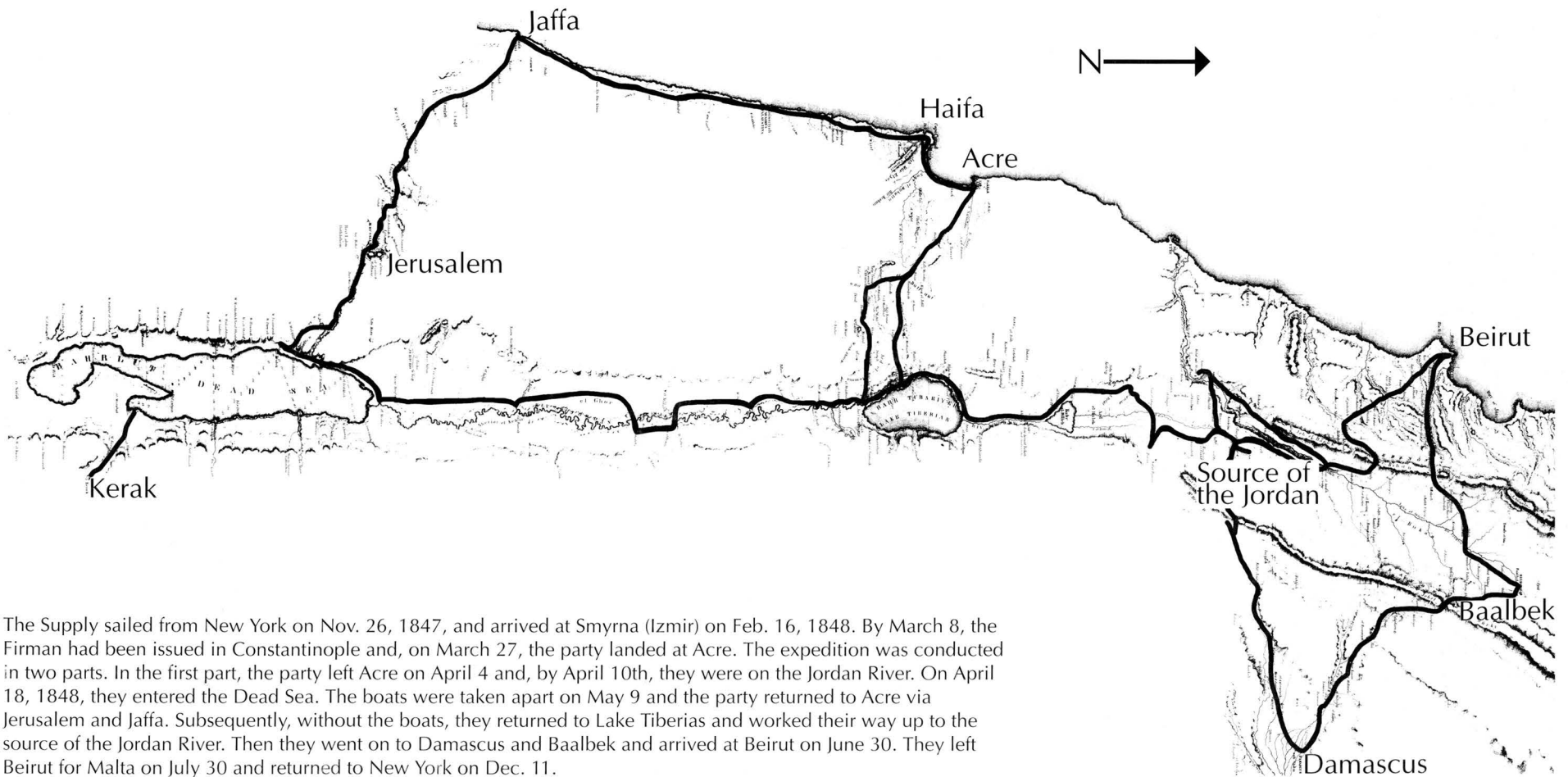
U.S. Ambassador to Jordan, Wesley Egan, was helpful with the project from the beginning as were Marcelle M. Wahba, Steven Thibeault, Colonel Michael Shaw, Colonel David J. Anthony, and Lieut. Colonel Pat Michelson, all of the U.S. Embassy in Amman. Vice Admiral Thomas B. Fargo, Commander Gordon Hume, and Lieut. j.g. James Mill of the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command also provided assistance.

Richard M. Walker, Archives Specialist, Naval Historical Center, Department of the Navy, provided ACOR with a number of documents relating to the expedition. Dan Gamber, Robert Mittelstaedt, Donald R. Keller, and Humi Ayoubi, all of ACOR, aided in many ways. Michael Slaughter tried, unfortunately without success, to locate a descendant of Lieut. Lynch through the genealogical records in Salt Lake City. Meryle Gaston and Jack Lee joined in the search for materials for the illustrations.

The Royal Geographic Center assisted with the reproduction of the maps. Andrea Atalla designed the publication and Shishir Dutta supervised actual production. We are very grateful for all of these contributions.

*Patricia Maynor Bikai*  
ACOR, 1998





The Supply sailed from New York on Nov. 26, 1847, and arrived at Smyrna (Izmir) on Feb. 16, 1848. By March 8, the Firman had been issued in Constantinople and, on March 27, the party landed at Acre. The expedition was conducted in two parts. In the first part, the party left Acre on April 4 and, by April 10th, they were on the Jordan River. On April 18, 1848, they entered the Dead Sea. The boats were taken apart on May 9 and the party returned to Acre via Jerusalem and Jaffa. Subsequently, without the boats, they returned to Lake Tiberias and worked their way up to the source of the Jordan River. Then they went on to Damascus and Baalbek and arrived at Beirut on June 30. They left Beirut for Malta on July 30 and returned to New York on Dec. 11.

## MANIFEST DESTINY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Lieutenant William Francis Lynch's 1848 survey of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea was, and remains, a controversial venture. In the politically charged atmosphere of the 1840s and 1850s, Lynch became a target for American congressmen locked in an increasingly bitter partisan struggle over the shape and destiny of a rapidly expanding nation. Democrats blasted President James K. Polk's initial authorization of Lynch's mission as both an abuse of executive authority and evidence of sorely misplaced priorities. Congressional critics and advocates of naval exploration alternatively decried and defended Lynch's endeavor. More than a century later the controversy still raged. In 1986 American historian William Goetzmann branded Lynch's expedition "a wildly impractical junket to the Holy Land" with dubious scientific credentials. To Goetzmann, Lynch was a quixotic opportunist, "a pious but ambitious Virginian who had been fifteen years without promotion in the navy."<sup>1</sup>

Somewhere amid these allegations and interpretations resides a fuller and more accurate version of the truth. Fortunately the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lynch's survey mission not only affords us an opportunity to commemorate his accomplishments and to retrace his steps but also permits us to place Lynch, his mission, and the controversies surrounding them within a more complete historical context.

Lynch served a young, exuberant nation certain of its destiny but increasingly troubled by the manifest obstacles along the path to that destiny. Lynch's colorful and immensely popular *Narrative of the United States Expedition to the River Jordan and the Dead Sea* (1849) detailed an exotic, Biblical frontier for antebellum readers. Many of those same readers eventually watched a sectional crisis that began over the disposition of slavery in America's western frontier become a national tragedy. It was entirely likely that in northern states Lynch's *Narrative* shared shelf-space with Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), while some southern readers perhaps alternated between later editions of Lynch's work and Hinton Rowan Helper's anti-slavery tome, *The Impending Crisis of the South* (1857). Therefore it is

appropriate that Lynch should help modern readers navigate treacherous terrains anew, territories as chronologically remote today as they were geographically disparate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A closer look at Lieutenant William Francis Lynch and his world teaches us at least as much about antebellum America as Lynch taught his 19<sup>th</sup> century readers about the Middle East.

## THE VIRGINIANS

Born on April 1, 1801, William Francis Lynch later described himself in his semi-autobiographical *Naval Life: Observations Afloat and On Shore* (1851) as "a motherless child, with a father who, though not devoid of affection, was engrossed by the care of his property." Little else is known about Lynch's childhood beyond what he offers in *Naval Life*, according to which he "abandoned" his studies at age sixteen and "embraced the roving, stirring, homeless, comfortless, but attractive life of a sailor."<sup>2</sup> Lynch's "abandonment" of his studies at age sixteen nevertheless left him with much more formal education than many of his contemporaries. His formal education, personal reading habits, and early professional experiences produced

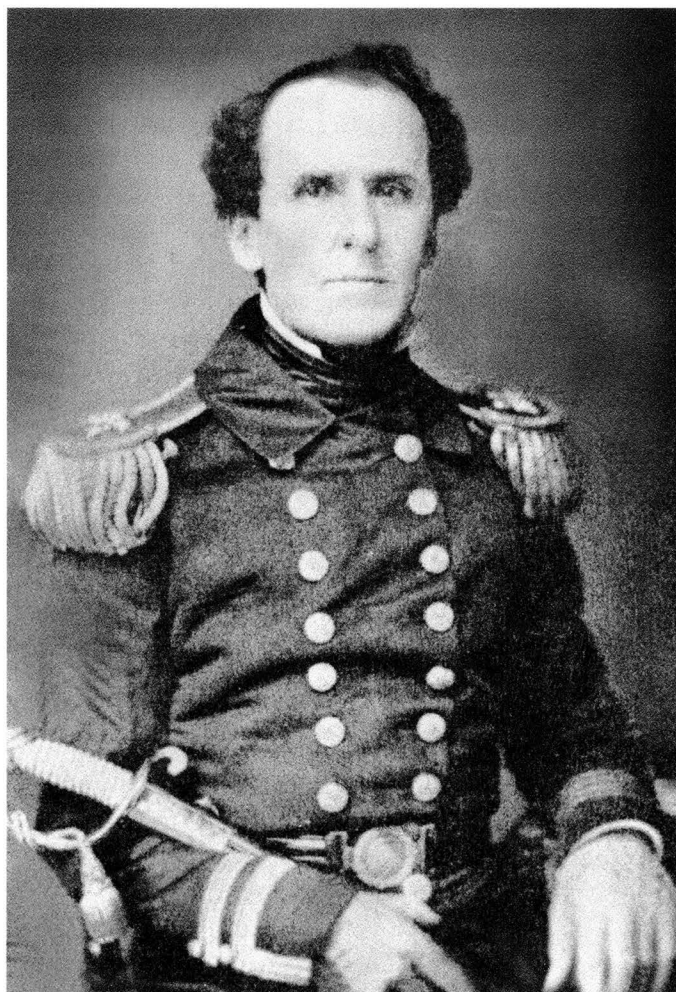


an individual who by 1847 was well-prepared to undertake the survey mission we now commemorate. Although neither a scholar nor a scientist, Lynch was a prolific writer. His letters, pamphlets, and books reveal an individual not only intimately familiar with the Bible but also well acquainted with the literature, politics, and science of his generation. Friends and colleagues recalled Lynch as a man of culture and intellectual vigor.

Official records indicate that Lynch was appointed a midshipman in January 1819. Although the American military academy at West Point had been in operation for more than a decade at that point, the U.S. Navy relied primarily upon an apprenticeship system. Young naval officers learned their trade on the high seas rather than in the classroom; the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis was more than two decades in the future when Lynch became a midshipman. Nevertheless, Lynch joined a navy that had already distinguished itself in battles against Algerian corsairs, French frigates, and British men of war. By 1819 the navy was rapidly making a place for itself in a world that many Americans saw as filled with wondrous possibilities. As the vanguard of an increasingly ambitious global commercial agenda, the navy encompassed the globe. Consequently, between 1819 and 1829 Lynch served in the East Indies, the Mediterranean, and the West Indies. He fought pirates in the Caribbean, patrolled the Brazilian coast, conducted commercial reconnaissance in the Mediterranean, and sailed the South China Sea. By his 30<sup>th</sup> birth-

day Lynch had acquired a breadth and depth of experience that left him predisposed and, more importantly, prepared for future adventures.

