Southern Expansion in the Caribbean Region, 1850-1860

Keith Ross Speiran

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses

Part of the History of the Pacific Islands Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses/3908
SOUTHERN EXPANSIONISM IN THE
CARIBBEAN REGION, 1850-1860

by

Keith Ross Speiran

A thesis presented to the
Faculty of the School of Graduate
Studies in partial fulfillment
of the
Degree of Master of Arts

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
July, 1964
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful appreciation is extended to Dr. Avery O. Craven, who as a visiting Professor of History at Western Michigan University, for the school year 1962-1963, interested the author in Southern history, especially the filibustering expeditions.

Sincere acknowledgement is expressed to Dr. Albert Castel, Professor of History, Western Michigan University, for the encouragement, assistance, and counsel he contributed in the preparation of this thesis.

Deepest appreciation is made to Nancy Speiran, whose help, patience and understanding were so bountifully given during the writing of this thesis.

Keith Ross Speiran
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE BACKGROUND: 1846-1850</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansionism, North and South</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Why Men Went A-Filibustering&quot;</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUBA</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early American Interest in Cuba</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narciso López</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round Island Expedition: 1849</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cardenas Expedition: 1850</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bahia Honda Expedition: 1851</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ostend Manifesto</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Bow's Review</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICARAGUA</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny: William Walker</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walker's First Endeavor in Nicaragua</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Last Attempts of Walker to Establish Himself in Nicaragua</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE KNIGHTS OF THE GOLDEN CIRCLE</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposes and Ideals</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Knight's Expeditions to Mexico</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Illustration Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Region of López's Filibustering Attempts</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>William Walker's Area of Filibustering</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The term "Filibuster" has a different connotation in modern times than that of a hundred years ago. Today, according to The American College Dictionary, the term means, "a member of a minority in a legislative assembly who resorts to irregular or obstructive tactics to prevent the adoption of a measure generally favored, or to force a decision almost unanimously disliked." The dictionary also gives the older definition, which will be used in this paper. This meaning is "an irregular military adventurer; a freebooter or buccaneer."

The purpose of this thesis is to describe a number of filibustering attempts in the period from 1850 to 1860. There were three attempts by Narciso López to take the island of Cuba; three tries by William Walker to establish a dictatorship over the country of Nicaragua; and finally there was the dream of the Knights of the Golden Circle to secure control over Mexico.

While describing these filibustering endeavors, the writer hopes to show that the South had a different reason for its brand of "Manifest Destiny" than the rest of the United States. The Southern idea centered around the concept of more territory for the South only, which would be used to protect slavery, while the rest of the country
wanted more territory for the whole nation.

It is also the aim of the writer to show that the fillibustering efforts and the militant spirit that raged in the breast of many Southerners did not stem from economic motives alone, but from political reasons also, mainly that of securing additional political strength for the South. The South had the notion that its political power was lost after 1850. This was not so; Southern politicians had control of Presidents Pierce and Buchanan after 1850, and, if complete madness had not seized the South, it could have dominated the election of 1860. However, because of unfounded fears, certain Southerners tried to increase the South's power through foreign expansion.

In the preface of his book *A Decade of Sectional Controversy: 1851-1861*, Henry H. Simms says, "Fascinating and perplexing in its implications, even if tragic in its consequences, the decade prior to 1861 is one of undying interest to students of American history." The writer has chosen the years 1850 to 1860 because they began with the first Lopez expedition to Cuba in late 1849 and ended with the death of William Walker in his third effort to take possession of Nicaragua in September, 1860. In October of the same year, the Knights of the Golden Circle gave up their thoughts of acquiring Mexico.

The author has chosen another reason for starting with the year 1850. He feels that 1850 was a pivotal year for the forces of expansionism in Southern history. By this time, many people in the South felt that they were being cheated and that the rest of the United States was passing them by. The South, they asserted, had gained nothing from the Mexican War. The attitude of the time of the war was not an "all of Mexico" policy. By 1850, with John C. Calhoun at their head, the Southerners argued that the South had the right to take their slaves into any new territory. The South had moved into an abstract field of reasoning with this argument, and, thus, away from the ability to compromise. The abstract field of reasoning that Calhoun entered postulated that the South had a right to take slavery into any new territory even before the United States had secured control of that territory, and that the South, as a minority section, must have its rights protected against the North, because it feared the North would destroy the Southern existence. The South also felt that slavery was in danger, which meant, therefore, that the South was in danger. The South could see where the North was growing stronger politically and economically, and this fear only made many Southerners more intensely nationalistic in their sectional feelings. The region no longer felt secure, and Southerners came closer together in a common search for means to re-establish their security.
The Compromise of 1850 was another great sectional compromise. Relief due to surviving the 1850 crisis was great on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line, but the Southern extremists felt little relief. Instead they had a regenerated fear of the "Colossus of the North," which men like William L. Yancey used at every opportunity to stir disunion sentiment. The Compromise of 1850 brought the state of California in on the side of the free states, thus upsetting the balance of power that the South contended it must have in order to protect its institution of slavery.

The Nashville convention met in 1850 with a total of 179 delegates. The charge was made that it was a secession movement, but this soon proved false. A second convention met on November 11, 1850, and was attended by the disunionists, while the conservative elements stayed away. The disunionist element passed resolutions that denounced the Compromise of 1850. This acted as a platform on which the secessionists could point out the dangers that their section was facing, as well as a means to gather support.

The people of the Lower South, with their headquarters at New Orleans, were the leading expansionists during the 1850-1860 period. These extremists with such spokesmen as John A. Quitman of Mississippi, L. W. Spratt

---

of South Carolina, William L. Yancey of Alabama, Louis T. Wigfall of Texas, and J.D.B. De Bow of Louisiana gathered a rather large following by constant agitation and propaganda. The Old South and the border states were not interested in gaining more territory for slavery. They had lost the power which they held for so long in the section, and they were afraid that more territory would add to their decline. Edmund Ruffin, of Virginia, the ante-bellum South's greatest soil expert, was more interested in building up his plantation than slave territory; many more in the Old South felt other problems to be more important than new territory.

Expansionism, North and South

The Mexican War officially started with the Declaration of War by Congress on May 13, 1846. With President Polk being a Southerner and a believer in "Manifest Destiny" a cry was soon raised that the war was an endeavor to extend the evils of slavery and increase the power of the slave holders. James Russell Lowell, in the summer of 1846 wrote this poem about the South and the Mexican War:

'T wouldn't suit them Southern fellers,
They're a dreffle graspin' set,
We must ollers blow the bellers
When they want their irons het;
May be it's all ez preachin;
But my narves it kind o' grates,
When I see the overreachin'
O' them nigger-drivin' States.
They may talk o' Freedom's ary
Tell they're pupple in the face,--
It's a grand get cemetery
Fer the barth rights of our race;
They just want this Californy
So's to lug new slave-states in
To abuse e and to scorn ye,
An' to plunder ye like sin.

Aint it cute to see a Yankee
Take sech everlasting pains,
All to get the Devil's thankee
Wy, it's just ez clear ez fingers,
Clear ez one and one makes two,
Chaps tht make black slaves o' niggers
Want to make white slaves o' you. 3

This was the type of Northern propaganda which drew the South closer together.

The Mexican War was not a war to extend the power of slavery. It was fought to extend the holdings of the United States to the Pacific. While the war was being fought, there was in the United States a strong support for an "all of Mexico" policy, with which President Polk had at least potential sympathy. President Polk told his cabinet on September 4, 1847, that if the war was prolonged he would be unwilling to pay the amount of money that Nicholas Trist, United States peace commissioner to Mexico, was authorized to offer for the settlement of territory, but if Mexico would still refuse to make a treaty he was "in favor of insisting on more territory than the provinces named." 4

3 Quoted in Chauncy S. Boucher, "In Re That Aggressive Slaveocracy," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, VIII (June, 1921), 29. Henceforth the Mississippi Valley Historical Review will be cited as MVHR.

4 Ibid., 49.
wanted more territory "for the spread of population," they
were speaking the language of all Western men and of those
filled with the desire for more land for the whole United
States, in the North as well as the South. The time had
not yet arrived for the seeds of sectionalism to flower into
the plant of Southern nationalism.

Northern senators who favored an "all of Mexico"
policy were Senator Daniel S. Dickinson of New York, who,
at a Jackson Day Dinner, toasted: "A More Perfect Union
embracing the entire North American Continent;" others
were Senator Edward A. Hennegan of Indiana, Senator Lewis
Case of Michigan, Senator William Allan of Ohio, and
Senators Sidney Breese and Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois.
Southern Senators were David Atchison of Missouri, Senators
Foote and Jefferson Davis of Mississippi and Senators Sam
Houston and Thomas J. Rusk of Texas. These were just a few
of the Congressmen who wanted all of Mexico. One can see
there was bi-partisan support in the Senate for an aggressive
policy against Mexico.

To demonstrate an old saying about "strange

---

8 Avery O. Craven, The Growth of Southern Nationalism,
1848-1861, Vol. VI of A History of the South, ed. Wendell
H. Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter (10 vols. Baton Rouge:

9 Edward G. Bourne, "The United States and Mexico,
1847-1848, "American Historical Review, V (April, 1900),
493. Henceforth the American Historical Review will be
cited as AHR.

10 John D. P. Fuller, "The Slavery Question and the
Movement to Acquire Mexico," WVHR, XXI (June, 1934), 38.
bedfellows," *The National Era*, a strong anti-slavery paper, advocated taking all of Mexico, then admitting each Mexican state into the Union as soon as possible. It was hoped that these states from Mexico would put an end to the expansion of slavery in the west and south.

There was much opposition to the "all of Mexico" policy in the South, mainly developed because of the Wilmot Proviso. The Proviso, introduced on a hot August evening in 1846, by David Wilmot, a Democratic Representative from Pennsylvania, moved to add an amendment to an appropriation bill that slavery should be prohibited in any territory acquired from Mexico. The reaction to the Proviso from the Southern Representatives was swift and violent, and the implications of this would be used by the South as a rallying point in the years to come. The Proviso was defeated, but the question of slavery expansion was not to be settled from this time forward until the Civil War.

Mr. Percy Walker from Mobile wrote on October 10, 1847:

> The Mexican war has been used by our northern and eastern enemies as a means by which they hope to rob us of all constitutional guarantees, subvert institutions most essential to our peace and prosperity, strip us of the insignia of sovereignty, pass a sentence of social degeneration.

---

De Bow denounced the Proviso: "The South, has with just indignation, and with one voice, condemned the nefarious scheme in its very bud, which threatens in all future time to reduce her to a subordinate position in the Union...." Senator Robert Toombs of Georgia, felt that Southern rights in the territories should not be trifled with, but he was against adding any new territory. He said the country had enough territory, and that the people should improve land already possessed: "...let us cover it with an industrious, enterprising population, who spread over its mountains and its valleys till the wilderness is covered with waving harvests." To Toombs, this included the slaveholders, because these men had helped to win the territory. Toombs felt it would be a harder task to drive out these men than had been the case with the Mexicans.  

In the opening session of Congress in 1848, Calhoun declared:

That to conquer Mexico or hold it, either as a province or to incorporate it in the Union, would be inconsistent with the avowed object of which the war has been prosecuted; and departure from the settled policy of the government; in conflict with its character and genius, and in the end subversive of our free and popular institutions.

