

# THE FLORIDA

## HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

---

PUBLISHED BY THE FLORIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## **Fernandina Filibuster Fiasco: Birth of the 1895 Cuban War of Independence**

*by* Antonio Rafael de la Cova

**I**n early January 1895, Cuban exile leader José Martí completed preparations in the United States and the Caribbean to ignite a revolt against Spanish colonial despotism in his homeland. Three vessels were chartered in New York and Boston to retrieve hundreds of weapons from a warehouse in Fernandina Beach, Florida, and board contingents of Cuban revolutionaries in Key West, the Dominican Republic, and Costa Rica to disembark on the island in conjunction with nationwide internal uprisings. During the previous forty-five years, Cuban patriots had been launching dozens of similar military filibuster expeditions from the United States, which the federal government moved to suppress for violating the Neutrality Act. The Fernandina affair ran into trouble when New York's *World* revealed parts of the conspiracy and the local collector of customs reacted by taking legal steps to seize the weapons, have the sailing charters revoked, and detain Martí and his cohorts for questioning.

These events, known as the Fernandina Plan, have never been fully analyzed. Historians, including Martí's biographers, have generally relied on his scant correspondence on the project, the sketchy version in his newspaper *Patria*, and the brief and sometimes confused accounts written by two participants decades later. A perpetuation of myths and errors has existed for over a century. In 1920, Willis Fletcher Johnson inaccurately wrote in his four-vol-

---

Antonio Rafael de la Cova is Assistant Professor of Latin American Studies at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology.

ume *The History of Cuba* that Martí had "purchased and equipped three vessels, the *Amadis*, the *Baracoa* and the *Lagonda*, only to suffer the mortification and very heavy loss of having them seized by the American authorities for violation of the neutrality law." Two decades later, the encyclopedia *Cuba en la mano* erroneously stated that Martí and the expeditionaries were arrested by the United States Government. In 1982, Nydia Sarabia of the *Centro de Estudios Martianos* in Havana mistakenly blamed the Pinkerton Detective Agency for the expedition's failure and repeated the falsehood that "The port of Fernandina was a swarm of federal agents, of policemen, [and] spies." In 1995, Cuban exile and writer Carlos Alberto Montaner alleged that "the United States Navy had detained in the port of Fernandina the three steamers loaded with weapons." The truth is that only two of the expeditionary vessels arrived in the sleepy little town, and there were no military ships in the area, except a disabled revenue cutter one hundred miles away in Savannah.<sup>1</sup>

This article analyzes previously unknown details of the covert expedition preparations and ascertains the causes of the fiasco. It describes the whistle-blowing role of informants and the yellow press, the blunders and indiscretions of Cuban rebels, the legal steps taken by federal authorities, Spain's diplomatic reaction, and the indefatigable efforts of two Americans—Fernandina entrepreneur Nathaniel Barnett Borden and New York attorney Horacio Rubens—to redeem the Fernandina Plan. This work is based on previously neglected materials in the National Archives (including documents from the United States Departments of State, Justice, and Treasury), the Bureau of Customs, contemporary newspapers from New York, Jacksonville, Savannah, and Charleston, and the Nathaniel Barnett Borden Papers in the Amelia Island Museum of History.

The first four filibuster expeditions to Cuba from the United States were organized by General Narciso López between 1849 and

1. Enrique Collazo, *Cuba Independiente* (Santiago de Cuba, 1981), 46-49; Horatio S. Rubens, *Liberty: The Story of Cuba* (New York, 1932), 70-74; "Los Tres Vapores," *Patria* (New York), 19 January 1895, 1; Willis Fletcher Johnson, *The History of Cuba*, 4 vols. (New York, 1920), 4: 15; *Cuba en la Mano: Enciclopedia Popular Ilustrada* (Havana, Cuba, 1940), 630; Nydia Sarabia, "El plan de Fernandina y los espías del diablo," *Anuario del Centro de Estudios Martianos* (May 1982): 200-209; Carlos Alberto Montaner, "Del Martí rebelde al antiyanqui," *El Nuevo Herald* (Miami), 21 May 1995, 22.