During this early period, Lynch served with some of America's greatest naval officers including Matthew C. Perry and David Dixon Porter. Perry eventually opened the door to American trade with Japan in 1853; Porter distinguished himself in the American Civil War. But Lynch's most significant and fortuitous association during this early period occurred in 1825 when he met Matthew Fontaine Maury. Maury, a fellow Virginian, served with Lynch aboard the *U.S.S. Brandywine* in the Mediterranean. The two young officers quickly developed a friendship that lasted for the rest of Lynch's life. In Maury, Lynch found a fellow naval officer dedicated to duty, God, and country. According to Maury's biographer, Frances Leigh Williams, Maury came to admire Lynch's "competence as an officer and his cultivated mind and imagination."<sup>3</sup> Like many naval officers of their generation, Lynch and Maury were frustrated by the many political and unprofessional aspects of naval life. Training was uneven, promotions were slow, and the navy's organization was at times unfathomable. Not surprisingly, both men lobbied for a naval academy and other reforms. More impetuous than Maury, Lynch frequently took matters into his own hands. In 1840, Lynch approached Secretary of the Navy James K. Paulding on behalf of all naval officers and urged the secretary to undertake several reforms. Paulding listened to Lynch and then ordered him to leave Washington immediately; Paulding later brought a bill before Congress containing many of Lynch's requests.<sup>4</sup> In 1845,



William Francis Lynch

both Lynch and Maury celebrated Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft's almost unilateral creation of the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. Professional matters aside, Lynch and Maury ultimately also shared a deeply personal and mutual friendship. When Lynch's marriage failed after his 1848 survey mission, Maury helped Lynch through a subsequent depression and introduced him to new friends. Several years later Lynch dedicated *Naval Life* to Maury. Both men were dedicated naval officers, devout Christians, and loyal sons of Virginia, not an unusual combination at that time. But they shared one other attribute that immediately helps us better understand Lynch's 1848 survey mission: a passion for exploration in the name of science and commerce.

In 1836, Lynch's career was temporarily becalmed. A combination of unspecified illnesses, prolonged treatment and recuperation for an ankle injury incurred early in his career, and a general surplus of naval officers in pursuit of too few sea billets kept Lynch out of action until late 1837. Meanwhile, Maury published *A New Theoretical and Practical Treatise on Navigation* (1836), a work that became a standard text for American naval officers and won him both wide acclaim and promotion. Ultimately, Maury would emerge as one of the founders of modern oceanography. In 1842, Maury became the director of the newly created Naval Observatory, an office that one naval historian later labeled "the institutional pivot" of naval exploration.<sup>5</sup> Currently, most U.S. history texts used at the secondary and post-secondary levels pay homage to Lewis and Clark and at least mention "Manifest Destiny" as es-

sential to understanding America's continental expansion. These same texts leave students with the distinct impression that maritime exploration ended with the arrival of Columbus in the New World. In reality, the U.S. Navy began exploring and charting the world's oceans soon after its creation in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. "Manifest Destiny" (*i.e.*, the belief that the United States was preordained to dominate the North American continent) was not a purely terrestrial or even hemispheric phenomenon. Between 1840 and 1850, the navy launched several exploratory missions in support of science and American commerce. There was, as naval historian John H. Schroeder noted, a distinctive maritime version of "Manifest Destiny." American naval officers explored the North Pacific (1838-42) and the South Atlantic (1849-52). Commodore William Perry visited China and Japan (1853-56) and Lieutenant William Herndon explored the Amazon River Basin. As Americans looked westward, journalists and naval officers pushed forward the boundaries of American trade with the Orient and Middle East. America's destiny reached beyond California's coast.

Taken out of context, Lynch's mission was a spectacular anomaly, a truly curious and impractical junket. But when seen as one of several naval exploratory missions of the 1840s and 1850s, Lynch's mission was anything but quixotic. Although clearly predisposed to defending both the mission and its commander, Matthew Maury in 1848 argued that a "Dead Sea Expedition" would help unlock many mysteries about Mediterranean air and sea currents.<sup>6</sup> There were, however, other considerations.

## FROM VERA CRUZ TO CONSTANTINOPLE

Impending victory for American forces in the Mexican-American War provided the initial impetus for Lynch's mission. As Lynch put it in the opening pages of his *Narrative*, "on the 8th of May, 1847, the town and castle of Vera Cruz having some time before surrendered, and there being nothing left for the Navy to perform, I preferred an application to the Hon. John Y. Mason, the head of department, for permission to circumnavigate and thoroughly explore the Lake Asphalties or Dead Sea."<sup>7</sup> Lynch's objective was not solely scientific exploration. As Schroeder noted, Lynch and other officers of his generation championed the navy's traditional role of scientific exploration in support "of an expansive gospel of commerce."<sup>8</sup> As a Southerner, Lynch was particularly eager to expand the realm of "King Cotton." Similarly, Lynch's piety and desire to validate Biblical events did not preclude searching for a new trade route to potential consumers in Persia, India, and China whose wants, according to Lynch, were capable of "doubling the clatter of every loom, and the ring of every anvil in Europe and America."<sup>9</sup> Lynch and America were not alone in this pursuit. Both France and England sought a similar direct route to the east. Two decades after Lynch's survey mission, the Suez Canal opened the trade route he had predicted would revolutionize world trade patterns. Throughout the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a canal joining the Mediterranean and the Red Sea via the Jordan River Valley was considered as a possible alternative



## LIEUT. LYNCH'S ORDERS

*Navy Department,  
July 31, 1847.*

*Lieut. Wm. F. Lynch  
U.S. Navy, Washington, D.C.*

*Sir:  
You will proceed to New York, and procure a copper  
boat of the dimensions proposed by you, and  
superintend its construction.*

*You are also authorized to ship, or select from those  
already shipped, one petty officer and twelve seamen  
for the service on which you are to be detailed.*

*I am respectfully  
Your Obt. Serv't  
J. Y. Mason*

---

*Navy Department,  
November 11, 1847.*

*Confidential.  
Lieut. W. F. Lynch  
Comm'g U.S.S. SUPPLY.*

*Sir:  
As soon as the U.S. Store Ship "Supply" under your  
command, is in all respects ready for sea, you will  
proceed to Smyrna. If at that place you find yourself  
unable to obtain the Firman, giving you with your  
party permission to proceed to and explore the Dead  
Sea, you will leave the ship at Smyrna, and go to*

*Constantinople with the dispatches to Mr. Carr,  
from the State Department. Should you not obtain  
the requisite authority from the Turkish  
Government, you will return to the ship, and proceed  
in execution of the orders for the delivery of stores to  
the Squadron. If you obtain the Firman, after  
having fully explained that your party will carry  
arms merely for your own protection, you will return  
to the Ship, at Smyrna, and in her proceed to such  
point on the coast of Syria, as shall be deemed most  
advantageous for the purpose, and land with your  
party, consisting of seventeen persons, officers and  
men as heretofore designated; and the "Supply"  
under Lieutenant Pennock, will proceed in execution  
of her orders. You may direct him, on his return from  
the Squadron, to touch, at such time, and at such  
point as you may indicate, to take yourself and party  
on board, on your return to the United States.*

*After landing you will proceed to the Dead Sea, with  
your boats, and make the exploration and survey of  
that interesting sheet of water, suggested in your  
letters to the Department. The object, with which I  
have yielded to your request, is to promote the cause  
of Sciences, and advance the character of the Naval  
service; to accomplish which a more favorable  
opportunity will probably not occur.*

*After completing the survey and exploration of the  
Dead Sea, you may if time permit, and it be  
necessary for the verification of your previous work,  
survey the terraces of the river Jordan, the river itself  
and the lake Tiberias through which it flows. Should  
some unforeseen cause detain the Ship after the  
preceeding operations shall have been completed,  
rather than the officers and men should remain idle,*

*you will employ them in verifying the old, or making  
new observations, as may seem most expedient.*

*In your intercourse with the inhabitants you are  
enjoined to be circumspect, conciliatory and  
forbearing; paying fairly for all provisions obtained  
or services rendered; and prohibiting those under your  
command from committing the slightest act of  
aggression. You are further enjoined to practice the  
strictest economy compatible with success, and you  
will yourself keep an account of each item of  
expenditure for future settlement.*

*This interesting special service will not operate your  
detachment from the command of the Storeship,  
except for the limited term of your absence from your  
ship, while in its execution.*

*Transmitted herewith, for your information, is a  
copy of a letter from the Department of State, dated  
15th October ult. communicating an extract of a  
dispatch, in relation to your enterprise, addressed to  
Mr. Carr, our Minister to Constantinople.*

*A copy of these instructions is entrusted to you, to be  
transmitted to Commodore Read, supposed to be in  
command on the Mediterranean Station, if you are  
not disappointed in obtaining Firman, without  
which you will not undertake the journey into Syria.*

*You will report in detail, the result of your  
proceedings to the Department.*

*I am, very respectfully  
Your obedient servant  
J. Y. Mason.*



route to the isthmus of Suez.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, although manifestations of his personal faith appeared in Lynch's request to chart the Jordan River, "a river teeming with sacred associations," and the Dead Sea, a body "enveloped in mystery which had defied all attempts to penetrate it," professional and commercial interests predominated.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, despite somewhat sketchy documentary evidence, Lynch's survey mission was also part of a promotional campaign on behalf of a navy that was overshadowed by the U.S. Army in the Mexican-American War. Since the Mexican fleet never posed any serious threat, surface actions that recalled the glories of 1812-15 were not to be had. The navy's job was done even before the war began. Although the navy blockaded the Mexican coast, bombarded Vera Cruz, and otherwise assisted several army operations, the Mexican-American War was primarily an army campaign. Worse, the war revealed that substantial elements of the navy's bureaucracy were badly antiquated and inefficient.<sup>12</sup> In short, the navy needed, if not glory, at least headlines. As historian Robert W. Johanssen noted, American newspapers and journals were filled with the exploits of General Winfield Scott and other army officers.<sup>13</sup> The army's campaign in Mexico left it well-positioned to fight budgetary battles in Washington. Moreover, the territories conquered and eventually ceded by treaty greatly expanded the army's role along the western frontier. Secretary of the Navy Mason's final orders to Lynch on November 11, 1847, provide some insight into this situation. Although noting the scientific and commercial nature of the enterprise, Mason charged Lynch

with advancing "the character of the Naval Service." Fame not won on the way to the halls of the Montezumas could be attained on the shores of the Galilee and the Dead Sea.

Like the navy he served, Lynch was also seeking to advance his interests. William Goetzmann was correct; Lynch's last promotion, to lieutenant, occurred in 1829. But Lynch's slow advancement must be placed in context. As navy and army officers both before, and after, the Civil War understood, war was hell but peace could be equally hellish for a career. Lynch's career was particularly hellish, however. Like many naval officers during the antebellum period, Lynch was frequently on leave, without pay, as officers were plentiful and sea billets scarce. Also, as noted previously, Lynch was plagued throughout his career by a bad ankle. Frequent bouts of fever and intestinal illnesses compounded this annoyance. These maladies were common in the antebellum navy and should not be taken as an indication that Lynch was somehow predisposed to illness. While naval medicine did not keep pace with naval science and exploration, disease did. Cholera, yellow fever, scurvy, and dysentery constantly plagued crews.<sup>14</sup> Lynch was not immune and suffered several bouts of illness. His survival and rigor during the survey mission and subsequent missions suggest that Lynch was an extraordinarily rugged individual, albeit one anxious for promotion and therefore ready to undertake great risks to win it. In 1847, Lynch saw an opportunity and seized it.