13 Bourne, AHR, V, 498.
15 Craven, Growth of Southern Nationalism, p. 38.
16 Quoted in Bourne, AHR, V, 495-7.
This was not the real purpose behind Calhoun's concern. He saw, in the acquisition of territory, the question of slavery, as stated in the Wilmot Proviso. He knew that slavery would be stopped from going into these regions. If this territory would be made into free states, then in time the Constitution would be amended to exclude slavery; therefore no new territory must be taken from Mexico.

John Fuller in his article of June, 1934, "The Slavery Question and the Movement to Acquire Mexico," in the Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXI, stated that the "chief support for the absorption of Mexico came from the North and West and from those whose pro-slavery or anti-slavery bias was not a prime consideration." Fuller further stated that the overwhelming majority of slaveholders were opposed to the acquisition of Mexico. "Among those slaveholders who were principally concerned with the fortunes of slavery opposition was unanimous." Their reasons were the same as those of Calhoun.

When the war was over, another troublesome issue came to the foreground: that of governments for the annexed territories just acquired from Mexico. When

18 Fuller, MVHR, XXI, 48.
19 Ibid., 42.
President Polk asked for territorial governments for Oregon, New Mexico and upper California. Robert S. Baldwin of Connecticut and Arthur P. Bagby of Alabama submitted resolutions in the House in which the slavery question (the Northerners wanted no slavery; the Southerners wanted it extended) would be of prime consideration in efforts to establish governments. From the heated sessions came only a government for Oregon. The issue of slavery got to be such a problem that Thomas Hart Benton said that "the real business of the country urgent, crying business of the country," was being stopped.

We read in Holy Writ that a certain people were cursed by the plague of frogs, and that the plague was everywhere. You could not look upon the table but there were frogs, you could not sit down at the banquet table but there were frogs, you could not go to the bridal couch and lift the sheets but there were frogs... We can see nothing, touch nothing, have no measures proposed, without having this pestilence thrust before us. Here it is, this black question, forever on the table, on the nuptial couch, everywhere!

The South could not hope to extend its "peculiar institution" to Oregon, and few felt that slavery could have survived in New Mexico, but the Southerners were unwilling to yield what they believed to be a constitutional right. Senator John M. Clayton of Delaware worked to secure a compromise in which Oregon would be free, while California and New Mexico would be organized with no action being taken on slavery. Clayton wanted to have this question up to the left

20 Quoted in Craven, Growth of Southern Nationalism.
local and federal courts. This plan failed, and all that was accomplished was the organization of Oregon. This session of Congress did little to heal the wounds of sectional hostility.

During the summer of 1849, Southern states followed the example of the Virginia Legislature when it declared that the passage of the Wilmot Proviso would present to the people the "alternatives of submission to the oppression and outrage...or determined resistance at all hazards and to the last extremity." When California asked to be admitted as a free state, new vigor was added to the Southern movement of unity against the attacks on slavery.

The stage was set for the great sectional struggle when Congress met in December, 1849. Tempers and passions arose and quickened on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line. In the House of Representatives, the Democrats and Whigs were nearly equal in numbers with the balance of power in the hands of the Free-Soilers. The House tried for days to elect a Speaker, with the South demanding a person who could protect Southern rights. As tempers rose, the cries of disunion gathered like thunder clouds for a summer storm,

21 Ibid., p 46.

22 Howard Perkins, "Neglected Phase of the Movement for Southern Unity," Journal of Southern History, XII (May, 1946), 157. Henceforth the Journal of Southern History will be cited as JSH. In January, 1850, Alabama passed the following resolution: "That in the event of the passage of any law by Congress debarring the Southern States from a just participation in the possession and enjoyment of the territories of the United States, we call upon the people of the slaveholding states to meet us in convention for the purpose of taking such action as our rights may demand." Detroit Free Press, January 10, 1850.
and the legislative processes were brought to a halt. 
Combs of Georgia gained the floor and spoke some very 
soothing words. He said that if Congress tried by legis­
lation to drive the South from the territories of Cali­
ifornia and New Mexico which were "purchased by the common 
blood and treasure of the whole people," and to abolish 
slavery in the District of Columbia, thus putting a "national degradation upon half the States of the Con­
federacy, I Am For Disunion; and, if my physical courage be 
equal to the maintenance of conviction of right and duty, 
I will devote all I am and all I have on earth to its 
consummation." This speech brought forth loud applause. 
Edward J. Barker of Illinois spoke of love of the Union, 
and he denied that the wish of the majority of the Northern 
men was to bring up the issue of disunion or "to excite 
unreasonable agitation." Debate was suspended for con­
tinuous voting. Then, on December 23, Howell Cobb of 
Georgia was elected by a plurality vote.

In the Senate, tempers did not reach the vicious­
ness that they did in the House, but it soon became evident 
that something must be done for the sake of the Union. 
Henry Clay answered the call to save the Union once more.

23 Quoted in Craven, Growth of Southern Nationalism, 
p 68.
24 Ibid.
On January 29, 1850, Clay submitted eight resolutions that he hoped would settle the slavery controversy and help the Union. The following are the important ones: California was to be admitted to the Union as a free state, which was only right since it had asked for admission as one; the rest of the territory taken from Mexico was to be organized without provision for or against slavery; Texas was to be compensated for a boundary settlement; the slave trade (not slavery) was to be abolished in the District of Columbia, with adequate security for slavery as long as it existed in Maryland or until her people along with those of the District should accept compensation for abolition; and a new and stronger fugitive-slave law was to be passed. On February 5, Clay arose to defend his proposals. He argued each point clearly and called for serious consideration, but the response to Clay's speech was not immediately favorable. The Speaker of the House, Cobb, called it a "great speech" but felt "no good...would result from it." Foote denied the right of "Congress to abolish slavery in the District." Debate continued on the Compromise with Jefferson Davis rejecting all consideration for compromise. Then, John C. Calhoun, who was too ill

26 As quoted in Craven, *Growth of Southern Nationalism*, p. 72.
to deliver his speech, had Senator James Mason of Virginia read his denunciation of the compromise. Calhoun wanted "simple justice" for the South, meaning equality in the territories, strict enforcement of the fugitive-slave law, and amendments to the Constitution that would give the South the power it wanted, even though it would let a minority rule a majority. His proposals left no room for compromise and, in effect, asked the North to surrender completely, which was impossible.

Three days later Daniel Webster spoke in favor of Compromise. He pointed out that "nature, and not Northern votes would make New Mexico free." Webster felt there should be a stronger fugitive-slave law, and declared that the South had a just grievance. New England's anti-slavery leaders were outraged by Webster's support of the compromise, especially the fugitive-slave law. "One called him a "Benedict Arnold," and another spoke of "the meanness of the lion turned spaniel in his fawning on the master whose hands he was licking." Senator Benton decried Calhoun's speech, pointing out that in 1836 Congress gave the Platte Territory which


28 Craven, Growth of Southern Nationalism, p. 76.
was one hundred miles north of the Missouri Compromise Line to Missouri, and only five years before had admitted Texas as a slave state. "The South had been inflamed by the cry of 'Wolf' and there was no wolf, and if given a chance, the Senate and the people would prove it."  

As the great debate developed in the national capital, the Southern spokesmen became more aggressive in their newspapers and public meetings. When Mississippi issued a call for a Southern convention, the appeal fell on fertile ground, and some hoped the convention would be used for secession. But, by the time the convention was ready to meet, the atmosphere had changed. The forces of compromise were gaining, and the shadow of discredit began to fall on the meeting, owing to the allegation that the convention was for disunion. Only nine of the slave states sent delegates, the largest contingent coming from Tennessee (one hundred and two), thus creating a conservative mood; Virginia sent six, South Carolina seventeen, Georgia twelve, Mississippi eleven, Texas one, Alabama twenty-one, Arkansas and Florida six apiece. Judge William L. Sharkey was elected president; his address called for harmony and was very conservative in tone, stressing that the purpose of the meeting was to preserve

the Union. The resolutions adopted were examples of moderation. There was only one section which was belligerent:

That slave-holding States cannot and will not submit to the enactment by Congress of any law imposing onerous conditions or restraints upon the right of masters to remove with their property into the territories of the United States, or to any law making discriminations in favor of the proprietors of other property against them. 32

The convention was a failure, because it did not call for the secession of the Southern states. Yet, it was worthy of notice, for the disunionist went home and preached secession more openly, gaining followers by the skillful use of propaganda.

The Compromise could not be enacted because of Southern opposition under the leadership of Calhoun and Northern opposition under President Taylor. Calhoun died in March, while Taylor passed away in July 1850, leaving the Compromise in more friendly hands. Still, support for the omnibus bill could not be found, because the Senators would not vote for all portions in one package. Stephen A. Douglas was the driving force which secured enough votes. Douglas put each resolution of the omnibus bill into a separate bill and in this way was able to secure enough support from Democrats and Whigs to get each measure

passed by September 16. The House concurred after some very stormy sessions.

The Compromise was accepted by the North and the South with a feeling of relief, although the extremists on both sides were not happy and continued to exploit the situation. The pro-slavery men were happier when there was nothing in the Territorial Acts which pronounced, or even implied, a moral judgment against slavery. Thus, an open conflict was avoided for another eleven years.

By 1850, the extreme Southern nationalist felt that he was denied rightful access to any new territory that would come to the United States. The Compromise of 1850 had not settled the basic question of slavery extension. Therefore, Southern expansionists began seeking ways to gain new lands for slavery. The lands around the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea drew the interest of the slavery-expansionists. The South felt the increased intersectional tension, and this, combined with the feeling that theslaveholding states were at a serious political disadvantage in dealing with the North, "provided an important additional stimulus for seeking territorial outlets." In the turbulent decade of the fifties, with the South shut off from the West, some Southerners began looking beyond the borders of the United States for lands to conquer. "We must

---

33 Craven, Growth of Southern Nationalism, p. 103.

reinforce the powers of slavery as an element for political control," declared the Richmond Enquirer, "and this can only be done by annexation of Cuba." The Southern Standard, published at Charleston, South Carolina, insisted that "with Cuba and St. Domingo, we could control the production of the tropics, and, with them, the commerce of the world, and with that, the power of the world." In the scramble that ensued, the South was first to reach unsuccessfully for Cuba to protect her "white man's country."

"Why Men Went A-Filibustering"*

As the 1850's dawned, the country was gripped by the passions of "Manifest Destiny:" the United States had just been successful with Mexico; California was a state, and Oregon was safely within the fold. The land from the Missouri River to the Pacific was waiting to be settled. Albert K. Weinberg, in Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History, said that the "'fifties' seem to be a heyday of 'spread-eagleism,'" and a

---


contemporary French observer "declared this filibustering seems to be almost a national institution of the American people."\(^{37}\)

The people of the 1850's were possessed with superabundant energy. The whole North American continent lay before them for the taking and for more than half a century they had been gaining possession of this land in whatever way seemed the most convenient. Louisiana was purchased, West Florida and Texas were acquired by a certain degree of filibustering; California came to the United States by conquest.

It has already been pointed out that one of the purposes of filibustering was the further expansion of slave territory. Not all the men that joined the expeditions were zealous apostles of slavery, but many of their abbetters were of that type. The wastefulness of the slavery system made the acquisition of virgin lands a necessity. Without new lands the institution would be doomed, bringing on social and industrial changes the results of which could not be foreseen. This had its political connotations, which called for a balance of power between the two sections in the Senate. This balance was lost forever; therefore, eyes were cast southward.

Most of the filibusters came from the South, not only for the purpose of the extension of slavery, but reinforce the powers of slavery as an element for political
because of the Southern way of life. The Southern civilization was more militant than that of the North. The Southerners still clung to the traditions and customs of Sir Walter Scott and the age of chivalry. These men were a special breed of fighters who were not afraid of death. For William Walker in Nicaragua, these men won battles on sheer "guts" alone. These men of the plains and mountains did not have the ordinary fears; what motives kept them going back on the filibustering expeditions when they knew what hardships would be encountered? They felt they could win because they were right. When these men landed, they would take on stature and be invincible.