1851 with hundreds of American volunteers. The Cuban populace refused to join López, who was captured in Pinar del Río and garroted in 1851. United States authorities dispersed two of the expeditions and put López and his staff on trial in New Orleans, dismissing the charges after three consecutive hung juries. During the Ten Years' War (1868-1878), twenty-two filibuster expeditions (using a total of fifteen vessels) were organized by Cuban expatriates in the United States. While many were successful, some vessels were confiscated by the federal government for violating the Neutrality Act. In 1872, the Spanish Navy captured the gunrunner *Virginius*, executing Captain Joseph Fry, thirty-six crewmen, and the four Cuban rebel leaders accompanying them. Between 1879 and 1894, a number of other filibuster expeditions led by Calixto García, Ramón Leocadio Bonachea, and the Sartorius brothers ended in failure. Martí took lessons from these previous experiences to implement his invasion plan.<sup>2</sup>

In 1892, the thirty-nine-year-old Martí organized the Cuban Revolutionary Party (PRC) in America to liberate Cuba. The PRC regrouped many leading veterans of the Ten Years' War, including renown generals Máximo Gómez and Antonio Maceo, and established representative clubs in Cuban exile communities throughout the United States and the Caribbean basin. Their stated goal was a "just and necessary war" to liberate Cuba. PRC clubs raised funds to finance the stages of the Fernandina Plan: chartering vessels in the United States under assumed names and false pretenses; bribing captains and crews with one thousand dollars to divert course; and if unsuccessful in their bribes, hijacking the ships to Cuba. One ship, with Martí, José María Rodríguez, and Enrique Collazo, would retrieve General Gómez and three hundred men from the Dominican Republic, and land on Camagüey province. A steamer with Patricio Corona would pick up the Maceo brothers, Flor Crombet, and two hundred men in Costa Rica and take them to Oriente province. The third vessel, carrying Serafín Sánchez

---

2. Herminio Portell Vilá, *Narciso López y su época* (Havana, Cuba, 1930-1958); Robert Granville Caldwell, *The Lopez Expeditions to Cuba 1848-1851* (Princeton, N.J., 1915); Vidal Morales y Morales, *Iniciadores y primeros mártires de la revolución cubana*, Vol. 2 (Havana, Cuba, 1931); Charles H. Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny: The Lives and Times of the Filibusters* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1980); Richard H. Bradford, *The Virginius Affair* (Boulder, Colo., 1980); Robert E. May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2002).

and Carlos Roloff, would take 150 men, including some twenty-five or thirty cigar makers from Jacksonville and Tampa, from Key West, Florida, to Las Villas province.<sup>3</sup>

Martí first mentioned the Fernandina Plan in a September 2, 1894, letter to Serafín Sánchez: "I am preparing the vessels and the weapons." Three weeks later, he wrote to Antonio Maceo and Máximo Gómez that at the end of October "our entry will be combined with all of the uprisings inside." Martí then sailed to Jacksonville on October 8 and traveled with Julio Sanguily and G. Domínguez by train to Fernandina.<sup>4</sup>

Fernandina is located thirty-five miles northeast of Jacksonville, on the northwest shore of Amelia Island, Florida's northeasternmost barrier island. The town, built in 1857 as the eastern terminus of the Florida Railroad, featured wharves along the Amelia River. The waterway was thirty feet deep around the docks, five-eighths of a mile wide, and four miles from the ocean. On the northern shore of the island, the St. Marys River empties into the mile-wide Cumberland Sound and demarcates Georgia. When Martí and his companions stepped off the train, Fernandina's unpaved streets were lined with abundant tropical foliage and numerous large Victorian frame houses for some of its two thousand inhabitants.<sup>5</sup>

The Cubans met with conspirator Nathaniel Barnett Borden, "one of the most prominent businessmen" in Fernandina, noted for "his straight-forwardness." He was vice consul for Spain,