Mason approved Lynch's proposal on July 31, 1847, and directed him to take command of the *U.S.S. Supply*. In addition, Mason ordered

## LIST

OF THE

### MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITION.

~~~~~

W. F. LYNCH, Lieutenant-Commanding.  
 JOHN B. DALE, Lieutenant.  
 R. AULICK, Passed-Midshipman.  
 FRANCIS E. LYNCH, Charge of Herbarium.  
 JOSEPH C. THOMAS, Master's Mate.  
 GEORGE OVERSTOCK, Seaman.  
 FRANCIS WILLIAMS, "  
 CHARLES HOMER, "  
 HUGH READ, "  
 JOHN ROBINSON, "  
 GILBERT LEE, "  
 GEORGE LOCKWOOD, "  
 CHARLES ALBERTSON, "  
 HENRY LOVELAND, "

The members also included volunteers Henry Bedlow, Esq., and Henry J. Anderson, M.D., and a number of other U.S. participants for a total of 17 persons in Lynch's party. Sherif Hazzâ of Mecca, 'Akil Aga el-Hasseé, and their parties brought the total of the members of the expedition to about fifty persons. Francis E. Lynch was Lieut. William F. Lynch's son. Lieut. John B. Dale contracted a fever during the expedition and died in Lebanon on July 24, 1848. He was buried at Beirut.



him to supervise the construction of the metal craft which Lynch deemed vital for the mission and to select a crew of thirteen men to accompany him. By late November 1847, Lynch was ready. On board the *Supply*, as she weighed anchor on November 26, 1847, were two metal boats, one copper and one iron, and Lynch's crew of thirteen "young, muscular, native-born Americans, of sober habits," each of whom had sworn a pledge to abstain from both alcohol and tobacco. Lynch later credited abstinence from the former with saving crew members lives during "the severe privations and great exposure" suffered during the survey. As for the later vice, Lynch could abide neither tobacco nor those who used it. He firmly believed that "if there be any herb, in any place, More opposite to God's herb of grace, It is tobacco."<sup>15</sup> Again, Lynch's attitudes toward these vices and his religiosity were not unusual. He came of age in America at a time of fervent reform impulses, impulses that were energized in no small measure by American Protestantism. Beginning in the early 1820s and continuing late into the 1840s, "The Second Great Awakening" swept America. Speakers like Charles Graham Finney challenged Americans to wage war against all evil in the land and to prepare America for the second coming of Christ. Finney and others spoke against idleness, alcohol, tobacco, dueling, and eventually slavery. This religious crusade reinforced more secular institutional reform movements. During this period Dorothea Dix crusaded for prison reform and better care for the mentally ill, Horace Mann promoted public education, and Dr. Sylvester Graham advocated the benefits of a whole-grain diet. America was

filled with voices inveighing against all forms of evil. In the U.S. Navy these reform impulses eventually ended both flogging (in the 1850s) and, with the help of wartime grain conservation, the on-board rum ration (in the early 1860s). Like many members of this reform era, Lynch believed that humans could remake themselves and, in the process, prepare the world for the dawn of a new millennium. These attitudes profoundly influenced his interpretations of the peoples and cultures he encountered in the Middle East.

Although the "Holy Land" was firmly fixed in the American Christian mind, the physical realities of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea were in the Ottoman Turkish Empire. Consequently, access to the Jordan River and the Dead Sea required the Ottoman Sultan Abdel Majid's permission. As Lynch awaited the Sultan's permission in late February 1848, he considered the commercial possibilities of his surrounding environment. Turkey, he noted, represented a huge market for "cotton-planters of the southern and south-western states." Indeed, the po-

| SERVICES OF THE U. S. <i>Supply (No 1)</i> |                   |                                   |          | Page 1     |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|------------|
| COMMANDED BY.                              | DATE.             | HISTORY.                          | 547 tons | REFERENCE. |
| <i>4th Rate</i>                            | <i>Store Ship</i> |                                   |          |            |
|                                            | 1846              | Built (+ Purchased)               |          |            |
|                                            | "                 | on Home Squadron                  |          |            |
| <i>John Cochran</i>                        | 1847              | Commanding                        |          |            |
| <i>Lieut</i>                               |                   |                                   |          |            |
| <i>Wm F. Lynch</i>                         | 1848              | Commanding                        |          |            |
| <i>Lieut</i>                               | 1849              | On Mediterranean Sqdn             |          |            |
| <i>Chas H. H. Kennedy</i>                  | 1850              | Commanding                        |          |            |
| <i>Lieut</i>                               | 1851              | Pacific Sqdn                      |          |            |
|                                            | 1852              | East India Sqdn                   |          |            |
| <i>Arthur Sinclair</i>                     | 1855              | Commanding                        |          |            |
| <i>Lieut</i>                               |                   |                                   |          |            |
| <i>D. D. Porter</i>                        | 1855              | Mediterranean Sqd Special Service |          |            |
| <i>Lieut</i>                               | 1856              | Commanding                        |          |            |
| <i>F. V. Gray</i>                          | 1857              | Commanding                        |          |            |
| <i>Lieut</i>                               | 1858              | Brazil & African Sqds             |          |            |

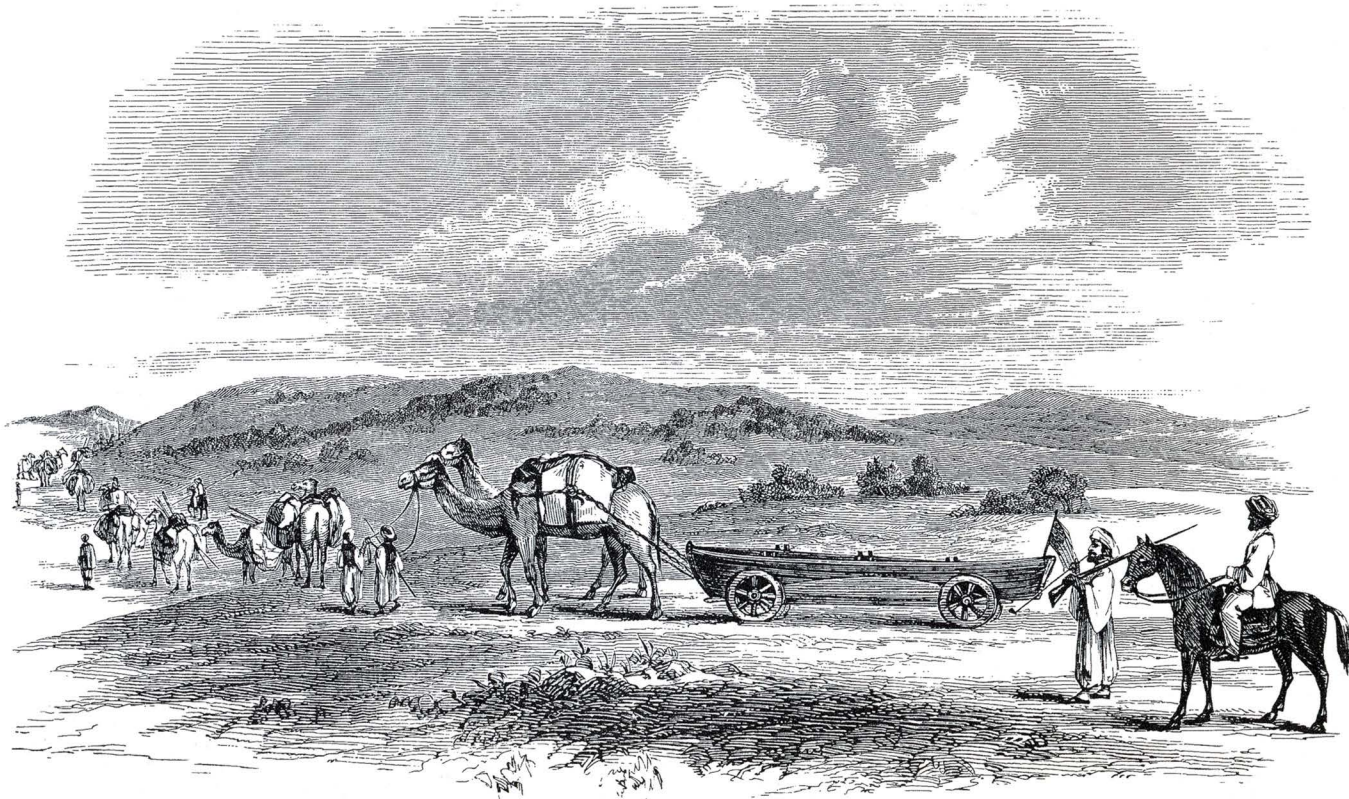


tential market was so great and underdeveloped that Lynch envisioned an indigenous cotton industry, supported by transplanted free blacks, that would offer a solution to an American racial problem while posing no threat to American cotton markets.<sup>16</sup> Upon meeting the Sultan, Lynch's speculations on future commercial prospects gave way to more circumspect and pessimistic assessments of Ottoman leadership. Lynch noted that the Sultan's "wearied and spiritless air was unrelieved by any indication of intellectual energy" and concluded that the Sul-

tan had leapt "at once from youth to imbecility."<sup>17</sup> Interactions with the Sultan's court convinced Lynch that the Muslim world was "in about the same condition as was the Polytheism of Pagan Rome, immediately prior to the introduction of Christianity."<sup>18</sup> Lynch's assessment of Islam was not unique. From the earliest days of the republic, American religious leaders included Islam as one of the last barriers confronting an American Protestant millennium. Yale's president, Timothy Dwight, "dreamed of the day when ... the Romish cathedral, the

mosque, and the pagoda should not have one stone left upon another."<sup>19</sup> To many Americans, Muslims had forsaken freedom for the chains of tyranny and slavery. American politicians across the ideological spectrum had used Islam as an expansive metaphor in warnings against threats to liberty.<sup>20</sup>

Untapped potential, corrupt governance, and decadent religion became prominent themes in Lynch's intellectual navigation of the Middle East. His journey from Constantinople into the Jordan Valley further reinforced these



Opposite: Excerpt from the log of the U.S. Supply  
Right: Caravan of the expedition

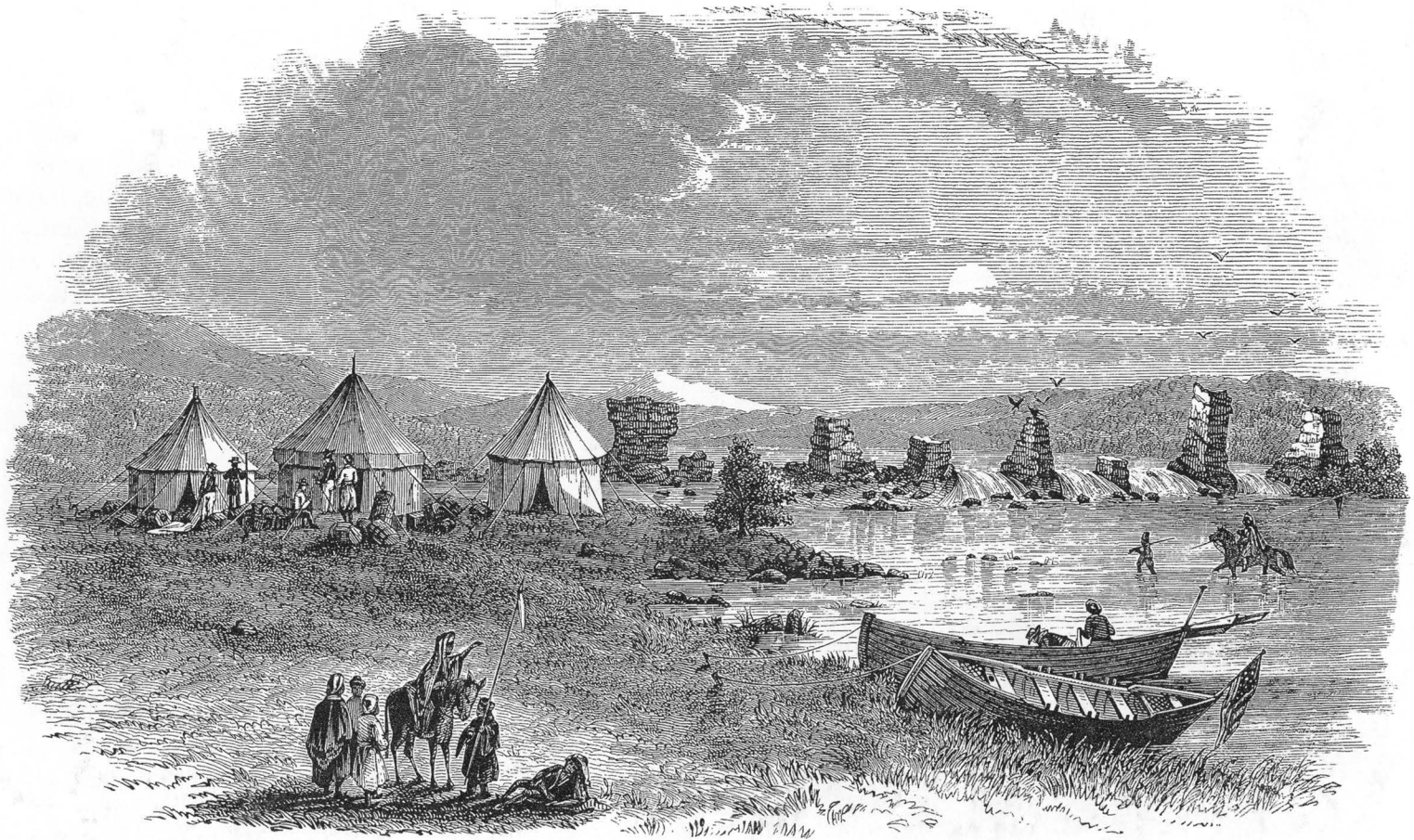




died shortly after reconnoitering the Dead Sea. In 1847, shortly before Lynch proposed his mission to the Secretary of the Navy, Lieutenant Thomas Molyneux, a Royal Navy officer, surveyed the Dead Sea but died of fever several weeks after completing the task. Lynch later confirmed many of his measurements and later commemorated both Molyneux and Costigan by naming points along the Lisan Peninsula after