CHAPTER II

CUBA

Early American Interest in Cuba

Since the time of early American history, the United States was allowed to trade with Cuba; and during the Revolutionary War, the Island was used by the Americans as a source of food and a base for privateers. At different times, Spain, however, tried to bring the Island under tighter control. In 1799, Spain issued a Royal Order that forbade trade between the United States and Cuba. Trade was still carried on, however, by illegal methods and by the payment of very high custom prices.¹

Thomas Jefferson was the first President of the United States who entertained serious ideas about the annexation of Cuba. In a cabinet meeting Jefferson asked if Spain did not include West Florida in the Louisiana purchase and added that if Spain refused to do so, the United States should take it by force and put an embargo on all Spanish colonies in America. Nothing came of this suggestion, but, Jefferson told Anthony Merry, the British Minister to the United States, that if war with Spain should come, "East and West Florida and successively the

Island of Cuba, the possession which was necessary to the defense of Louisiana and Florida, ... would be an easy conquest."

In 1822, the fate of Cuba became the concern of the United States, because France was preparing to invade Spain, which in turn might lead to French intervention in Cuba. The United States made contact with a Cuban agent by the name of Bernadé Sánchez who offered a plan for annexation. John Quincy Adams, then Secretary of State, said that Calhoun wanted to annex the island; and two years before, Thomas Jefferson said that the United States, at the first opportunity, would take the "Pearl of the Antilles," even if it meant war with England. Sánchez's offer was rejected on the grounds that the President was powerless to promise that Cuba would be admitted to the Union. Another reason stated that it would create bad feelings between the United States and Spain. The government secretly requested more information on the revolutionary movement and its chances of success.

It was rumored variously in 1823 that Mexico or Columbia would annex Cuba, that France would invade the Island, that Spain would cede the Island to Britain in return for loans, and that the Cubans would start a

2 Ibid., p. 15.
3 Ibid., p. 21.
4 Ibid.
revolution. A proposal was made by the United States that for certain concessions the United States, along with Columbia and Mexico, would guarantee Spain's position in Cuba. Adams wanting more support against the British and trying to end the threat of French invasion of the Island, offered Spain a joint guarantee with France. Nothing came of these projects.

With all this intrigue over Cuba, the London Courier drew an excellent parallel between Turkey and Cuba: Cuba was the "Turkey of transatlantic politics, tottering to its fall, and kept from falling only by the struggles of those who contend for the right of catching her in her descent."

As the United States moved into the period of the 1840's, the South began to worry about Cuba. The island of Haiti had free Negroes; the Spanish-American Republics and the British and French West Indies were also free of slavery. The South feared that Great Britain would force Spain to free the slaves on Cuba, and this would bring a Negro Republic almost to the doorsteps of the South. John Calhoun wrote a note early in 1844 to Lord Aberdeen in which he stated that the President of the United States

---

5 The "concessions" were independence for Mexico and Columbia, and liberalization of Spain's commercial regulations in Cuba. Ibid., p. 22.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., pp. 44-45.
was deeply distressed with the British desires concerning the general abolition of slavery throughout the world.

A general agitation developed in the South for the annexation of the "Pearl of the Antilles," due to "Manifest Destiny" and the fear of a free Negro Republic. A resolution was proposed in the Senate by Senator David Yulee of Florida:

Resolved, That, in the opinion of the Senate, it is advisable for the president to open negotiations with the Government of Spain for the cession to the United States of the Island of Cuba, the inhabitants of said Island consenting thereto.

When the resolution came up for debate, it was withdrawn.

The New Orleans Bee, on August 14, 1847, stated in a stinging article designed to quiet the talk about Cuba:

The New York Sun has undertaken to revive this Cuba humbug, to warm the inanimate nursling of Mr. Yulee into existence, and to play putative father to as rickety and jointless and languid an abortion as was ever spawned from the sickly brains of progressive democracy.

---

8 Ibid., p. 45.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid. Another resolution was offered by Representative R. Smith of Illinois in 1846. Before he made his resolution, another was offered in the Senate on December 22, 1845, with the same wording as Mr. Yulee's by Mr. Levy, Mr. Levy withdrew his on December 27. Niles National Register, LXVIII (September-March 1845-1846, pp 258ff, pp 277ff. The Niles Register reported that a meeting was held on September 20, 1856, in St. Clair County, Illinois, where "it was adopted that the chair appoint five persons to make a report about the annexation of Cuba." p. 37.
11 Ibid., LXXII, 387.
On the day that word arrived in Washington that Mexico had ratified the peace treaty, it was decided in a cabinet meeting to send full instructions to Romulus M. Saunders (United States Minister to Spain) to try to buy Cuba. Saunders was authorized to offer Spain between $50,000,000 and $100,000,000 for this choice piece of real-estate. Saunders did not follow his instructions; he went on his own initiative, saying that the American public had created the impression if he, Saunders, intensified his efforts and offered liberal terms, Spain would sell Cuba.

Would Perdo J. Fidal, the Spanish Foreign Minister be interested in hearing more concerning the sale of Cuba? Fidal declared that he thought that Saunders was not able to make such an offer, but could only negotiate. Saunders replied that he only wanted to know if Her Majesty would discuss the subject. Fidal answered most positively: "That it was more than any Minister dare, to entertain any such proposition." Fidal felt he knew the feelings of all Spaniards, which was "that sooner than to see the Island transferred to any power, they would prefer seeing it sunk in the Ocean." This ended the negotiations without them getting under way; Fidal never heard about the $100,000,000 offer.

There were then as in later years many newspaper editorials calling for the annexation of Cuba, not only in

Rauch, American Interest in Cuba, pp. 96-97.
the slave states, but in the North as well. The Northern newspapers called for the annexation as a means of fulfilling our "Manifest Destiny." The New York Sun was especially active in campaigning for annexation. There was a defensive motive also for the desire of Cuba. The American government did not want the island to come under British control, for this would cut off American trade in the Caribbean in the event of war with Great Britain.

The decision of Cuban exiles to start active filibustering assaults on Cuba were based on the realization that the Taylor Administration would not renew Polk's efforts to purchase Cuba, and, also, by the shifting to America of the center of Cuban revolutionary activity. This brings on the stage the first of the three filibustering adventures under the leadership of Narciso López.

---

13 Ibid., p. 59. "Cuba must be ours!...To us it is indispensable. We want its harbors for our ships to touch to and from Mexico—for the accommodation of American and English transatlantic steamers—for its products and trade, and as the Grand key to the Gulf of Mexico. Give us Cuba, and our possessions are complete." It further states that "Spain is ready to sell, the Cubans are waiting for us to make the purchase, and to come at once into the Union." This editorial was dated July 23, 1847. It was also reprinted in the Niles Register, LXXII, 338.

14 Rauch, American Interest in Cuba, p. 108.
Narciso López

Narciso López was born in Venezuela and was of Creole blood. During the war for independence in South America, he fought on the side of the Spanish forces. He rose to the rank of colonel in the Loyalist forces, and, when Spain withdrew, López went with the Spanish army to Cuba. During this tour of duty in Cuba, López married a daughter of a noble family; with this event, his interests became Cuban.

Later, López went to Spain where he changed his views and became a liberal; there he championed Queen María Christina and her small daughter María Isabel against Don Carlos, the late King's brother. María Christian was fighting to break the traditional Salic Laws which excluded a female from succession to the Throne. López rose to the rank of Field Marshal in the ensuing battles. After the Queen's victory, López returned to Cuba where he became governor of the province of Trinidad. He lost this important post in 1843 when Captain General Leopoldo O'Donnell replaced him. López was forced to enter business, but was unsuccessful because of inexperience and gambling losses. It was during this time that he became a revolutionary; he had to flee Cuba when his activities became very well

---

There is one point concerning López on which most authors agree: the South used him as an instrument in trying to extend slavery. Samuel F. Bemis says, "...he [López] became the instrument of revolt in Cuba and the tool of the slavery expansionists in the United States."  
Wallace said that López followed the plan of other Cuban revolutionaries, which was to "achieve Cuban independence, possibly by the intervention of the United States, and to retain slavery as an institution. If the price for American help meant annexation he wanted the admittance of Cuba to the United States as a slave state." Rauch declared that "whatever anti-slavery sentiments he had entertained were submerged in deference to the American South and in hope of its support." His plan was meant to appeal to as broad a base as possible, "and he won the adherence of American adventurers, enthusiasts of Manifest Destiny and partisans of the South and slavery, European liberal revolutionary exiles, and [some] Cuban slave owners and liberals."

A better book to read about López is R.G. Caldwell's The López Expeditions to Cuba: 1848-1851, (Princeton University Press, 1915), but he is also inclined to look upon the filibusters in a heroic way.


Wallace, Destiny and Glory, p. 57.

Rauch, American Interest in Cuba, p. 108.
López did not have the complete backing of the Cuban Council of New York. The Cuban Council was the organizational expression for the Cuban liberals and annexationists in the United States. In getting his first expedition launched in 1849, López had to fight Cuban as well as American opposition. In spite of interference, López was able to gain the counsel of Senator Foote, Davis, Douglas, and Dickinson. John Calhoun at one of these meetings in early 1849, said that he was in favor of annexation and that the American people could give lawful aid to the revolutionaries, but his statement was later denied by Representative Venable of North Carolina who said that at the meeting Calhoun opposed the plan. López claimed to have Calhoun's support, and John I. O'Sullivan (an American who was a New York Democrat and a leader in the Cuban revolutionary movement) wrote to Calhoun just before the first expedition was to sail that "the South ought (according to an expression which General López has quoted to me from you) to flock down here in 'open boats' the moment they hear the tocsin."

The Round Island Expedition: 1849

This first expedition was to leave from Round Island near New Orleans. López, in his appeal for Southern support, offered the command to Jefferson Davis who

---

20 Ibid., p. 112.
21 Ibid., p. 113.
refused, but suggested Major Robert E. Lee. Lee refused on the grounds that it was not right to take command of a "foreign army" while he was a commissioned officer in the United States army.\textsuperscript{22} López was able to secure other American officers, including colonels Briscoe and White, the latter having commanded a Louisiana Company in the Mexican War. In order to get men, lavish promises were made, but the ordinary recruits were not told the precise destination. From the reports, the men were from the dregs of society.\textsuperscript{23}

The leaders of the expedition did not try to keep their movements secret. One could say this was one of the reasons why these endeavors failed, since everyone knew what was happening. The Spanish authorities had time to warn the government of the United States, and to prepare the Spanish army in Cuba. With this advance information, the Spanish authorities could arrest the revolutionaries in Cuba. No doubt, the openness drew support to the cause, but, in the long run, it ruined the chances of success of the revolutionaries.

