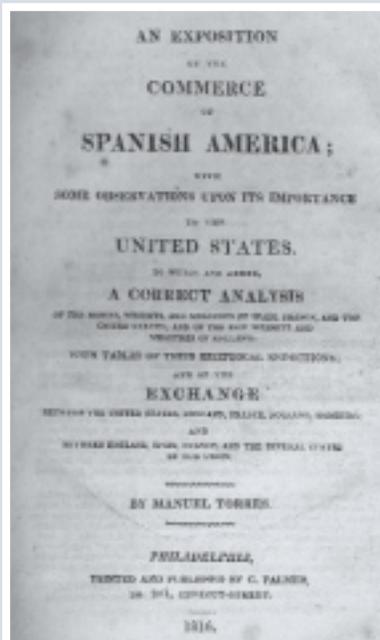


Philadelphia’s political connection with Latin America began in large part because of a man dubbed the “Franklin of the Southern world” by William Duane, editor of the *Aurora*. Manuel de Trujillo y Torres (1762–1822), more commonly referred to as Manuel Torres, emigrated from Spain in 1778 to New Granada, which later became the Republic of Colombia. A student of Enlightenment philosophy, Torres took part in a conspiracy to overthrow Spanish colonial rule of New Granada in 1794. Forced to flee the country, he left his family behind and sought asylum in the United States.

Manuel Torres arrived in Philadelphia in 1796 where he remained until his death in 1822. Philadelphia, still the capital of the nation and the center of revolutionary activity, seemed an obvious choice for the politically minded Torres. Commercial trade between Philadelphia and the Spanish colonies was booming and Philadelphia was the center of Latin American study and influence, due to the American Philosophical Society’s interest in the subject. Nearly every Latin American leader who visited the country came to Philadelphia at some point during his travels, including General Francisco de Miranda of Venezuela and Simón Bolívar, both of whom Torres undoubtedly met. Thus, despite his physical departure from the Hispanic world, Torres maintained close ties to other Latin American patriots throughout their revolutionary period.

Upon arriving in Philadelphia, Torres made contacts with many of the city’s important political leaders and these friendships aided Torres in disseminating information regarding the situation in Latin America. One of Torres’s closest allies was William Duane, editor of the popular newspaper *Aurora*. Duane went to Torres for advice on Latin American issues and allowed Torres to publish his articles advocating the independence of the Spanish colonies. Perhaps the most famous piece of Latin American propaganda of the period was an anonymously authored pamphlet entitled *Reflexiones sobre el comercio de España con sus colonias en tiempo de guerra*. As it was published in Philadelphia



Manuel Torres, *An Exposition of the Commerce of Spanish America* (Philadelphia, 1816).

in 1800, Torres may have been the author. In 1816 Torres did write a tract on Spanish-American trade, titled *An Exposition of the Commerce of Spanish America: With Some Observations upon Its Importance to the United States*.

When the Latin American wars of independence were set in motion in 1810, Torres took a leading role in shaping public opinion in the United States. Through correspondence with his many friends in Latin America, he kept abreast of the events of the wars. Revolutionaries seeking help from the United States turned to Manuel Torres for assistance in gaining access to arms and recognition from the American government. His acquaintance with prominent businessmen allowed Torres to arrange meetings for his Latin American visitors, which gave them valuable contacts for both the supply of arms and future business endeavors.

In his 26 years residing in the United States, Manuel Torres became the premier liaison between the Spanish-speaking and the English-speaking worlds of the Americas. In 1818, Simón Bolívar appointed Torres to the position of chargé d'affaires of Venezuela. Shortly before his death, Torres met with President Monroe in June 1822 as a diplomatic officer of Gran Colombia, a union of New Granada and Venezuela. This historic event marked the first official acknowledgment by the United States of an independent Latin American nation. In addition to Gran Colombia, President Monroe recognized the independence of Chile, Peru, Argentina, and Mexico in 1822.

Upon his death just one month later, Torres was buried with full military honors in the cemetery of old St. Mary’s Church on 4th and Spruce Streets in Philadelphia. Today, a plaque stands in his honor reading, “As minister of the Republic of Colombia he was the first Latin American diplomatic representative in the United States of America.”

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Information from Charles H. Bowman Jr., “Manuel Torres, A Spanish American Patriot in Philadelphia, 1796–1822,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 94 (1970): 26–53.