them.<sup>22</sup> In 1837, the *U.S.S. Constitution* landed General Lewis Cass and several naval officers at Jaffa. Cass, a hero of the War of 1812 and a former Secretary of War under Andrew Jackson, spent three weeks traveling through Palestine and Syria. Although they did not survey the Dead Sea, Cass and his party did survive it. Several hours of floating in the mineral-laden waters produced skin irritations but no fatalities.<sup>23</sup>

Knowing well the hazards ahead and the fates of those who preceded him, Lynch traversed the twenty-five miles between the coast and the Sea of Galilee in five days, finally launching his boats on April 8. Over the next three months, Lynch surveyed the Jordan River, traveling first downstream from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea and then, after returning to the coast for replenishment, completing his mission



Left: Map of the route of the land party with camp sites marked  
Right: Ruined bridge of Semakh

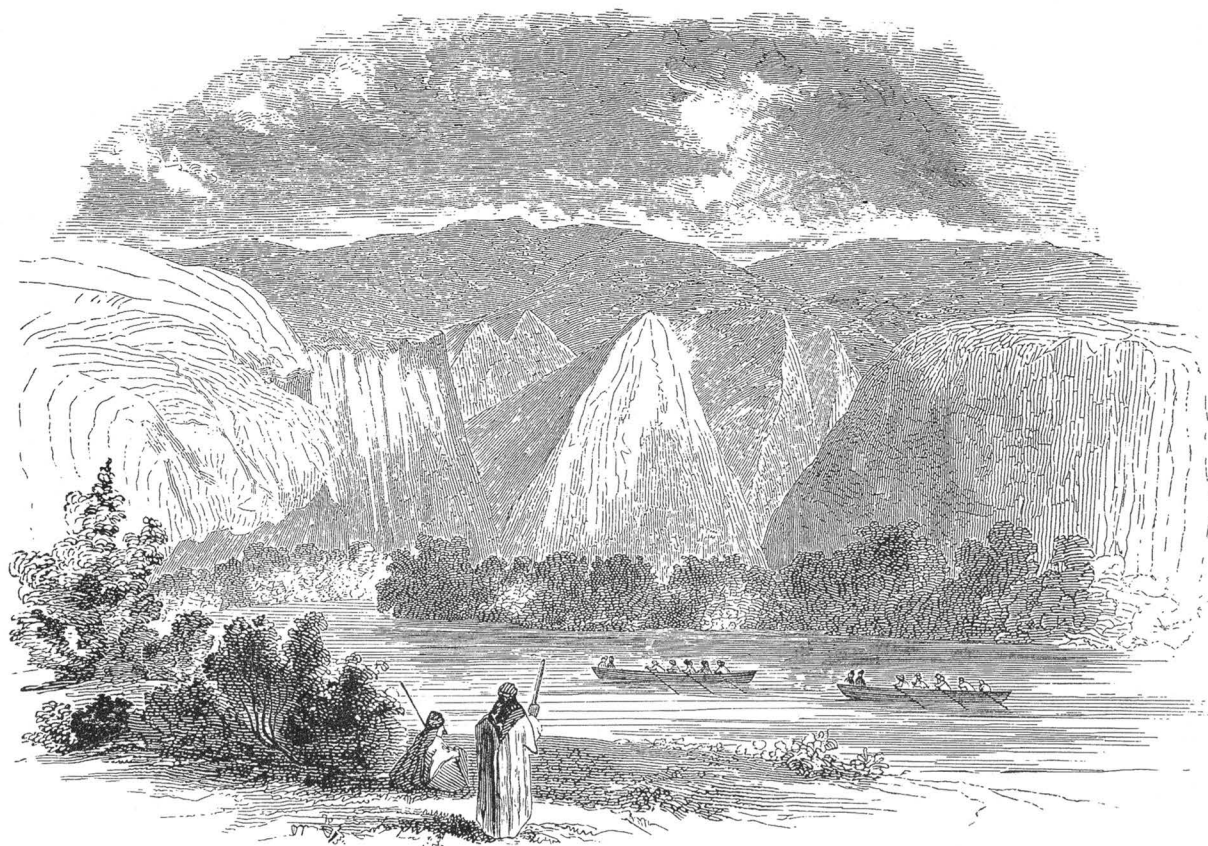
by exploring the northern valley from the Sea of Galilee, through the Huleh basin, to the headwaters of the Jordan before leaving the region via Damascus and Beirut at the end of June. During his voyage downstream, Lynch quickly realized that the lower Jordan Valley held little potential as a commercial waterway. Following a "tortuous course" of more than 200 miles in the "sixty miles of latitude and four or five miles of longitude" separating the Sea of Galilee's fresh

water from the saline body of the Dead Sea, the Jordan River contained no fewer than twenty-seven rapids and was "more sinuous even than ... the Mississippi."<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the lower valley, or Ghor, held other possibilities. A land party that Lynch had assigned to parallel the river survey team reported "an extensive plain, luxuriant in vegetation, and presenting ... a richness of alluvial soil, the produce of which, with proper agriculture, might nourish a vast popu-

lation."<sup>25</sup> As Lynch proceeded further along the Ghor, he noted a "most beautiful tract of alluvial" soil located amid country "entirely destitute of cultivation."<sup>26</sup> To Lynch, this landscape could support small farmers and independent shopkeepers. In short, Lynch saw a fertile medium for the duplication of American republicanism.

As Lynch neared the Dead Sea, the landscape bracketing the alluvial plains eroded his assessment of future possibilities. Salt, blown up from the Dead Sea, coated rocks and vegetation, extinguished the life that was abundant in the northern Ghor. Though rich in soil and Biblical heritage, the Jordan Valley's beauty and potential bounty was "only rendered so by contrast with the harsh, dry, calcined earth around."<sup>27</sup> The Jordan River was a slender band of hope that vanished into the depths of the lowest point on earth. Lynch's arrival at the Dead Sea on April 18 began a three-week period in which he mapped the shoreline and explored the surrounding heights. More importantly, he avoided the fate of both Costigan and Molyneux as he navigated an environment that offered neither salvation nor commercial possibility. News of the death of former president John Quincy Adams, a staunch advocate of American commercial expansion, reached Lynch during this period and "harmonized with the atmosphere and scenery" of desolation enveloping Lynch. In a tribute to Adams, Lynch ordered a twenty-one gun salute laboriously fired from one cannon, each shot swallowed by an expanse that had defied both patriarchs and emperors.

That same expanse, however, inspired Lynch. As part of the survey mission, Lynch col-





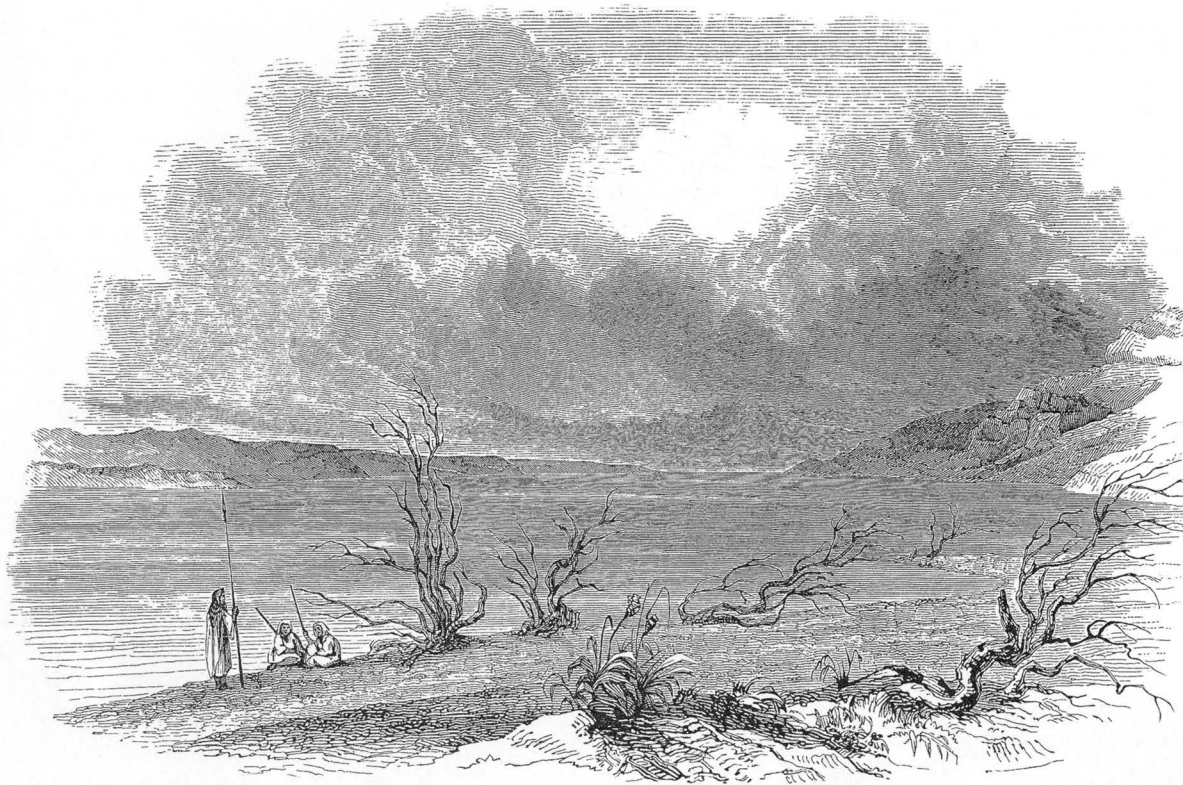
At 3.25, P. M., passed by the extreme point where the Jordan is one hundred and eighty yards wide and three feet deep, and entered upon the Dead Sea. The river, where it enters the sea, is inclined towards the eastern shore, pretty much as represented in the map of Messrs. Robinson and Smith, which is the most exact of any we have seen.

A fresh northwest wind was blowing as we rounded the point. The wind soon freshened into a gale, and caused a heavy sea, in which the boats labored excessively. The spray was painful to the eyes and skin, and evaporating as it fell, left incrustations of salt upon our faces, hands and clothing.

Left: View of the Jordan

Above: Diary entry for April 18, 1848

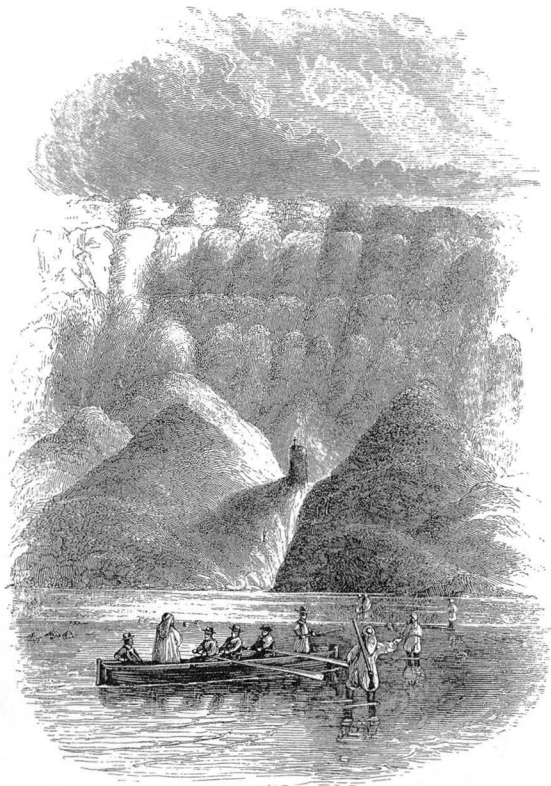
Below: Shore of the Dead Sea



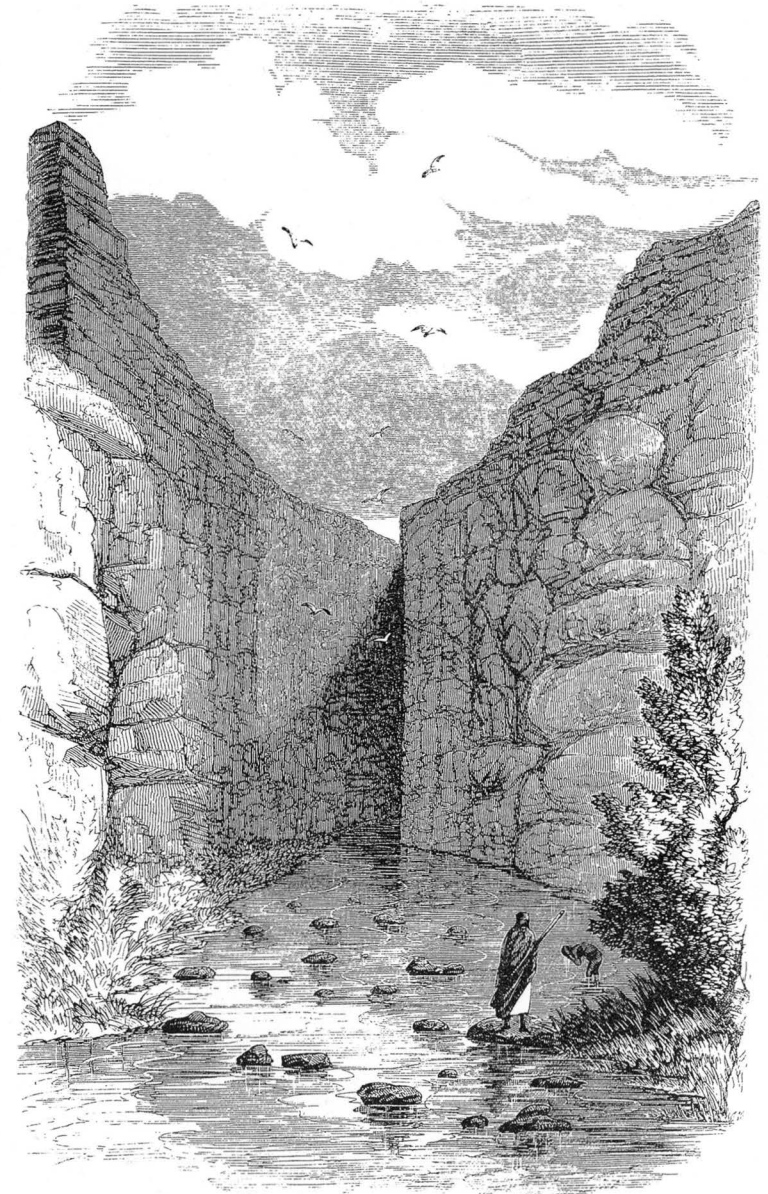
lected scientific data in the lower valley and along the Dead Sea. Lynch's attention to scientific matters revealed, once again, his professional and personal kinship with Matthew Maury. While clearly champions of pure science, both Lynch and Maury were also disciples of both commerce and Christianity. Consequently, although Lynch quickly concluded that the Jordan River was unsuitable as a major navigable waterway, he nonetheless assayed the region's mineral resource possibilities. As Lynch and Dr. Henry J. Anderson, a civilian who joined the expedition in Beirut, examined shells and other organic materials along the Dead Sea's northern shore, Lynch noted the presence of mineral salts—sulphur, nitre, and gypsum—that constituted an “interesting field of investigation.”<sup>28</sup> In addition, Lynch collected numerous water samples throughout the latter phase of his survey in an attempt to discern further mineral composition and possible extractive uses. Lynch realized that infertile soils and barren plains could provide alternative sources of wealth. In commenting on the geology of the Dead Sea's western shore, Lynch observed that “Nature is ever provident in her liberality, and when she denies fertility of surface, often repays man with her embowelled (*sic*) treasures.”<sup>29</sup> Lynch's words proved prophetic both for the United States then and the Jordan Valley now. Unbeknownst to Lynch, several months earlier workmen building a mill for John Sutter had discovered gold amid California's rugged and inhospitable Sierra Nevada foothills. Similarly, lucrative large-scale mineral extraction began in the lower Jordan Valley a century after gold fever swept antebellum America.



But for Lynch, science served not only mammon and the navy but also Christianity. Like Maury, Lynch believed that nature, and specifically geological evidence, held the keys to validating Biblical scripture. As Maury's biographer noted, Maury passionately believed that "God had created the universe in harmony and expected man to discover the laws of nature and live by them." Moreover, the Bible offered mankind "a divinely inspired handbook of life." The answers to humanity's past mysteries and present dilemmas lay in the scriptures. And sci-



ence, by validating the true genius and beauty of biblical events, would reveal nature's divine order and humankind's path to salvation.<sup>30</sup> To Lynch, the Dead Sea and its environs afforded ample evidence of both the miracles of creation and the wrath of God. Both Lynch and Maury, like many of their contemporaries in the scientific community, were convinced that volcanic activity both created the earth and later destroyed those who defied God. Theories of vulcanism and a more liberal interpretation of the creation story, *i.e.*, days for a divinity were incalculable to mortals and therefore God's seven days were a good deal longer than an earthly week, fired Lynch's imagination. As he entered the lower valley, Lynch gathered fresh water shells but soon noted the absence of sea shells and round pebbles around the Dead Sea. This absence and the presence of bitumen convinced Lynch that volcanic activity had shaped the lower valley.<sup>31</sup> Specifically, Lynch suggested that the entire Dead Sea area had "sunk from some extraordinary convulsion." This tantalizing evidence led him to note that "I shall ever regret that we were not authorized to explore the southern Ghor and the Red Sea." Nonetheless, to Lynch the scientific evidence was



conclusive. While not claiming positive proof for the creation of the earth, Lynch was certain “of the truth of the Scriptural account of the destruction of the cities of the plain [Sodom and Gomorrah].” He proclaimed, “I record with diffidence the conclusions we have reached, simply as a protest against the shallow deductions of *would-be* unbelievers” (italics in the original).<sup>32</sup> Despite this spiritual validation, the physical rigors and the barren landscape gradually exacted a price. The expedition’s morale and physical strength weakened with each passing day spent near and on the Dead Sea.