Secretary of State Clayton received the first definite information about the expedition from Thomas Ewing, Secretary of the Interior. Ewing wrote, on August

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., p. 114. An agent of the Secretary of State, described them as the "most desperate looking creatures as ever were seen and would murder a man for ten dollars."
that Colonel White, with 300 men, would embark from Round Island for Cuba on August twentieth or the twenty-fifth with expeditions leaving from other American ports. The next day, Clayton gave orders to the Federal Attorney at New Orleans to enforce the Neutrality Laws. On August 9, the Commodore at Pensacola was ordered to prevent a landing on Cuba. On August eleventh, President Taylor in a Proclamation warned citizens against taking part in the expedition and called upon every civil and military officer to arrest and punish anyone who broke the Neutrality Laws.²⁴

Despite the stern warnings in the Proclamation, not one person was arrested or tried. However, six naval vessels blockaded Round Island, cutting the filibusters off from their source of supplies. Early in September the adventurers surrendered and were taken to the mainland and set free. The filibusters were allowed to keep the two ships and other possessions that they had purchased. This lenient treatment, according to General Gonzales (second in command to López) was attributed to "protection from high places."²⁵ Thus ended the first filibustering attempt by López, but it taught López to limit his quest for support to the South to where the atmosphere was more congenial to his purposes. The New York Herald said López was ready to set out on another "buffalo hunt."

²⁴Ibid., 117-118.
²⁵Ibid., 118.
when the season opened in 1850. The United States Magazine and Democratic Review, edited by Thomas Prentice of New York, a "doughface," was in favor of General López. Prentice hoped López would try again and wished that López would not "find the Navy of the United States applied to the
englorious service of the blockade of our shores."

---

26 Ibid., p. 120.
27 "Doughface" is a term used to describe a Northern man with Southern sympathies.
28 The United States Magazine and Democratic Review, XXVI (February, 1850), 112. Thomas Prentice was an advocate of annexation during this whole period.
REGION OF LÓPEZ'S FILIBUSTERING ATTEMPTS
(Fig. 1)
With the failure of the Hound Island expedition, López moved from New York into the Mississippi Valley. At Cincinnati, López met with some Mexican War officers, offering them rank in Cuba, plus a bonus of $10,000 each. To the privates, he offered regular army pay, a bonus of $4,000, and Cuban land after one year's service. López had to fight the effect of the fever of the gold rush upon these men; one of his inducements was "the gold is already dug and coined for which you will fight." He succeeded in recruiting about 250 men under the leadership of Colonel Theodore O'Hara, veteran of the Mexican War.

On his way to New Orleans, López stopped at Jackson, Mississippi, to confer with John A. Quitman, the Governor of Mississippi, and offered him military command of the Cuban revolutionaries. The followers of López hoped that Quitman's leadership could "tie into one single action Southern interest and Cuban annexation." López told Quitman:

Were the extreme Southern men, possessing influence like yourself, to stretch forth a friendly hand to all Southern unionists on the guaranteed condition of striking together one great and bold blow for Cuban annexation, positive force and probable advantages would result to the South...31

---

29 Wallace, Destiny and Glory, p. 59.
30 O'Hara wrote a poem "The Bivouac of the Dead," in commemoration to the Americans who fell in the Battle of Buena Vista.
Quitman turned down this appeal to his emotions, but he offered his opinion on military strategy. 32

López arrived in New Orleans, and the city welcomed him with open arms. He set up his headquarters at Bank's Arcade on Magazine Street, which had been the headquarters of Davy Crockett, James Bowie, and William B. Travis. With this romantic backdrop, he recruited more men, trying to give them a political character that could be identified with the South. Three regiments were organized from three different states: Kentucky under Colonel O'Hara, Mississippi under Colonel Bunch, and Louisiana under Colonel Chatham R. Wheat. 33

With such openness, the Spanish authorities followed the movement very easily. On the other hand, the United States officials found it much more difficult. The ships which the filibusters had bought had evaded them by taking on arms from fishing smacks. Then, too, the port authorities of New Orleans had accepted the ruse that the ships were bound for California and did nothing to detain them. These incidents reveal that the sympathies of the lower South were with López.

The expedition was to meet off the coast of Yucatan on the island of Mujeres (see Fig. 1, page 35,

32 Ibid., Rauch, American Interest in Cuba, pp 123-124, both accounts tell of the meeting between Lopez and Quitman, but each tell different parts, but both agree that Quitman wanted to take the command but did not.

33 Rauche, American Interest in Cuba, p. 125.
other Cuban towns cited in this chapter will be found on the same page); but due to bad winds the Kentucky Battalion landed on Contoy about twelve miles north of Nujeres. Contoy was a sandy key that was uninhabited and had no drinking water. The Louisiana Battalion sailed on the *Susan Loud*, while the Mississippi regiment sailed on the *Creole*. The three groups met at Contoy and set sail for Cuba aboard the *Creole*.

The Liberatores (as they called themselves) surprised the coastal garrison at Cárdenas on the morning of May 19, after landing the day before. The intelligence (which said that the Cubans were ready to revolt) that López received was erroneous, because when he tried to raise recruits with a drum and flag not a single Cuban fell in. The people were not unfriendly to the filibusters, but the town was surrounded by sugar plantations, and the planters feared that the slaves would be set free; their fears about a slave revolt were as deep-seated as those of the South. After a short encounter with the Spanish Lancers, the filibusters retreated to the *Creole*. López wanted to re-land his forces further down the coast, but the ship became grounded in the harbor. It was reflated only after the arms were thrown overboard, thus spoiling his ambition for another invasion at that time. The *Creole* was pursued back to Key West,

---

Florida, by the Spanish steamboat Pizarro. The people of the town gave the men a hero's welcome, and helped them escape. All a federal officer did was to seize the Creole.

López was arrested in Savannah, Georgia, for violating the Neutrality Laws of the United States. He was later released for lack of evidence. Immediately, López began plans for another expedition. This time the Federal government used pressure, and forced a grand jury to indict López, Quitman and fourteen other men. At first Governor Quitman was going to use the State militia to defend the State's sovereignty, but he gave up this course of action, however, and allowed himself to be arrested. When the suits were dismissed, New Orleans went wild. There were thirty-one gun salutes fired for the Union and for Cuba.

De Bow's Review carried a piquant article on this attempt. In one section De Bow spoke for himself, and showed that he had not become, as yet, an ardent expansionist.

We trust, for the honor of humanity and faith of treaties, it will lead us into nothing for which our history shall blush... There are honorable means of achieving our purpose, and, if these fail, the purpose itself becomes dishonorable. Let us negotiate with the Cabinet of Madrid, as we did with that of Versailles... Should the negotiations

Rauch, American Interest in Cuba, p. 129;
Bemis, Diplomatic History of the United States, pp. 315-16.
fail, honor and the preservation of national faith
demand, that we give no countenance to any move­
ments hostile to the cause of Spain. 37

The next section seemed to speak for the whole country.

De Bow used the term "our people" which, to those who
believe him an expansionist at this time, would mean the
South. The writer, however, believes that De Bow was
speaking of "our people" as the people of the United States.

None can doubt, that, at this moment, there is a well
fixed and almost universal conviction upon the minds
of our people, that the possession of Cuba is indis­
pensable to the proper development and security of
the country. We state the fact, without entering
into the reasons of it or justifying it, that such a
conviction exists. Call it lust of dominion—the
restlessness of democracy—the passion for land and
gold, or the desire to render our interior impregnable
by commanding the key of the gulf—the possession of
Cuba is still an American sentiment, not to be sure a
late, but a growing and strengthening one.... 38

The Bahia Honda Expedition: 1851

The last expedition of Narciso López must have
been conceived under an unlucky star. The ships were pur­
chased in New York, but this time they were attached and
the trial of John L. O'Sullivan and two of his subordinates
ended in a mistrial. López sold the ships and returned
again to friendly New Orleans. The Fillmore Administration
was keeping a closer watch on the group, but López was able

37J.D.B. De Bow, "The Late Cuban Expedition,"

38Ibid., 173.
to sail from New Orleans aboard the Pampero on August 3, 1551, after hearing of a revolution in Cuba.

López had been keeping in communication with a group of revolutionaries in Cuba at Puerto Príncipe. These men had been discovered by the Spanish officials with only a few being able to escape to the hills. The revolution was begun on July fourth, but it never really got started. The last of the Cuban revolutionaries were killed on August twelfth, the very day that López landed at Bahia Honda.

This futile endeavor was the revolution that López had heard about. He left New Orleans with about 400 men, in his haste to get to Cuba, taking only a fraction of those available. The ship was bound for Key West to procure men and supplies. Again, there were no naval ships to stop López, and on the tenth the filibusters left Florida. A great many men on this last expedition (only 160 returned to the United States out of better than 400) would die and be buried in unknown graves. After leaving Key West, it was found that the ship did not have a sufficient supply of coal to steam up the east coast of Florida to the St. John's River to take aboard artillery and more men. López then decided to invade western Cuba, where he felt the Spanish authorities would not expect him and the natives would rally to his cause. After the ship left Florida it went
off course, either because of winds and tides, or the iron in the guns, which might have affected the compass. Whatever the reason, the Pampero came upon Havana harbor, was sighted and recognized. The ship turned west, giving the Spanish time to alert their forces. The ship was again sighted when it tried to land at a small harbor in which two Spanish warships were at anchor. Still López would not call off the invasion. López finally put ashore a short distance from Bahia Honda after the ship struck a coral reef.

The expedition had no real chance, for the Spanish army was waiting for it. López started inland, trying to reach the safety of the mountains. He placed Colonel W.L. Crittenden, nephew of the Attorney-General of the United States, in charge of a small group of men at the beachhead to bring up supplies. His small force was attacked and divided. Crittenden and forty-nine other men made their way back to the coast and put to sea in four boats, but were captured, and later executed in a public square in Havana. López and his men fought a brave battle, but with 160 starving and wounded men he surrendered on August thirty-first. The remainder of the men under López were not executed, but their leader was garroted in a public square in Havana.

---

ceremony at Havana.

When the news of López's death and the public executions of Crittenden's men reached New Orleans, rioting broke out before the Spanish consulate, and mobs ran wild. The Courier shouted: "American blood has been shed. It cries aloud for vengeance...blood for blood! Our brethren must be avenged! Cuba must be seized." At Baltimore, mourners passed through the streets, burning in effigy the American consul in Havana. At Mobile, the crew of a wrecked Spanish ship was almost assaulted.

Spanish-American relations were not exactly improved by the rioting, and Spain demanded redress for the damages done to Spanish property. To ease the situation, the United States ordered a special salute to the Spanish flag at New Orleans. The men captured with López were sent to Spain to work in labor camps, and upon hearing that the filibusters were given pardons, the United States appropriated $25,000 as remuneration for damages suffered by Spanish subjects living in New Orleans.

De Bow had not yet become a vociferous proponent of expansionism, so he wrote: "Let us pause and consider

42 Ibid., p. 110; Rauch, American Interest in Cuba, p. 161.
well the consequences before we take the fearful leap. Let the fate of other republics be a warning to us of the dangers of unlimited extension, and wars of conquest." 44

This editorial could not possibly be more emphatically against the policies of the filibusters. John Calhoun's son, John, wrote in De Bow's Review an article about Cuba: "We now have most of the commercial advantages without the expense of administering the government." 45 The Senior Editor of The Western Journal and Civilian, published in St. Louis, wrote, "But, at the present time, neither Cuba nor the United States are ripe for annexation; nor are we authorized to conclude from any manifestations yet made by the people of that Island, that a majority desire a change of government." 46

The men who returned from the ill-fated third expedition had no words of praise for López. J. Fisher, a hospital steward in López's army said, "López has deceived us all. The expedition [was] all a humbug." Another member, C. F. Horwell said:

It is my conviction that the petty clique in New Orleans, whose existence depended upon the exaltation of Cuban bonds, felt that the precipice over which they must shortly fall must be avoided by


45 John Calhoun, "Independence of Cuba" Ibid., 421.

46 "Cuba," The Western Journal and Civilian, IX (February, 1853), 302.
some desperate scheme, and hence the second (he did not count the Round Island expedition) abortive attempt to create sympathy in favor of Cuban patriots, struggling for liberty!

A cook, by the name of Gilman, said, "López, the scoundrel, has deceived us—all those reports about the Cubans uprising were trumped up in New Orleans." With the experiences that these men had undergone their bitterness is easily understood; but they were the lucky ones, since they returned to the United States.

Spain contacted England and France, trying to secure assistance in her fight to maintain control over the Island. Britain proposed a plan in which she, the United States and France would join in a treaty stipulating that the signatories would not wrest Cuba from Spain. In April, 1852, Britain and France formally asked the United States to join the three-power treaty. Before Webster, then Secretary of State, gave a formal answer, he told the French and British Ministers in Washington that he was in complete concurrence with their views in regard to Cuba. Webster died before he could send a formal reply. The November election brought victory to Franklin Pierce and the "Young Americans" were a group of men who were possessed with "Manifest Destiny" within the Democratic Party. The


Leader was Stephen A. Douglas; its chief spokesman was George W. Sanders of Kentucky. In the light of Pierce's victory, President Fillmore decided to reject the proposed treaty.

It has been stated in the first chapter that the slave states had a fear of Cuba becoming a Negro Republic. De Bow's Review carried an article written by Dr. Van Evene of Washington, D.C., which is graphic in its description and was intended to arouse this fear. De Bow by this time was beginning to move in the direction of a nationalist.

...Indeed, Cuba would be a volcano of 'free negorism' constantly vomiting fire and blood on the neighboring coast; and at any moment British aristocracy, with its stupendous steam marine, could bridge the straits of Florida, and, hurling a hundred thousand infuriated blacks upon the coast, appeal to the hostility of race and the latent brutulism of the negro, and lay in blood and ashes the fairest portion of the confederacy. Cuba, we repeat, is thus the turning point of the future...

The very next steamer that arrives from Europe, may bring an order to the Spanish officials in that place to take the preliminary steps to release the negro population from its natural subordination to the whites; and if the American government and the American people look on passively and silently, and permit this last act in the programme of British philanthropy to be completed, then will come the crisis, and an issue more terrible than the nation ever yet encountered, an issue involving not only the civilization or the barbarism of these islands and Central America, but an issue involving the social and industrial system of the South, indeed the very existence of the Southern people. 49

This Southern fear had in part caused the proposed treaty

---

between England, France and the United States to protect Cuba in 1852. To quiet some of these fears, Lord Carendon wrote to the British Ambassador in Belgium in November, 1854, asking him to forward information to the American Ambassador in Belgium that Britain had no intentions of "Africanizing" Cuba.50

The death of López brought John A. Quitman, a militant expansionist and strong secessionist, to the leadership of the Cuba filibusters. In 1853, Quitman made various trips to different cities, gathering support for another expedition against Cuba. This time, the United States government moved more forcibly in halting Quitman's planned campaign against the Island. At the spring session of the United States Circuit Court for Eastern Louisiana, Quitman and two other organizers were ordered to show cause why they should not be required to observe the Neutrality Laws. The defendants had to pay a $3,000 bond to observe the laws for a period of nine months. This action only increased enthusiasm for the planned invasion. The mood can best be expressed by the toast given at a public dinner for Quitman in New Orleans after his release:

Cuba--
we'll buy or fight, but to our shore we'll lash her;
If Spain won't sell, we'll turn in and thrash her.51


Quitman postponed the proposed date of the invasion of the Island from the summer of 1854 until the spring of 1855.

His intended expedition caused the Pierce Administration such embarrassment that the President called Quitman to Washington in an attempt to save the Administration from a scandal. Quitman gave up command of the Junta on April 30, 1855.

Ostend Manifesto

The issuance of the Ostend Manifesto put before the world a prime example of Southern ambition. The raw wounds caused by the Kansas-Nebraska Act had no chance to heal and the Pierce Administration's expectation that the North would stand behind such a declaration of policy was ludicrous.

The Pierce Administration had been waging an active campaign to acquire the "Pearl of the Antilles." The seizure of the Black Warrior, an American ship by Spanish officials in Havana, on February 28, 1854, gave the Administration a chance to exert more pressure. The ship was one of the largest vessels in the Atlantic coast trade at the time. It had made more than thirty trips between New York and Mobile, stopping at Havana. In all of these trips, the ship had carried cargo not bound for Cuba, but had not listed the cargo on the manifest which was a direct violation of existing laws. The Spanish officials had always let this pass. In this case, however, the violation was not allowed
to pass, and the ship was seized. The Captain-General of Cuba, Marqués de la Pezuela, would not negotiate with the American Consul in Havana, and the American government and nation became incensed over the incident. The troubles were finally resolved between Spain and the American ship's owner, but the challenge to the United States could not be overlooked.

The United States Minister to Spain at this time was Pierre Soule, a pro-slavery Southern expansionist, a Louisianan of French birth. He was a hot-headed person with little tact; in other words, he was a person who had no business handling the delicate mission of buying the Island from Spain. On April third, 1853, new instructions were sent to Soule to offer Spain as much as $130,000,000 for Cuba. In the instructions, William L. Marcy, Secretary of State, told Soule that Spain was going to introduce an agricultural apprentice-labor system on the Island. Marcy pointed out that Soule already knew the President's views on the subject (these were not in the instructions), and that he must make every effort to purchase the Island.

Spain would not sell; perhaps part of the reason for this absolute rejection of the United States' proposal by

---


Spain was the conduct of Soule. His behavior in Spain was a progression of blunders: he sent an unwarranted ultimatum to the Spanish government after the Black Warrior incident; became involved with Spanish revolutionists; and fought a duel with the French Ambassador, whom he shot in the knee, crippling the man for life. Pierre Soule then left Spain and met with James Buchanan, Minister to England, and John Y. Mason, Minister to France, in October, 1854, first at Ostend, then at Aix-la-Chapelle, to formulate a policy for the acquisition of the Island. These three pro-Southern expansionists issued the Ostend Manifesto which have the traditional reasons why Spain should sell the Island, and said that the United States would be justified in taking it from Spain. In this justification the ministers compared the United States to "an individual...tearing down the burning house of his neighbor, if there were no other means of preventing the flames [Spain's policies toward the 'Africanization' of Cuba] from destroying his own house."

The report was a secret dispatch, not a public statement of policy; but when it leaked out, it shocked Europeans and Americans alike. This unfavorable reaction

54 Wallace, Destiny and Glory, p. 113.
55 Bemis, Diplomatic History of the United States, p. 332; De Conde, History of American Foreign Policy, p. 223; Rauch, American Interest in Cuba, p. 293.
made the Administration repudiate the "Manifesto." Marcy instructed Soule to cease his efforts in Spain; this repudiation of Soule forced him home. This bad publicity also caused the Administration's stoppage of Quitman's proposed expedition to Cuba. The two actions brought to a close the high point in America's efforts to acquire the Island.

Suchanan was elected to the Presidency in 1856 on a platform that advocated the annexation of Cuba. He tried several times to stimulate interest in Cuba by proposing its purchase to Congress. In 1859, a bill that would place $30,000,000 toward the acquisition of Cuba at the disposal of the President was rejected. The annexation of the Island was tied too closely with slavery and could not be accepted by the North. When the South wanted to annex new slave states from Spanish America, the North could not see that the South's cries for liberty, state's rights and the extension of democratic institutions had any validity. The North only saw that the South was using these arguments to conceal its purpose which was to extend slavery.

Stephen Douglas in his debate with Lincoln at Jonesboro, Illinois, said, "When we get Cuba we must take it as we find it, leaving the people to decide the question of slavery for themselves,..." President-elect Abraham

Lincoln looked differently upon this matter. He felt that the South in a year's time would ask for Cuba as a condition for staying in the Union. "There is in my judgment but one compromise which would really settle the slavery question, and that would be a prohibition against acquiring anymore territory."

De Bow's Review

*De Bow's Review* had a tremendous influence on the South's attitude regarding expansionism. By the middle of the 1850's *De Bow* turned in defense against the assaults made upon the South. When the magazine first started in 1846, *De Bow* was neutral on slavery and expansion, but as the years progressed and the South's position became of greater concern, *De Bow* slowly became a Southern nationalist. "More and more *De Bow* became a standard-bearer of those Southerners who, despairing of a safe berth in the Union would prepare for possible independence." In the pages of the *Review*, *De Bow*'s ideas were ably presented along with those of other writers who were of the same persuasion.

59 Ibid., p. 115.
CHAPTER III

NICARAGUA

The three filibustering attempts on Nicaragua led by William Walker had the sympathy of the South, although they were not the result of a conspiracy by the pro-slavery contingents to extend the limits of slavery. These elements hoped that Walker would succeed so that the country would be annexed to the United States as a slave state. Walker's raids also differed from the filibustering endeavors in Cuba in that the Northern states favored them less than those in Cuba. With the anti-slavery feelings growing in the North one can easily see why the North would be out of sympathy with Walker.

The Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny: William Walker

William Walker was born of Scotch-Irish parents on May 8, 1824, in Nashville, Tennessee. His parents intended him to be a servant of God, but, finding this occupation not to his liking, Walker first became a doctor, then a lawyer. He gave up this last occupation and moved into the field of journalism and became an editor of the New Orleans Crescent. After Walker lost his newspaper job in 1849, he made his way to California with those who were

seeking the "Golden Fleece." He arrived in San Francisco in June, 1850, and set up his law practice. Wanderlust moved through Walker's veins which caused him to move to Marysville in 1851 (the town is about twenty miles north of Sacramento). He became a law partner of Henry P. Watkins and enjoyed some success.

The idea of founding an American colony in Sonora originated with several men of Auburn in Placer County, California, early in 1852. One of these men was Mr. Frederic Emory. Emory contacted Walker and paid the expenses of Walker and his law partner, Watkins, to proceed to Sonora and to get a land grant from the Mexican government, in return for which the colonists would protect the natives from Indians. The Mexican government refused to give the land grant, easily seeking through the scheme.

The region was worthless; it held nothing but centipedes, snakes, insects and Apaches; but reports of gold and silver deposits had aroused interest in it. There was a movement in the California press that grieved for the poor peons in Sonora, no doubt flavored by the reports of gold and silver. Walker was to lead the expedition to Sonora. From a doctor, lawyer and editor, the now Colonel

---


William Walker became a soldier of fortune and filibuster. The original plan called for Walker to land near Guymas, in Sonora. But Walker had fewer than fifty men, so he planned to land in Lower California and use it as a base for assembling recruits and supplies. Walker landed at La Paz, the capital, and without firing a shot, captured the town. To make matters worse, Walter did not receive the much needed food from California. The United States and Mexico signed the Gadsden Treaty, giving the mineral bearing part of Sonora to the United States. Now the expedition lost its appeal for Americans, and the adventure came to nothing.

Walker returned to San Francisco and was received with honor. In June, 1854, he went on trial for the crime of filibustering, but he was acquitted, while two other men on trial with him, who had followed his orders, were found guilty. Walker then went back to newspaper work in San Francisco for the Commercial Advertiser where his interest in Nicaragua grew by conversations with Byron Cole, the editor. Cole tried to get Walker to abandon ideas about returning to Sonora, and concentrate his attention on the American colonization of Nicaragua.5

---


5 Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers, p. 70.
Walker's First Endeavor in Nicaragua

With the gold rush starting in California at the beginning of the 1850's there was a large increase in transportation to the West Coast. There were four routes which travelers could use: the Isthmus of Panama, around the southern tip of South America, through Nicaragua, or overland across the United States. The country of Nicaragua was a perfect place for a man with Walker's ambitions to seize the initiative.