The only respites from the solitude and sterile emptiness came with expeditions onto the heights to the west and east of the Dead Sea. A survey team dispatched to the Roman fortress of Masada, on the western heights, re-

ported that it was surrounded by “earth ... as sterile as if sown with salt.” Lichen-covered cisterns and granaries were the only evidence of cultivation that Roman historian Josephus Flavius claimed once fed a Roman garrison.<sup>33</sup> Lynch’s visit to Kerak on the eastern heights provided not only much needed relief from the Dead Sea’s stifling air but also reminded Lynch of America’s political and commercial rivals. As Lynch enjoyed Kerak’s cooler temperatures, he was shocked to discover English cloth for sale in the town’s only shop.<sup>34</sup> English political influence and commercial expansion greatly concerned Lynch and other American commercial expansionists of the period. Despite negotiated settlements to both a crisis over Maine’s northern boundary in 1842 and a protracted dispute over American expansion into the Pacific North-

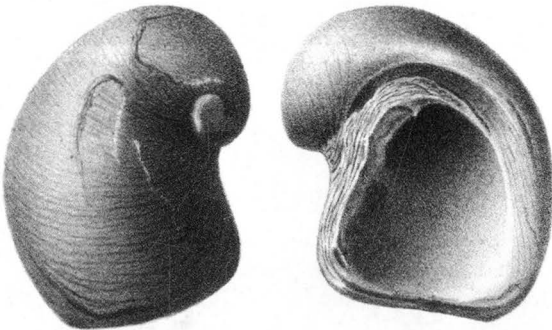
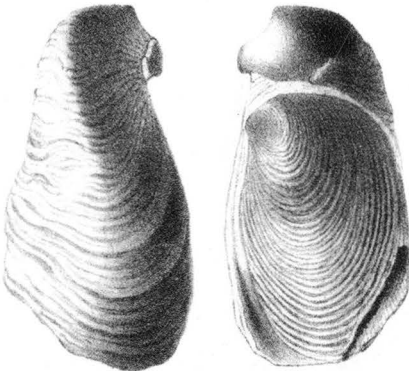
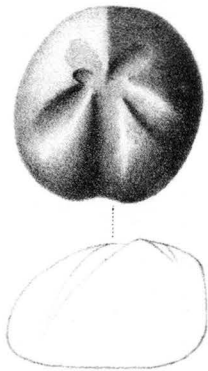
*Analysis of the Dead Sea Water.*

The quantity submitted to analysis was drawn up by Capt. Lynch himself from a depth of 185 fathoms. The determination of its constituents was very carefully made by Professor Booth, of Philadelphia, assisted by Mr. Alexander Mucklé. I subjoin the results as already given in Captain Lynch’s Official Report, submitted February 3, 1849.

Specific gravity = 1.22742.

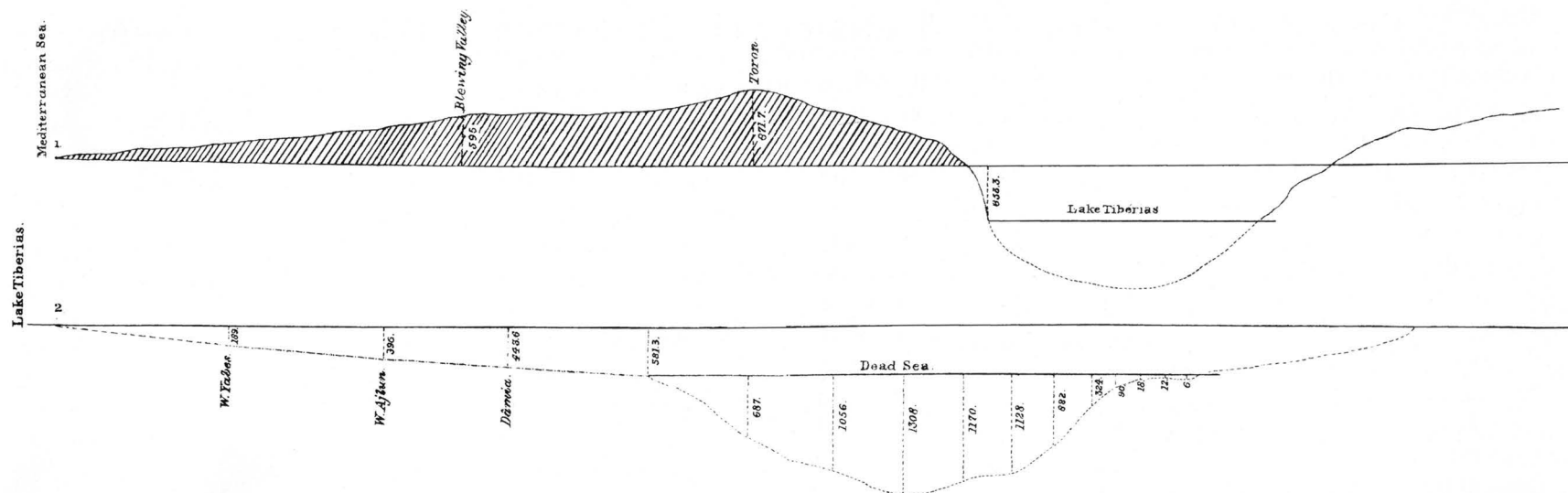
|                                  |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Chloride of Sodium, . . . . .    | 78.554   |
| Chloride of Potassium, . . . . . | 6.586    |
| Chloride of Magnesium, . . . . . | 145.897  |
| Chloride of Calcium, . . . . .   | 31.075   |
| Bromine Salts, . . . . .         | 1.374    |
| Sulphate of Lime, . . . . .      | .701     |
|                                  | <hr/>    |
|                                  | 264.187  |
| Water, . . . . .                 | 735.813  |
|                                  | <hr/>    |
|                                  | 1000.000 |

It may be remarked that the great specific gravity of this water does not indicate full saturation with any of the chlorides, for the water is still capable of holding much chloride of sodium, and of course still more chloride of magnesium, in solution. Since, however, crystals of chloride of sodium remain undissolved at the depth of 116 fathoms,\* it follows that the water of the Dead Sea is very unequally charged with its constituents, and that no safe inference can be drawn from an analysis of the surface water, and still less of any specimen in which the depth is not given. I will also add, that in two analyses of Dead Sea water for chloride of calcium alone, I have found more of this salt than in the analysis above given, in one instance 48 gr. 47 in 1000; but the water was in these cases taken from another part of the Sea.

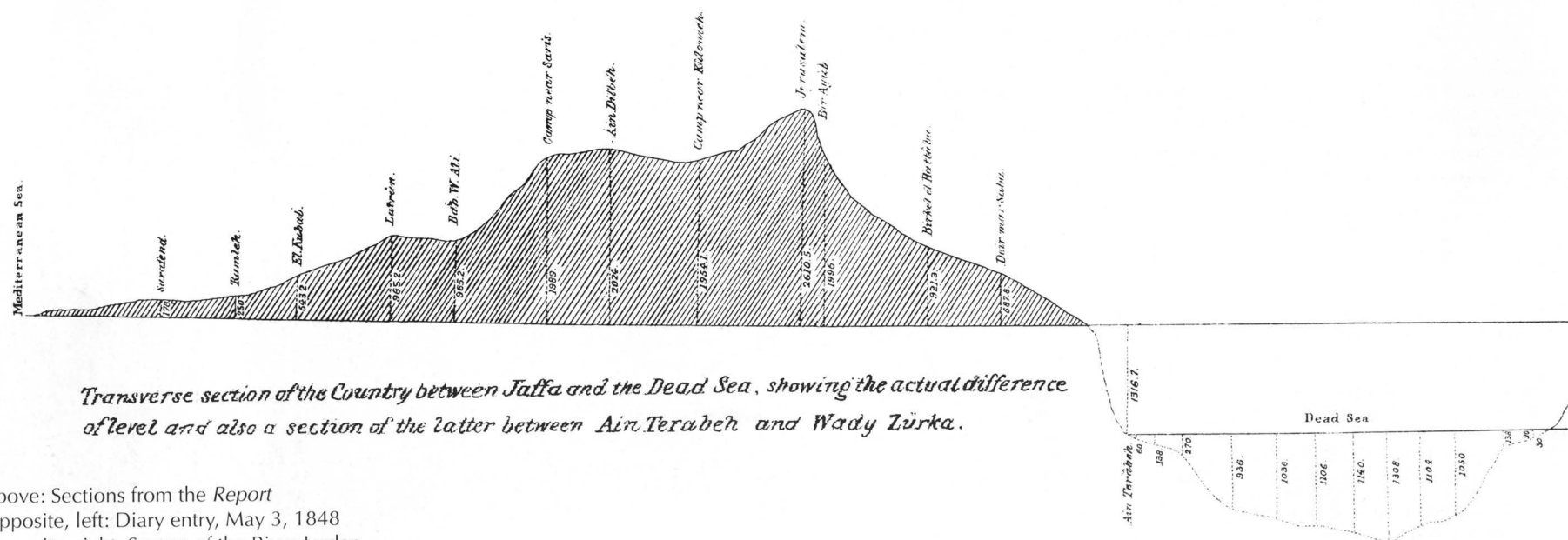


Opposite, left:  
Pillar of Salt at  
Udum at the  
south end of the  
Dead Sea  
Opposite, right:  
Wadi Mojeb  
Left: Analysis of  
Dead Sea water  
Right: Organic  
remains found in  
the chalk





- N<sup>o</sup> 1. A Transverse section of the Country between Acre and Tiberias, showing the Barometrical differences of level in feet.  
 N<sup>o</sup> 2. Shows the descent of the River Jordan, and a longitudinal section of the Dead Sea.



Transverse section of the Country between Jaffa and the Dead Sea, showing the actual difference of level and also a section of the latter between Ain Terabeh and Wady Zurka.

Above: Sections from the Report  
 Opposite, left: Diary entry, May 3, 1848  
 Opposite, right: Source of the River Jordan

The exploration of this sea was now complete; we had carefully sounded its depths, determined its geographical position, taken topographical sketches of its shores, ascertained the temperature, width, depth and velocity of its tributaries, collected specimens of its own and its tributary waters, and of every kind of mineral, plant and flower; and noted the winds, currents, changes of weather, and all atmospheric phenomena. These, with a succinct account of events, exactly as they transpired, will give a correct idea of this sea as it has appeared to us. The same remarks holds with respect to the Jordan and the country through which it flows. Unless when prevented by high winds, we have on no occasion, day or night, omitted taking astronomical, barometrical and thermometrical observations.

west in 1846, American suspicions of British economic policies remained high. These suspicions were not unfounded. As historian James A. Field has shown, the British successfully frustrated numerous American efforts to expand trade with the Ottoman Empire and Persia well into the 1870s.<sup>35</sup>

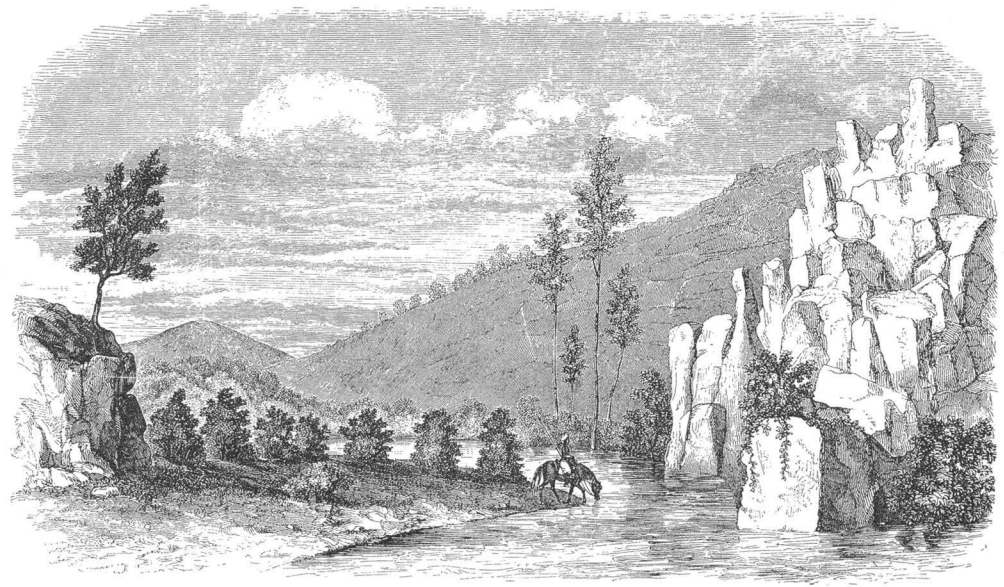
Lynch's reply to English linen was the stars and stripes. After mooring an American flag in the center of the sea, Lynch's expedition left the Dead Sea on May 8. As he climbed through the Judean hills en route to Jerusalem, Lynch noted "fields of yellow grain, orchards of olives and figs, and some apricot trees, covered all the land in sight capable of cultivation; but not a tree, nor a bush, on the barren hill-sides." Numerous abandoned and crumbling terraces along the slopes accounted "for the redundant population this country once supported."<sup>36</sup> Two weeks spent in Jerusalem exploring holy sites, recuperating from the rigors of the Dead Sea, and reconnoitering a return route to the Mediterranean passed quickly. Lynch's arrival at Jaffa enabled a final calculation of the difference between the levels of the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea, a difference Lynch ascertained at 1,316.7 feet, a measurement about one percent greater than those taken in the middle of this century.<sup>37</sup> Although never tiring of "the luxuri-

ant and refreshing green of the gardens," Lynch was disturbed by the inefficiencies of its irrigation system, a system that depended on "Persian water-wheels" and lost a great deal of water. Failing in his attempts to persuade local officials to adopt more economical means, Lynch resigned himself to the fact that Jaffa was "an antediluvian place" and conceded "that the Persian water-wheel, like the other customs of their ancestors, will be adhered to by this people."<sup>38</sup> To Lynch, Ottoman governance and Arab farming had despoiled the land and lacked any capacity to reclaim a once rich inheritance.

Following a brief stay in Jaffa, Lynch returned to the Sea of Galilee on June 13, beginning his survey of the northern valley the next day. In comparison to the sand hills of the coast and the Dead Sea, the upper Jordan Valley was rich in possibility. The Huleh basin's fertile plains and a confluence of the

ant and refreshing green of the gardens," Lynch was disturbed by the inefficiencies of its irrigation system, a system that depended on "Persian water-wheels" and lost a

Jordan River's perennial tributaries contributed to Lynch's assessment as he ascended the Golan Heights.<sup>39</sup> On June 17, Lynch briefly left the expedition and the Jordan Valley to reconnoiter the Lebanon's Litani River basin before returning to lead the expedition out of the valley to Damascus, where commerce once again became a principle concern. Lynch discovered Damascene bazaars filled "with foreign fabrics and cutlery—mostly English—paying, we were assured, a handsome profit." Upon arrival in Beirut, the seaport of Damascus, Lynch procured "a list of its imports and exports," which he appended to his official report to Secretary Mason.<sup>40</sup> A cholera epidemic in Beirut hastened Lynch's departure from the region at the end of June in a chartered French ship bound for Malta.





## LOCAL POPULATIONS, LOCAL POLITICS

Despite Lynch's harsh assessment of the local populations, his success and perhaps even his survival owed a great deal to the peoples he blamed for the decrepit state of the surrounding region. Although the Jordan Valley was nominally Ottoman territory in the 1840s, ac-



tual Ottoman control of the valley was non-existent. Turkish political authority emanating from Constantinople was parceled out among local pashas in Beirut, Damascus, Acre, and

Jerusalem. Such a diffusion of power, so distant from Constantinople, invited both foreign invasion and local insurrection. In the decade prior to Lynch's arrival, Egypt's Muhammad Ali invaded and occupied Palestine before being defeated by an Ottoman force supported by European allies in the early 1840s. Ironically, Ali's commander, Ibrahim, tried and failed to suppress rebellious Bedouin tribes in the valley, a process Lynch suggested was "somewhat on our plan of military occupation of Florida."<sup>41</sup> Ibrahim's ultimate failure, however, became Lynch's security problem. Upon arrival in Palestine, Lynch discovered that "ten miles east of a line drawn from Jerusalem to Nablus, the tribes roamed uncontrolled."<sup>42</sup> The Jordan Valley and Dead Sea was a 'no-man's land' and Lynch's expedition required protection. They received it in Akil al-Hassee, an Arab tribal leader from Nazareth, through whom Lynch came to know the region's indigenous population:

We never tired of the company of this graceful savage. Altogether, he was the most perfect specimen of manhood we had seen ... Akil did not excel in physical qualities alone; his intelligence was far above mediocrity; and although a barbarian, he had much of the manners and feelings of a gentleman ...<sup>43</sup>

Lynch proclaimed that there was "much honor beneath the skin of this untutored Arab."<sup>44</sup> Akil became Lynch's "noble savage" with a Ma-



chiavellian political acumen. This "brave, generous, and universally loved or feared" barbarian had alternatively served and rebelled against Ottoman Turkish and Egyptian rulers.<sup>45</sup> Regardless of his immediate employer, Akil served his own long-term political interests.<sup>46</sup> During his visit to Kerak, Lynch suspected that Akil was contemplating American assistance in a renewed rebellion against the Turks. Although Lynch thought the Arab tribes "too discordant" to be successful, he appreciated the fluid political dynamics of the region and did not doubt Akil's capacity to exploit the situation.<sup>47</sup>

Akil was also an atypical member of what, for Lynch, was a stereotypical Arab population for which the Native American offered a convenient scale of measurement. To Lynch, "In the American (Indian) everything proclaims the savage who has not yet arrived at a state of civiliza-

tion, in the Arab, everything indicates the civilized man who has returned to the savage state."<sup>48</sup> A return to civilization was therefore possible, particularly since, according to Lynch, "these sons of the desert may be guided like children." Not surprisingly, Lynch believed that Christian missionaries would provide the proper spiritual guidance, though this guidance alone would not suffice. Basic agricultural instruction would reclaim ravaged lands, strengthen malnourished bodies, and underwrite the salvation



Opposite, left:  
'Akil Aga el-Hasseé

Opposite, right:  
Sherif Hazzâ of Mecca who, with 'Akil Aga el-Hasseé, became the protector of the expedition

Left: Jum'ah of the tribe of el-Hassee  
Above: Sherif Masa'd (nephew of Sherif Hazzâ), Emir Nassir Arar Guzzhawy of the Ghor, and a Beni Sukr Sheikh



of souls. This new Arab yeoman farmer, like his American frontier counterpart, "would become settled in his habitation" as he felt "the comforts of civilization gathering around him." Once settled, missionaries could minister to a people "sensually imaginative" but "incapable of a refined, spiritual idea."<sup>49</sup>

Lynch's harsh assessments and sense of cultural superiority were not unique. Such racial, ethnic, and religious distinctions helped many Americans of the period determine the frontiers of civilization. Although in retrospect arrogant, they were nonetheless representative of American attitudes at a time when the apotheosis of western civilization generally and America specifically appeared imminent.

## A HOSTILE RECEPTION

### AND A TURBULENT DECADE

For Lynch, the only thing imminent upon his return to America was controversy. Life after the survey mission was bittersweet. The survey mission became a fresh target for politicians eager to exploit any issue for partisan purposes. As previously noted, congressional critics attacked the commercial rationale of naval exploratory missions. Lynch was particularly stung by Georgia's Alexander Stephens, who argued that the improvement of American commerce began at home. Covetous of internal improvement appropriations, Stephens argued that monies spent surveying the Jordan River and Dead Sea should have been spent improving the Savannah River.<sup>50</sup>

Not surprisingly, Matthew Maury was among the first to defend Lynch. Writing in September 1848, Maury condemned the partisanship that delayed and at times obstructed the navy's scientific duty in support of American commerce. He defended the manner in which Lynch's expedition had been approved as an effort "to snatch it away from party and politician where it does not belong" and to place it in the hands of professionals.<sup>51</sup> In a further response to Congressional complaints, Secretary of the Navy John Y. Mason hurriedly submitted Lynch's official report on the mission to the United States Congress in February 1849. Encouraged by Mason, Lynch placed his case before the American public in May 1849. In the preface to his *Narrative*, Lynch admitted that "indications were such as to induce me to ap-



prehend that it [the mission] was not appreciated." He appealed to "a liberal and enlightened community [who] would not long condemn an

attempt to explore a distant river, and its wondrous reservoir."<sup>52</sup> Lynch's faith in the American public was justified. The *Narrative* was a

commercial success; the first edition quickly sold out. Over the next decade, it went through seven American and two English editions.<sup>53</sup> Sales of the *Narrative* appeared to validate Matthew Maury's contention that public interest in the mission was sufficient enough reason to fund it. Noting the mission's \$700 price, Maury suggested that there was not a "village church in the land, where if the matter had been proposed, such a sum could not have been raised at once."<sup>54</sup> Despite the controversies surrounding his mission, Lynch's career flourished. In 1849, Lynch was finally promoted to commander. In a letter acknowledging his promotion, Lynch proposed a new mission, a search for the missing English explorer

Sir John Franklin. Earlier in the decade, Franklin disappeared during an attempt to locate the Northwest Passage to the Pacific. Sensitized by the criticisms of his recent survey mission, Lynch noted that he could raise the money necessary for the undertaking from private sources. Although the navy eventually sent two expeditions in search of Franklin and the Northwest Passage in 1850-51 and 1853-55, Lynch was not involved in either endeavor. Undeterred, Lynch applied for permission to explore the tributaries of the La Plata River in February 1852. Several months later Lynch finally received permission to explore the western coast of Africa for the purposes of colonization. In October 1852, Lynch sailed to Africa where, despite precautions, he fell ill with fever. Upon his return from Africa and after his recovery from fever, Lynch took command of first the *U.S.S. Alleghany* and later the *U.S.S. Germantown*. Between late 1853 and early 1857, Lynch served in the navy's Brazil Squadron and sailed along the eastern coast of South America collecting plants and animals to improve agriculture in the United States. He was also promoted again, in 1856, to captain. Nonetheless, the decade following his Dead Sea survey mission was an anxious and tumultuous time for Lynch. Although many of Lynch's trials and tribulations during this period were intensely personal, many of his fellow southern naval officers and ultimately the United States experienced similar fears and pains. As noted previously, Lynch's marriage collapsed shortly after his return from the 1848 survey mission. The dissolution of Lynch's marriage presaged the eventual collapse of the United States into civil war. Much as Lynch suffered the conse-

*With Lt. Maury's compliments*