The country of Nicaragua was going through one of its periodic revolutions, with the Liberal party being the group trying to attain power. They called themselves Democrats, and their leader Francisco Castellon made contact with Byron Cole who had gone to Nicaragua. Cole was authorized to bring a detachment of Americans to Nicaragua to serve in the Democratic army. Walker saw in the contract a direct violation of the Neutrality Laws, and would not act. He told Cole to return to Nicaragua and secure a colonization grant, then "something might be done with it." This Cole proceeded to accomplish, and the second document reached Walker early in February, 1855. This contact guaranteed Walker and his men "forever the privilege of bearing arms." By being colonists, the men did not violate the Neutrality Laws. Walker and his small

expedition, who would soon become known as "William Walker's Immortals," sailed from San Francisco in May, 1855. The "Immortals" had a few experienced soldiers, including a man who had been with López. The privates were made up of miners, groccerymen, cobblers and professional killers.7

The group landed five weeks later at Realejo (see Fig. 2, page 56, other Caribbean places cited in this chapter will be found on the same page) and marched to Leon, where they joined forces with Francisco's army. With the help of the Americans, the Democratic army was able to defeat the Legitimist army. Francisco, however, was unable to enjoy the victory for he died of yellow fever. Walker then established himself as the real power behind the new President, Don Particio Rivas, who made him commander-in-chief of the army.

To consolidate his authority, Walker had to execute one of his most dangerous enemies, General Ponciano Corral, leader of the Legitimist forces, which was accomplished in early December, 1855. Within a short time, the United States Minister in Nicaragua, John Wheeler, extended recognition to the Rivas-Walker government. This was a premature act because of the political situation in the United States, and the fear that the United States had that recognition would upset England. The Secretary

of State, William Marcy, ordered Wheeler to extend no recognition until the Rivas-Walker government would prove itself stable. The United States finally did recognize the new Nicaraguan regime in May, 1856. President Pierce said that it was done because the Rivas-Walker government seemed to be the one desired by the people. The real reason was that Pierce was trying to get the Southern vote for the upcoming Democratic Convention, so he would get the Presidential nomination. Although Marcy had called Walker, "a pirate and an assassin," Marcy in June said recognition was given so that Great Britain might not have complete ascendancy in Central America.

The success of Walker did not go unheeded in the South. There were notices in the New Orleans papers advertising that the Government of Nicaragua was giving large tracts of land to any emigrants, and that the fare to the country was reduced to more than half the former rates. In April, 1856, more than two hundred emigrants left New Orleans for Nicaragua. De Bow's Review in June,

---

8 Ibid., p. 143.
1856, carried an article reprinted from Blackwood's Magazine that went into a minute description of the achievements of General Walker, praised them mightily, and emphasized that what he had done was for the good of the country:

When they first landed in Nicaragua, not ten months ago, they numbered only fifty-six men; but in as far as they had the good will of the majority of the American people, they represented the nation as truly as General Pierce and his cabinet. Colonel Walker was merely the practical exponent of a popular theory.  

The article further explained that the Americans had gone there at the request of the party (Democratic) that spoke for the majority of the people. The Americans had become citizens and fought for power.

On July 12, 1856, Walker reached the pinnacle of his career when he was made President of Nicaragua. One act which created sympathy in the South was the decree of September 22, 1856. It stated that the acts and decrees of the old government of the United Provinces of Central America were null and void. This act abolished the law that outlawed slavery in 1824. Walker was not an advocate of slavery, and it is doubtful that some of his American followers would have joined his army had his cause been to advance the institution of slavery. Several authors have said that Pierre Soule advised Walker to issue the proclamation that

13"Nicaragua and the Filibusters," De Bow's Review, XX (June, 1856), 57.

14Ibid., 69.
re-established slavery when he visited Walker in August, 1856. While Soule was there, he assisted Walker in securing a loan of $500,000 through the Bank of Louisiana.

The accounts of the men who were with Walker did not mention anything about Soule or his influencing Walker's decision to re-introduce slavery. Walker in his proclamation said

15 Bemis, Diplomatic History of the United States, p. 329; Franklin, The Militant South, p. 119; also see Preston J. Moore "Pierce Soule: Southern Expansionist and Promoter," JSH XXI (May, 1955), 213. In emphasizing his influence over Walker, Scroogs declares: "No man in the South held more advanced ideas along this line than Pierre Soule, and his visit to Nicaragua seems to have had the effect of crystallizing the policy of Walker as far as Cuba, annexation and slavery are concerned." W. O. Scroogs, "Walker's Designs on Cuba," NVHR, I (December, 1914), 210.


17 Charles William Doubleday, Reminiscences of the "Filibusters:" War in Nicaragua (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1886); James Carson Jamison, With Walker in Nicaragua: Reminiscences of an Officer of the American Phalanx (Columbia, Missouri: E.W. Stephens, 1909). Jamison feels that the slavery decree helped bring the downfall of Walker (p. 96). Jamison further states that Walker changed his mind about slavery after he had made a complete study of the social and economic conditions of the country. Jamison points out that Walker wrote his book, The War in Nicaragua, after he was forced to leave the country, and Walker needed Southern help to organize another expedition to retake the country. Jamison further stated that some "publications have asserted Southern statesmen were behind the movement to re-introduce slavery, an assertion untenable and unsupported by Walker himself...." (p. 98). Preston J. Moore says there is no evidence to support the charge that Soule influenced Walker, but he still feels that Soule did exert influence. Moore, JSH XXI pp 213-14. Greene in his biography of Walker does not mention any influence of Soule's. Two American Counselor Agents wrote accounts, Peter F. Stout, Nicaragua: Past, Present and Future (Philadelphia: J.E. Potter, 1859). This is a travel guide and is of no political importance. William
that he had faith in the intelligence of the Southern states
"To perceive their true policy and in their resolution to
carry it out," he also stated, "the way is open and it only
requires courage and will to enter the path and reach the
goal. Will the South be true to herself in this emergency?" The South reacted instantly to Walker's appeal. New Orleans
was the focal point of Walker's activities as it had been for López. The New Orleans Daily Delta gave wholehearted en-
dorsement. In one issue, the newspaper said the "noble cause
in which William Walker is engaged, knowing that it is our
cause at bottom--help him onward, step by step with money,
with men, voice and hand...." De Bow's Review carried a
letter from a person in Nicaragua to a friend in Virginia
which said that General Walker has revoked the decree abol­
ishing slavery in Nicaragua. "It has come a little sooner
than I told you it would, but not too soon. Now what can

V. Well, Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua (New York:
Stringer and Townsend, 1856). It was printed before Walker's
decree, but slavery did not play a part in the book. William
Walker, in his The War in Nicaragua did not mention Soule,
but said that "While the slavery decree was calculated to
bind the Southern states to Nicaragua, as if she were one
of themselves, it was also a disavowal of any desire for
annexation to the Federal Union." (p. 226) It is the writer's
opinion that Soule did influence Walker, and used the bank
loan as a pry to get Walker to issue the proclamation.

Franklin, The Militant South, p. 119; Walker,
The War in Nicaragua, pp 267-80. Here Walker gives his
full arguments for re-introducing slavery.

Quoted in Franklin's The Militant South, p. 120.
you Virginians do." The answer was obvious, and a number of young Southerners began heading for Nicaragua.

The Democratic Party's platform in 1856, on which James Buchanan was elected President, expressed the deep sympathy of the American people "with the efforts which are being made by the people of Central America to regenerate that portion of the continent which covers the passage across the Interoceanic Isthmus." This resolution was drafted by Soule, and passed 221 to 38.

The success of Walker's enterprises in Nicaragua drew the attention of the Cuban patriot, Don Domingo de Goicouria. He knew that Nicaragua would be a better spot from which to invade Cuba than the United States. Accordingly, by December, 1855, Goicouria sent an agent to Walker in the person of Captain Francisco Alejandro Laine. The filibuster listened to Laine and entered into a written agreement on January 11, 1856, by which Goicouria and Walker were to pool their interests. The Cuban revolutionists were to amalgamate their resources with Walker and aid in "consolidating the peace and government of the Republic of Nicaragua." Walker pledged to "assist and cooperate" with his person and his resources, such as men, in the cause of Cuba and in favor

---

21 Moore, JSH, XXI, 13.
Walker was even toasted "as the Hope of Cuba" by the revolutionaries.

Unknown to Goicouria, Walker had no intention of Cuba being a free country. His plans were centered around the idea of creating out of the five Central American republics a strong, federated state "organized and governed on military principles; and after achieving this he aimed to effect the conquest of Cuba." 24

Goicouria began to suspect his plans were not going well in the fall of 1856. Walker, because of a quarrel over the way Walker should run the government, dropped him from the roll of the Nicaraguan army. The general public in the United States did not know of this quarrel until the latter half of November, 1856. The Cuban withheld the most damaging evidence against Walker until the last. He then published a letter giving instruction as to how Goicouria as Minister to England should pursue Walker's policy. "You [Goicouria] can make them [England] see that the only way to cut the expanding and expansive democracy of the North is by a powerful and compact Southern federation, based on military principles." This shocked the devotees of "Manifest Destiny" who had counted on Walker. The letter further stated "Tell him he must send me the news and let me know whether Cuba

22 Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers, p. 218.
23 Scroggs, VWHR, I, 204.
24 Isid., 199.
must and shall be free, but not for the Yankees. Oh, no! that fine country is not fit for those barbarous Yankees. What would such a psalm-singing set do in the island?25

One can well imagine the shock these instructions gave to Goicouria. He had been working for the last six months with all human energy trying to get Cuba into the American Union, then to be informed by Walker that the island was not fit for "psalm-singing Yankees." Such language did not argue well for Cuba's freedom. In his final communication on the subject, Goicouria repudiated Walker with bitter words. "I therefore denounce Mr. Walker as a man wanting in the first element of every kind of ability, namely, good faith. I denounce him as wanting in ordinary sagacity and discretion. I denounce him as false to the interests as well of Cuba as of the United States."26

One might say that Walker had a "Napoleonic Complex." His plans to establish a military despotism alienated his Northern supporters. To build up a great state with aims and institutions that were diametrically opposed to the North gave his Northern supporters pause and lost him their sympathies.

The Walker government had much vocal support from the United States, but it needed more than that, and it

25Scroogs, Filibusters and Financiers, p. 224.
26Ibid.
never came. Walker had made enemies with other countries of Central America which formed an alliance to drive him from Nicaragua. Not only were the Central American countries against Walker, but the British government gave aid in the form of guns and other war materials to Costa Rica, the leader of the Central American alliance. However, the biggest obstacle to Walker's ambitions was Cornelius Vanderbilt. Walker joined the entrepreneur's enemies (Charles Morgan and C. K. Garrison) in taking Vanderbilt's Nicaraguan Transit Company away from him. This was a very serious mistake since Vanderbilt was a man of terrible vindictiveness and had millions to spend on revenge. Knowing that Walker's strength depended on an open transit route, Vanderbilt aided Costa Rica in closing the Atlantic ports; and switched his ships to the Panama route and so cut off Walker's flow of supplies and recruits from the United States.

"The Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny" was forced to leave Nicaragua. He surrendered to Commodore Charles H. Davis of the United States Navy on May 1, 1857, and returned to New Orleans as a hero. The South gave him a colossal welcome. Wherever he traveled in the region he found a lively interest in his Nicaraguan fortunes.
The Last Attempts of Walker to Establish Himself in Nicaragua

Mobile, Alabama, became the site for Walker's next expedition to Nicaragua. A company of Savannah men placed themselves as fighters in his service. He found that many Georgians and Texans were ready to join him. Walker had no trouble securing a number of men to sail for Nicaragua in November, 1857. But Lewis Cass, who before becoming Secretary of State had given vocal support to Walker, now issued instructions to every federal officer in Southern ports to be sure that no vessel connected with Walker was allowed to sail; in addition, the Navy was instructed to prevent filibusters from landing in the Caribbean region.  