# OFFICIAL REPORT

OF THE

# United States' Expedition

TO EXPLORE THE

# DEAD SEA AND THE RIVER JORDAN,

BY

LIEUT. W. F. LYNCH, U. S. N.

*Published at the National Observatory, Lieut. M. F. MAURY, U. S. N., Superintendent,*

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HON. WM. A. GRAHAM, SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.

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1852.

quences of frequent and long absences from home and family, the political, economic, and cultural bonds that joined North and South suffered the consequences of irreconcilable differences over slavery and the nature of the Union. Consequently, the escalating sectional crisis of the 1850s prompted many southern naval officers to serve not only a national maritime manifest destiny and but also more narrow sectional economic interests.

Lynch's visions of an Ottoman Turkish market for southern cotton and the resettlement of free blacks in Anatolia during the 1848 survey mission and his subsequent explorations of both West Africa and South America during the 1850s reflected these initially parallel but increasingly divided agenda. As director of the Naval Observatory, Lynch's closest friend and ally, Matthew Maury, tried to balance these agenda. However, Maury's secret instructions to the naval officers leading an expedition to the Amazon River basin in 1851-52 revealed distinctly sectional loyalties. According to naval historian Geoffrey S. Smith, Maury feared "that growing northern political and economic strength threatened his section's mores and institutions." Consequently, although personally disgusted by slavery, Maury proposed sending large numbers of slaves into the Amazon to secure both land and markets for southern planters.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, during this same period Lynch explored the possibilities of settling slaves and free blacks in western Africa as part of a plan to expand southern commerce. Neither Lynch nor Maury could accept the sacrifice of southern commerce and institutions as the price of continued national unity.

## JOURNEY'S END

By the time Lynch relinquished command of the *Germantown* in early 1857, American territorial and commercial expansion had ground to a halt. Dreams of a continental and maritime empire evaporated as tensions between northern and southern states neared a breaking point. Although he did not know it at the time, Lynch had commanded his last vessel for the U.S. Navy. Between mid-1857 and the end of 1860, Lynch awaited new orders.

As he waited, Lynch lobbied for expanded American trade with the Far East via the Middle East. In 1860, Lynch published *Commerce and the Holy Land*, an expanded version of a public lecture he delivered several times between 1858 and 1860. In *Commerce and the Holy Land*, Lynch's personal beliefs and experiences in the Jordan Valley coalesced into a passionate appeal for a new American trade route to the east. To Lynch and many other American expansionists of the period, commerce was the primary agent of progress of civilization. As such, commerce was not only a financial enterprise but also a vanguard of cultural progress. Without commerce, Lynch proclaimed, "neither science, nor art, nor civilization, nor religion could have spread beyond the boundaries of the places of their birth."<sup>56</sup> Anticipating historian Brooks Adams later in the century, Lynch argued that civilization emerged in Mesopotamia, flowed westward along Greco-Roman and Anglo-Saxon bloodlines, and found its fullest fruition in mid-century American expansion toward the Pacific and Far Eastern markets. Again, this cultural chauvinism was typical of the period; Lynch's

argument was not unique. As historian Reginald Horsman observed, throughout the 1850s many proponents of American continental expansion linked "their defenses of commerce, Christianity, and racial destiny with the westward movement of civilization."<sup>57</sup>

Lynch's innovation, however, came in the form of a complementary eastern axis of advance. Drawing upon an intellectual and cartographic view of the world popular during the Crusades, Lynch proclaimed the Holy Land "the geographic centre of the united continents of the earth" and declared Palestine a vital hub for transactions in an expanding American commercial empire.<sup>58</sup> Again, Lynch offered only a unique variation on a popular theme in the 1840s and 1850s. Many prominent Americans believed that commerce and Christianity would bring "civilization and progress to backward regions."<sup>59</sup> Antebellum American expansionists described Mexican deserts and Central American jungles as potential paradises; as one historian of the period has noted, "heaven could be found almost anywhere in the tropics of the Western Hemisphere."<sup>60</sup> For Lynch, paradise could also be found in the Middle East.

Although Lynch's 1848 survey demonstrated the Jordan River's unsuitability as a navigable commercial waterway, the Jordan Valley remained a central piece of his blueprint for American commercial expansion. The Jordan Valley offered a middle route between an increasingly troubled Ottoman Turkish empire and European powers, England and France, feuding over a route for what became the Suez Canal. In 1855, an English engineer, W.A. Allen, had proposed blasting a canal from the Medi-



terranean across the path Lynch took to the Sea of Galilee. According to Allen, the rapid influx of Mediterranean seawater would enter the valley, overflow the Sea of Galilee, and unleash a raging torrent down the valley, eventually opening a waterway to Aqaba on the Red Sea coast. Such a route built upon the theories of the Swiss explorer, Johann Burckhardt, whose belief in an ancient Jordan River course reaching the Red Sea persisted until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>61</sup> The idea of an ancient Jordan River watershed underwrote several alternative routes to the east, two of which became bases for Lynch's earlier requests to extend his survey mission in 1848. Lynch had first requested the permission to extend his survey to include the Jordan Valley below the Dead Sea to the Red Sea. He later requested an extension of his survey of the northern valley to include a reconnaissance of possible routes to the Tigris and Euphrates River basin as a means of supporting a trade route via the Persian Gulf to the Orient. Both requests were denied at the time, but the routes remained sources of inspiration for Lynch's belief in an eastern route to the Far East.<sup>62</sup>

In *Commerce and the Holy Land*, Lynch expropriated elements of Allen's plan. He envisioned a canal opening the upper Jordan Valley to the Mediterranean. But, instead of following the route south through the valley to the Red Sea as Allen proposed, Lynch offered two northern routes to the Persian Gulf: a route north via the Jordan and Yarmouk Rivers to the Tigris and Euphrates, as well as a second route to the east and north across the Jordan Valley to Grane, near present day Bahrain. Both routes, Lynch argued, required further exploration and sub-

stantial construction of road, rail, and canal systems. Such an investment of time and money, however, would gain access to a lucrative trade that would benefit both America and the Middle East. In terms of American trade, Lynch's proposed routes would reach both the Pacific and the Atlantic coasts of the U.S., linking the Deep South with the Far East and making it possible to "both *support and make profitable*, as well as build a Pacific Railroad."<sup>63</sup> Lynch hoped that an expanded American commercial empire would benefit not only southern states but also help unite a nation that was tearing itself apart.

Publication of *Commerce and the Holy Land* coincided with the hotly contested 1860 presidential election. Abraham Lincoln's victory in that election signaled the end of both the Union and Lynch's naval career. In December 1860, South Carolina seceded from the Union and on April 12, 1861, opened fire on Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. On April 17, Virginia seceded. The next day Robert E. Lee refused to command troops against his native Virginia and resigned his commission in the U.S. Army. Three days later on April 21, Matthew Maury resigned from the U.S. Navy in Washington. Although certain of his decision, Maury agonized over what he perceived as a betrayal of professional loyalty and kinship to Lynch. Maury need not have worried, since Lynch tendered his resignation the same day from Norfolk.<sup>64</sup>

Over the next four years Lynch and Maury served the Confederate Navy. While Maury served in several administrative and diplomatic posts, Lynch held several combat commands. He commanded a flotilla of small ships in an

ultimately futile defense of the North Carolina coast. Early in the war Maury and Lynch planned for the creation of a gunboat fleet to harass Union shipping; in January 1862, Maury's youngest son joined Lynch's command. One month later, Lynch commanded Confederate forces in the defense of Croatan Island. It was the largest naval engagement of the war for Lynch; it was also a fight that Lynch knew he could never win. On the evening of battle one of Lynch's fellow officers, Lieutenant William Parker, found him in a dressing gown quietly reading *Ivanhoe*. The two officers subsequently spent the remainder of the evening discussing literature rather than plotting strategies for the next day. Parker later described Lynch as a "cultivated man and a most agreeable talker." Parker also claimed that he had "never spent a more delightful evening."

The next day, however, was disastrous; Lynch and his fleet were routed.<sup>65</sup> Such was the pattern of Lynch's Confederate career. Fresh from defeat in North Carolina, Lynch commanded Confederate naval forces in the initial defense of Vicksburg, Mississippi, from March to October 1862. He returned to North Carolina in late 1862 and for the next two years attempted to break the Union's coastal blockade.

In May 1864, Lynch achieved momentary success. In command of the Confederate ironclad *Raleigh*, Lynch drove off the blockaders but, on his return to harbor, ran aground and irreparably damaged his ship.<sup>66</sup> At war's end, Lynch surrendered to federal authorities and was paroled on May 5, 1865. Lynch spent the final six months of his life in Baltimore, Maryland, where died on October 17, 1865.

## A PATRON SAINT CONFIRMED

In 1982, the historian of archaeology Neil Asher Silberman credited Lynch with arousing “intense public interest in the further exploration of Palestine.” Less than ten years after his death, the American Palestine Exploration Fund (APEF) emerged and soon found itself in direct conflict with its parent organization, the British Palestine Exploration Fund. This conflict was soon resolved via a timely division of Palestine for exploratory purposes. The British received exploratory rights to all lands west of the Jordan River and the Americans received the same

rights east of the river.<sup>67</sup> Today, Lieutenant William Francis Lynch’s photograph hangs unobtrusively in the library of the American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR). As ACOR’s unofficial patron saint, Lynch symbolically watches over ACOR facilities, staff, researchers, and visitors. It is particularly appropriate that he do so. For despite his shortcomings, Lynch was an exceptional individual. As a naval officer, he was a dedicated professional. As an explorer, he challenged the unknown with a careful eye to detail. And yes, he was also an opportunist and a product of his times. While his racial, ethnic, religious, and regional biases colored many of

his perceptions and interpretations, he nonetheless held tightly to a vision of a better future for all of humanity. He was a disciple of progress and as such believed that a greater understanding of past and present circumstances served not only the navy and America but also ultimately humankind. As ACOR commemorates the sesquicentennial anniversary of Lynch’s survey mission to the Jordan River and Dead Sea, it not only continues his mission to understand more about Jordan and antiquity but also strives to reveal the past in the service of the present and the future. And in this final respect, ACOR works to fulfill Lynch’s wider mission.



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30. Williams, *Matthew Fontaine Murray*, 341.
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33. Ibid, 331-32.
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## NOTES ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The wood engravings are all from the *Narrative*. They and the maps were based on original drawings and sketches by Lieutenant John B. Dale and Passed-Midshipman R. Aulick under the supervision of Lieutenant Wm. F. Lynch.

Page:

- 1 and 3. Graphic by Atalla Design, based on *Narrative*, facing 146.
8. Map based on *Report*, facing the title page.
10. Photo courtesy of the Eleanor S. Brockenbrough Library, Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia.
12. Transcription courtesy of the Naval Historical Center, Department of the Navy.
13. List of members of the expedition, *Narrative*, viii.
14. Log of the U.S. Supply courtesy of the Naval Historical Center, Department of the Navy.
15. Caravan of the expedition, *Narrative*, facing 146. The copper boat was called *Fanny Mason* and the iron boat *Fanny Skinner*. They were "so constructed as to be easily taken apart into eight pieces." See Edward Montague, *Narrative of the Late Expedition to the Dead Sea. From a Diary by One of the Party* (Philadelphia: Carrey and Hart, 1849), 124. Lieutenant Lynch was not pleased by Montague's rush into print (*Narrative*, v-vi).
16. Map based on *Report*, facing the title page.
17. Ruined bridge of Semakh, *Narrative*, facing 176. The boats had a difficult time passing through these ruins.
18. View of the Jordan, *Narrative*, facing 234.
19. Diary entry, April 18, 1848, *Report*, 31.
19. Shore of the Dead Sea, *Narrative*, facing 276.
20. Pillar of Salt at Usdum, *Narrative*, facing 308. *Narrative*, 307: April 26, "... a lofty, round pillar ... upper or rounded part is about forty feet high, resting on a kind of oval pedestal, from forty to sixty feet above the level of the sea."
20. Wadi Mojeb, *Narrative*, facing 368.
21. Analysis of Dead Sea water, *Report*, 204-5.
21. Organic remains found in the chalk. No. 2, *Venus perovalis*, found on the road from the Dead Sea to Kerak (*Report*, 225); no. 102, *Exogyra densata* found half way between the Dead Sea and Kerak (*Report*, 224); no. 106, *Exogyra densata* from Wadi Zerqa Ma'in (*Report*, 224).
22. Sections based on *Report*, facing 43.
23. Diary entry, May 3, 1848, *Report*, 42.
23. Source of the River Jordan, *Narrative*, the frontispiece. *Report*, 43: "At the foot of Mount Hermon it gushes copious, translucent and cool, from beneath a bold, perpendicular rock, and flows in two rectangular streams between banks literally fringed with flowers."
24. 'Akil Aga el-Hassee', *Narrative*, facing 128. He is

described by Lynch (*Narrative*, 128) as a great border sheikh of the Arabs and he guided the expedition.

24. Sherif Hazzâ of Mecca, *Narrative*, facing 134. He was a 33d lineal descendant of the Prophet (see *Narrative*, 132) whose father and brother had been governors of Mecca until deposed by Mehemet Ali. He was asked to accompany the expedition and did so.
25. Jum'ah of the tribe of el-Hassee, *Narrative*, facing 216.
25. Sherif Masa'd (nephew of Sherif Hazzâ), Emir Nassir Arar Guzzhawy, described as a "powerful prince of the Arabs of the Ghor." (*Report*, 15), and a Beni Sukr Sheikh (*Narrative*, facing 244).
26. Title page of the *Report*. This copy, belonging to the library of the American Center of Oriental Research, is inscribed "With Lt. Maury's compliments."

## MAPS

- Map of the River Jordan & Dead Sea and the Route of the Party under the Command of Lieut. W.F. Lynch U.S.N., *Report*, facing the title page.
- Sketch Map of the River Jordan, *Narrative*, facing 13.
- Sketch Map of the Dead Sea, *Narrative*, facing 268.













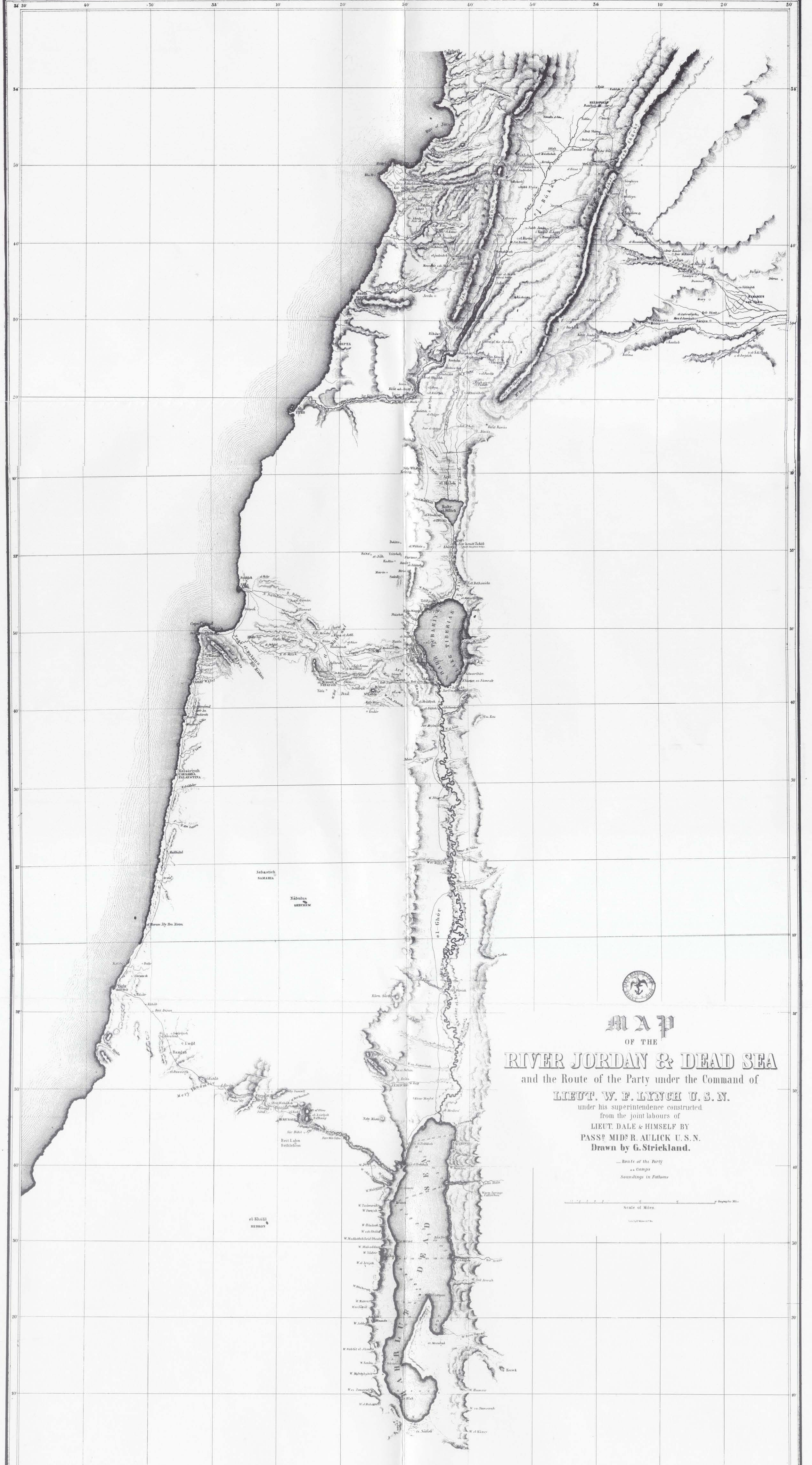
Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1869, by Lea & Blanchard, in the District Court of the eastern district of Pennsylvania.

P. S. Duval's steam lith press Philad!









**MAP**  
OF THE  
**RIVER JORDAN & DEAD SEA**  
and the Route of the Party under the Command of  
**LIEUT. W. F. LYNCH U. S. N.**  
under his superintendence constructed  
from the joint labours of  
**LIEUT. DALE & HIMSELF BY**  
**PASS<sup>g</sup> MID<sup>g</sup> R. AULICK U. S. N.**  
**Drawn by G. Strickland.**

— Route of the Party  
•• Camps  
Soundings in Fathoms





American Center of Oriental Research  
Amman, Jordan