On November tenth, a United States Marshall presented Walker with an affidavit charging him with violations of the Neutrality Laws. The General was questioned and released on bond to appear later in the week for a hearing. He never appeared for the hearing, for Walker sailed for the Central American coast as soon as he was released.

Nearly three hundred men were with Walker when he sailed. The filibusters were able to slip by the United States sloop Saratoga and land in the Nicaraguan coastal town of Graytown. The commander of the Saratoga did not know what to do because the invading force was out of his jurisdiction. He sent a message to the commander of the

27 Greene, The Filibuster, p. 305.
Caribbean Squadron, Commodore Hiram Paulding, asking for instructions. Paulding arrived on December sixth, aboard the Wabash. On the following day, the *u.s.s. Fulton*, and shortly afterward two British ships, the *Brunswick* and the *Leopard*, appeared. The Walker army turned over its arms, and on December twenty-fourth, Walker returned to the United States aboard the *Wabash*.

The press in the United States was divided on the actions of Commodore Paulding. The abolitionists hailed him as the agent of the higher law; the South cursed him. Mass meetings were held in the defense of Walker. One in New Orleans demanded that Walker be returned to Nicaragua with his followers.28 The Buchanan Administration did not give its full support to Paulding. Buchanan, who denounced Walker's activities in a message to Congress on December sixth, 1857, made Paulding the scapegoat and relieved him from duty while the Nicaraguan government presented him with a jeweled sword for his actions.29

In May, 1858, General Walker was brought to trial in New Orleans, with Pierre Soule in his defense. The majority of the jury voted for acquittal, and the district attorney entered a *nolle prosequi.* 30 "The Gray-Eyed Man"


was free once more to pursue his lust for power.

While Walker was awaiting trial in New Orleans he wrote his book, *The War in Nicaragua*. The whole book is built around the chapter on slavery. It is quite obvious that by this time Walker was seeking Southern support by making definite promises.

During the summers of 1858 and 1859, Walker made tours in the South trying to gather support. Finally, in December of 1859, an advanced group of Walker's left to secure a base on an island off the coast of Honduras. This endeavor ended in complete failure when the ship was wrecked on a reef during a storm. The men were back in Mobile on New Year's Day, having been rescued by the British Navy.

The "Gray-Eyed Man" fulfilled his destiny on his last endeavor in Nicaragua. In 1859, Great Britain arranged treaties with Honduras and Nicaragua by which England withdrew their protection from the Mosquito Coast. With this news, Walker planned to invade Honduras, then move into Nicaragua. Walker used the discontent raised by the transfer of Ruatan Island to Honduras as a means to get his men on the Island. As his men increased in number, the natives became suspicious. When the British authorities received word of the impending invasion, they agreed to

---

Some of Walker's supplies were seized by British officials at the port town of Belize, in British Honduras. The men however, were able to charter another ship and joined Walker off the island of Ruatan. The whole group was put aboard Walker's ship and sailed to the small island of Cozumel. There they waited for supplies from New Orleans which never came. Adding to their discomfort was the fact that the British did not strike their colors at Ruatan. Walker did not know that the transfer of the Island had not taken place.

After waiting three weeks, Walker made a desperate attack on the fortress at Truxillo on the mainland of Honduras. He concluded that since Honduras had made war on him while he was President of Nicaragua, therefore, he had a right to attack Truxillo and captured the city. In the latter part of August, the British warship Icarus came into the harbor. The commander, Norvell Salmon, ordered the filibusters to surrender, promising that they would have the protection of the British against the Hondurans. Walker asked the messenger to return the next day for an answer. That night Walker and the men who could leave with him started down the coast toward Cape Gracias. Native troops started in pursuit and fought a running battle with Walker. Walker reached the Río Negro River (now called the Trujillo) and
proceeded toward the coast. On September third, the British came upon the filibusters camp and again ordered them to surrender. This Walker consented to do, but he asked twice to whom he would surrender, "and was assured that it was to a British officer." The entire group was taken back to Truxillo, where Walker and another man named Rudler were given up unconditionally to the Honduran officials. After six days the order was received from the Honduran officials to execute him. On the morning of September twelfth, 1860, Walker was led before a firing squad at Truxillo and shot to death. The ended the life of William Walker, filibuster deluxe, and the man who became a living legend.

The reaction to his death must have been small because the sources consulted gave no hint of public feeling. But the country was engaged in a heated and momentous presidential election and had little time and interest for a dead man who failed.

---

CHAPTER IV

THE KNIGHTS OF THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

Purpose and Ideals

The most fantastic and grandiose of the filibustering schemes were those of the Knights of the Golden Circle. This organization, no doubt, grew out of some desire by Southerners for some sort of group for the protection of Southern rights. According to R. H. Williams, who was a member of the Knights, the group was formed ostensibly to protect Southern rights, "but its real object was to bring about secession and it did all in its power to further that movement." What evidence there is does not support this premise. Anna Irene Sandbo, in her article "First Session of the Secession Convention in Texas," feels that the primary purpose was filibustering to perpetuate the institutions of slavery. A Federal grand jury for the District of Indiana returned almost two hundred indictments against persons of the Knights of the Golden Circle in May, 1862. At its conclusion the following was part of the presentation.

1 Anna Irene Sandbo, "First Session of the Secession Convention in Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XVIII (October, 1914), 175.
2 Ibid., 173.
Its primary object, when it originated, was to:
organize the friends of the institution of African slavery in the United States for purpose of acquiring more territory in Mexico and the Central American States; also the acquisition of Cuba, thereby to extend and foster a great slave empire....

It is very hard to form an accurate opinion about the Knights because of the lack of evidence.

The Knights were formed by George Washington Lafayette Bickley at Lexington, Kentucky, on Independence Day, 1854. The idea for the name came from a proposal that, using a radius of sixteen degrees with Havana as the center, a gigantic circle would be drawn which would include the Southern portion of the United States, the Caribbean area, Mexico, Central America, and the upper portion of South America. The Knights had a dream of uniting all this territory into one great "slaveocracy," which would produce most of the world's supply of tobacco, sugar, cotton and most of its best rice and coffee. With this much power, this area, so they thought, would rival the ancient Roman Empire.

George Bickley was the guiding spirit of the Knights. Little is known of him until 1850, when he appeared in Virginia as a physician. There he founded a historical

---


society and published a "Manifest Destiny" novel Adalaska, in 1853. One writer called him "a hot-headed Southerner with a flair for adventure." Bickley always signed his letters "President General of the American Legion, K.G.C." By 1858, the organization had grown to have an elaborate structure. The local units were called castles. Each castle was divided into an outer and inner temple. The candidate was admitted to the outer temple for a period of probation and after proving himself sound on the essential questions (slavery and the expansion of the institution) he was allowed to enter the inner temple. There were three degrees within the Knights. The first degree was the military which was called the Knights of the Iron Hand. This group was the army of the organization that would be the spearhead of invasion into new territories. Not all members of this degree were pledged to become soldiers. It has been claimed that upon entering the Knights of the Iron Hand, they were addressed in the following manner by one of the officials:

Gentlemen, we must now tell you that the first field of our operation is 2 (Mexico): but we hold it to be our duty to offer our services to any Southern State to repel a Northern army. We hope such a contingency may not

5 Osterweis, Romanticism and Nationalism, p. 180.
8 Ibid.
occur. But whether the Union is reconstructed or not, the southern states must foster any scheme having for its object the Americanization and Southernization of Mexico.

The second degree was the financial one called the Knights of the True Faith. The fee for joining was larger than the first degree and was probably the chief source of income. The third was the governmental or political degree called the Knights of the Columbian Star. Only a few were allowed into this group.

By 1858, the increasing membership started calling for a specific program in which the wonderful dream of its inventor would be completed. Bickley initiated his plan in 1859 which called for the acquisition of Mexico. This would bring into the Union at least twenty-five Southern states, with fifty Southern Senators and minimum of sixty Southern Representatives. If these states were refused admission to the Union on the grounds of being an extension of slavery, the next step would call for Mexico to be added to the Southern Confederacy. Then the large golden circle would become a reality.

No doubt, Bickley formulated this plan because of the civil war raging in Mexico, which had reduced that country to anarchy and provided new opportunities for

10 Bridges, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XLIV, 289.
terrestrial expansion by the United States. In his message to Congress in 1859, Buchanan recommended the creation of a force to support the Juárez regime in a joint United States-Mexican operation in Mexico. The McLane-Ocampo treaty (in the treaty, Mexico gave the United States the right of way across the Isthmus of Tehantepec, the right to move troops across the same area, a trade treaty and the United States lent Mexico $4,000,000) between the United States and Mexico in late 1859, was the culmination of Buchanan's Mexican policy. Juárez wanted the backing of the United States because his grip on the power was diminishing rapidly. This treaty was so generous that it gave the United States a practical protectorate over Northern Mexico. This treaty was defeated in the Senate by the slavery question and by the presidential politics of the Republicans. The Republicans could not let the South gain territory in any manner and expect to win the election in 1860. It would lose the votes of the Free-Soilers and the abolitionists.

At the Southern Commercial Convention held at Vicksburg, Mississippi, in 1859, a resolution was passed which stated that the interest and necessities of the South, as well as the rest of the United States, would be better if the country had complete ascendency in the Gulf of Mexico.

12 Ollinger Crenshaw, "The Knights of the Golden Circle," AHR, XLVII (October, 1941), 27.
De Bow's Review, in February, 1859, carried an article that was an answer to an earlier speech by Senator James H. Hammond, of South Carolina, a conservative. Hammond said that there was no more slave territory. The answer was from a Texan:

We believe there is more slave territory to be acquired—there are countries we may obtain legitimately, where Southern men may go with their property and continue their domestic institution....Thousands of rifles are sleeping in Texas, and the Southern States, are ready to awake at the call of a leader, and become an 'Army of Occupation' in that broad territory between Monterey and the Rio Grande. 14

The territorial expansion spoken by the Knights can be seen in the following selections taken from newspapers from 1860. The Memphis Daily Avalanche stated that "'the true genius' of American policy consisted of 'occupation and annexation,' and, peering into the future, saw not only Mexico but Cuba and all Central America as possessions of the United States within fifty years." 15 The Little Rock Arkansas True Democrat said "the crookedest of all boundary lines" was the Rio Grande which was offensive to an Arkansas observer who "insisted that the Sierra Madre range must become the boundary; otherwise the people of the United States would take all of Mexico." 16 "Territorial expansion is the prevailing idea of the present age," so stated the New Orleans Daily


15Crenshaw, AHR, XIVII, 28.

16Ibid.
De Bow's Review featured an article that called for the Southern states to save Texas from subversion by using Texas as a center where a mighty confederation would build up "similar patriarchal and conservative institutions throughout the whole of Mexico, Central America, and the West Indies...." The New Orleans Courier of March sixth, 1860, said that Bickley's men were prepared to fight in the "broad field of Civil War in Mexico," with the aim of putting the Juarez government in power in Mexico City.

The Knight's Expeditions to Mexico

There were two filibustering endeavors by the Knights to use Texas as a base for an invasion of Mexico; the first was in the spring of 1860. It failed when reinforcements failed to join the men at Brownsville, Texas, and Sam Houston, Governor of Texas, issued a proclamation calling for the army to disband. Later, in an obvious attempt to explain away the failure, the Columbus Georgia Weekly carried an explanation. It said the Knights feared that annexation would result in the "Kansasizing" of Mexico; therefore, they preferred to wait until the Mexican civil war had ended. It further stated that Mexico would open

17 Ibid.
19 Crenshaw, AHR, XIVII, pp 30-33.
a "wide field for slavery," and all this would be achieved by the "superior" races which Mexico needed so badly. 20

The second attempt was also a complete failure. Newspaper reports covering the movement of the knights said that the leaders who were to lead the group to victory did not show up. 21 Bickley was pressured into giving some reason why the second attempt was unsuccessful. In a letter to the Galveston News, reprinted in the New Orleans Picayune and dated October 26, 1860, Bickley gave these reasons: the fate of William Walker in Honduras; the silence of the American government on British intervention in Mexico and Central America; the difficulty of transportation for a large number of arms and men across the country; failure of ammunition to arrive on time; and the coming presidential election. If there was no civil war, then the Knights would be given notice for the time and place to advance on Mexico. "Members were urged to be prepared for either emergency, service at home or in Mexico." 22 Thus ended the dream of the Knights, but these men would soon be used in the coming struggle.

20 Ibid., pp 33-34.
21 Bridges, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XLIV, pp 298-99.
22 Crenshaw, AHR, XIVII, 301.
The plans of the Knights interfered with the dreams of another American who was smitten by "Manifest Destiny," Sam Houston, Governor of Texas. In Houston's dreams, he wanted to expand into Mexico for the sake of the Union, not for some romantic concept of a new and stronger Southern confederacy. In the spring of 1860, according to Walter Prescott Webb, Houston conceived a daring and bold plan. Houston would lead a band of ten thousand Texas Rangers, supported by Indiana and Mexicans, into Mexico. He would then establish a protectorate over the country with himself at its head. This would so dazzle the American public that they would forget their sectional fight over slavery and flock to his support. "At one stroke he would save the Union, expand the national domain, and perhaps receive his just reward, the Presidency of the United States." Houston tried to enlist the aid of the commander of the Eight United States Military District at San Antonio, Lt. Col. Robert E. Lee, but without success. Houston made overtures to London bankers who held depreciated Mexican bonds, but they would not help. Even after the war started, Houston talked of

---


Ibid., pp. 206-12.

Ibid., pp. 213-15.
restoring the "Old Republic Texas." Houston would recall
the Texans troops from the Southern army, bring out the
banner of the Lone Star Republic and declare himself
the magistrate of the independent state. This was never
to be; his dream like those of López and Walker died with
him on July 25, 1863.

26 Osterweis, Romanticism and Nationalism, p. 184.
No matter how much propaganda the Southern nationalists circulated in the South on the subject of expansionism, the South as a section never gave them full or active support. The lower South was the real heart and center of the expansionists; the rest of the South merely gave vocal support. If the South had given its unqualified aid, it is quite possible that Cuba and Mexico would have become a part of the United States.

One reason why the upper South did not ally with the lower South in the quest of foreign lands was that the border states did not have any practical interest or need for "new lands." Their power in the South was already reduced to a low point. The border states were Southern in many of their attitudes and were proud of being Southern. If new territory came under the influence of the lower South, this would have pushed the border states into the Northern sphere of influence, which was not what the border states wanted. Also, if new foreign territory was added, the slave trade might have to be re-opened to supply labor for the new plantations. In the late 1850's there was a strong movement in that direction. The border states were engaged in a profitable enterprise of selling their excess slaves to
the lower South. This business would be stopped or become less profitable if the re-opening of the African slave trade should be accomplished; therefore, the border states were not in favor of expansionism.

Another reason why the upper South did not join the lower South was that their attention was centered on the right to take slaves into the western territories, not acquisitions of foreign territories. The Compromise of 1850 gave the South lands in the West, but they were not suited for slavery. Some Southerners realized that the natural limits of slavery were set by nature, and nothing much could be done about it. The Kansas-Nebraska Act declared the Missouri Compromise void, which opened up whole new areas in the northern part of the United States. The Southerner with his human chattel could go North—or so he thought.

Along with the feeling that no real need existed for overseas land, the Southerner knew that it was impractical to govern such areas. This would be the first time the United States would take over lands that were heavily populated by a foreign people who had no idea about the American way of life. Regions such as Cuba and Mexico were politically unstable and it would cost much money and men to "Americanize" the natives.

The filibustering attempts were very impractical, especially the schemes of the Knights of the Golden Circle.
The leaders of these attempts were not of the highest caliber. Lopez went against the advice of the Cuban Council and other Cuban revolutionaries and died needlessly because of his blindness. Walker, as stated before, had a "Napoleonic Complex," and would not follow advice given by Goicouria. Walker wanted a military depositions, thus alienating most of his Southern supporters. George Bickley was a picture of sheer incompetence. After reading the bizarre accounts of this man, one can understand why his support for an actual filibustering endeavor on Mexico failed.

Filibustering was a manifestation of both Southern romanticism and growing nationalism. As to the first, the South at this time was still in many ways, intellectually and emotionally, in the romantic world of Sir Walter Scott. The man still used the code duello in defense of their honor and women. The young Southerner thought of himself as a cavalier, and the ideals of chivalry were accepted in all sincerity. As to the second, nationalism, the extremists in the South regarded foreign expansionism as a way to bolster the power of the South in the Union—or, eventually, outside the Union. One must always remember that the Southerner wanted to protect slavery above all else in order to keep the country a "white man's country." ¹ After California came into the

Union as a free state, thus upsetting the balance that had been maintained for so long in the Senate, the South could see the "handwriting on the wall." It knew that in time the free states would far outnumber the slave states, and this led to the fear that the North would in some way do away with slavery. This in turn would upset the race relations that had been so carefully cultivated in the South. The program of the abolitionists did nothing to reduce the friction between the two sections. The South had to get new territory in order to extend its institution and at the same time increase its power by adding new slave states. Then, and only then, could the South feel safe again.

While on the subject of motives, Frederick Law Olmstead (a Northern man who traveled extensively in the South before the Civil War) made some observations on why the Southerners wanted Cuba. He felt that the planter did not think of the economic effects that annexation would have. These men did not realize that the duty on sugar would be dropped, putting Louisiana farmers in direct competition with the Cubans. Olmstead found that the wealthy planters who had purchased Cuban revolutionary bonds to aid in the filibustering enterprises had but one motive: to get possession of the large estates on the Island. Under their control, the planters would be able to increase their profits because of greater skill in sugar making, cheaper land, and slave labor
supply; these, coupled with a longer growing season, would make them wealthy men in a few years.

The principle subscribers of the Junta stock (Cuban revolutionary bonds) in the South, according to Olmstead, were the land speculators. These persons expected that by favoring the movement they would be able to obtain from the revolutionary government large land grants at very low prices. These speculators hoped that the land prices would rise in value after annexation.

Olmstead also found that there was a romantic appeal in the call to arms. "They had got the idea that patriotism was necessarily associated with hate and contempt of any other country but their own, and the only foreigners to be regarded with favour were those who desired to surrender themselves to us."

As a secondary reason, Olmstead surmised that some who wanted land in Cuba "thought if Cuba were annexed the African slave trade would be re-established, either openly or clandestinely with the states," and the lands would increase in prices, due to cheap labor. Whether these were the real reasons for the Southern desire for the Island or

---


3 Ibid., p. 332.
not, they lead to interesting reflections.

The filibustering schemes were doomed to failure from the start; only William Walker came within a "whisker" of being successful. There was opposition to these attempts from the North. The Federal government did not give its sanction to the filibustering attempts. At times it did very little to stop them, but by not giving support, success was almost impossible. One must not overlook the attitudes of the foreign governments, especially Great Britain. England did not want to see her trade disrupted in the Caribbean. Great Britain was particularly sensitive to Walker's activities in Nicaragua, because of the closeness of British Honduras.

The South's struggle for survival could be likened to the person who has advanced into water over its head and grabs, for the first thing within reach. For the Southern nationalist, this happened to be the concept of more territory for its peculiar institution. The institution needed to be protected above all else. The passions and angers that were aroused in the North against slavery made some Southerners look, not westward, because the Compromise of 1850 had not given the South that much, but southward, toward Cuba, Mexico and Central America. If this area could come under the control of the South, then numerical strength would be returned to the section. Then the South could be sure that Congress would protect the
Southern institution of slavery.

However, in spite of all the agitation from 1850 to 1860 to acquire territory in the Caribbean region, the inaugural address of Jefferson Davis, in February, 1861, contained no glowing expression favoring a policy of expansionism, because he knew that the time was not favorable for expansion. Southerners did not foresee that the upcoming Civil War would destroy their fields, cities, men, and most important of all, their peculiar institution.

4 "Inaugural Address of President Jefferson Davis at Montgomery, Alabama, February, 1861," Southern Historical Society Papers, I-II (January, 1876), pp 5-6.
The material cited in this section of the bibliography is only what has been cited in the thesis.

PRIMARY

Books


Resolutions and Address Adopted by the Southern Convention, Held at Nashville, Tennessee, June 3rd to 12th Inclusive in the Year 1850. Nashville, Tennessee: Harvey M. Watterson, Printer, 1850.


Articles and Periodicals


"Cuba," The Western Journal and Civilian, IX (February, 1855), 295-302.


--------. "Our Army in Mexico," De Bow's Review, II (January, 1847), 428-430.


"Inaugural Address of President Jefferson Davis at Montgomery, Alabama, February, 1861," Southern Historical Papers, 1-11 (January, 1876), 5-6.


Kettel, Thomas Prentice. The United States Magazine and Democratic Review, XXVI (February, 1850), 97-112.

"Late Southern Convention," De Bow's Review, XXVII (July, 1859), 95-103.


"Temper of the South," Detroit Free Press, January 10, 1850.

SECONDARY

Books


Articles and Periodicals


Soucher, Chauncey S. "In Re That Aggressive Slavocracy," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, VIII (June, 1921), 13-79.


Scroggs, William O. "Walker's Designs on Cuba," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, I (December, 1914), 198-211.

MATERIAL NOT CITED IN THESIS

PRIMARY

Books


Articles and Periodicals


"Direct Trade—How to Save the South and the Union," De Bow's Review, XXIX (July, 1860), 104-107.

Fitzhugh, George. "Acquisition of Mexico-Filibustering," De Bow's Review, XXVI (December, 1858), 613-626.


"How Can the Union be Preserved?" De Bow's Review, XXI (September, 1856), 232-248.


"Late Southern Convention at Montgomery," De Bow's Review, XXIV (June, 1858), 575-603.


"What are we to do?" *De Bow's Review*, XXIX (July, 1860), 7-77.

"Walker's Expedition," *De Bow's Review*, XXIV (February, 1858), 146-151.

"Where Does the South Stand?" *De Bow's Review*, XX (March, 1856), 362-364.

SECONDARY

Books


Greer, James, "Louisiana Politics, 1845-1861," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXV (October, 1930), 617-654.


Ramsdell, Charles W., "The Natural Limits of Slavery Expansion," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVI (June, 1929), 151-171.

Russel, Robert T., "What was the Compromise of 1850?" Journal of Southern History, XXII (August, 1956), 292-309.


Sidney, Webster, "Mr. Marcy and the Cuban Question," Political Science Quarterly, VIII (March, 1893), 1-31.

Sloussat, St. George L., "Tennessee, the Compromise of 1850, and the Nashville Convention," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, II (December, 1915), 311-347.