3. The PRC organized 126 revolutionary clubs in eighteen cities by November 1894, including sixty-two in Key West, fifteen in Tampa, six in Ocala, and one each in Gainesville, St. Augustine, and Jacksonville. Outside Florida, there were eleven in New York City, seven in Mexico, six in Philadelphia and in Jamaica, three in New Orleans, and one each in Thomasville, Ga., Atlanta, Chicago, Brooklyn, Boston, Santo Domingo, and Panama; "Clubs Revolucionarios," *Patria*, 24 November 1894, 1; "Ready to Fight for Cuba," *Savannah Morning News*, 16 January 1895, 2; Ramón Cernuda, ed., *La Gran Enciclopedia Martiana*, 4: 108, 181-83, 189-98; José L. Franco, *Antonio Maceo: Apuntes Para Una Historia de Su Vida*, 3 vols. (Havana, Cuba, 1975), 3: 77; "Arms Consigned to Mr. Borden," (New York) *Herald*, 15 January 1895, 12.
4. Cernuda, *La Gran Enciclopedia Martiana*, 4: 76-77, 92-93, 104.
5. Federal Writers Project, Guide to Fernandina, Florida, Jacksonville Public Library, Jacksonville, Fla.; S.W. Paul to John G. Carlisle, 21 January 1895, RG 36, Customs Bureau, Special Agents Reports and Correspondence 1865-1915, S.W. Paul, Box 360, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; "Bagged by Baltzell," *Florida Times-Union*, 13 January 1895, 1; "The Filibustering Fleet," *Savannah Morning News*, 15 January 1895, 1.

Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Uruguay, and Brazil. Borden never revealed his motivation for assisting the revolutionaries, who lodged at the Florida House Inn on Third Street, where Martí had stayed during his previous visit in February 1893. The vice-consul introduced them to the Fernandina Social Club where the visitors signed the register, a conspiratorial misstep that would later confirm to authorities their presence in town.<sup>6</sup>

The thirty-four-year-old Borden was tall, curly-haired, and wore gold-rimmed spectacles. His father, Thomas J. Borden, had been a colonel in the Sixth Mississippi Regiment during the Civil War. Nathaniel Borden attended Vanderbilt University for three years and later worked for a large lumber company in Mobile, Alabama, from 1878 to 1888. He afterward became a managing partner in the New York firm of William D. Wheelwright & Co., which led him to Fernandina. In 1892, Borden resigned and established N.B. Borden & Co. in Fernandina, with the bookkeeping assistance of his younger brother Tom. Their company had its own warehouse and dock at the foot of Dade Street and engaged in the lumber, shipping, and phosphate trade to Cuba, the West Indies, the Canary Islands, and Europe.<sup>7</sup>

Borden accompanied the Cubans on their October 13 return to New York, but a shortage of funds postponed the invasion plans, and he returned to Fernandina. Two weeks later, Martí asked cigar manufacturer Eduardo Hidalgo-Gato for a \$5,000 loan, promising to reimburse him even if the revolution failed. In November, the projected uprising was again delayed due to a lack of rebel coordination in Cuba and a failed assassination attempt on Maceo in San José, Costa Rica. When the *Plan de Alzamiento* (or uprising plan) was completed in early December and signed by José María Rodríguez, José Martí, and Enrique Collazo, a coded message was sent to Cuba by secret emissary: the insurrection

---

6. S. W. Paul to John G. Carlisle, 21 January 1895, RG 36, Customs Bureau, Special Agents Reports and Correspondence 1865-1915, S. W. Paul, Box 360, National Archives of the United States, Washington, D.C.; "Bagged by Baltzell," 1; "The Filibustering Fleet," 1.

7. Nathaniel Borden Papers, Amelia Island Museum of History, Fernandina Beach, Florida; 1895 State Census, Nassau County, Florida, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee; "Off on a Secret Cruise," (New York) *World*, 11 January 1895, 2; Wendy Philcox, "The Rise and Fall of N.B. Borden," *Amelia Now* (summer 1993): 18-20.

would begin in January, twelve days after the islanders received a final signal by telegram.<sup>8</sup>

Martí then telegraphed Borden in Fernandina indicating that he was "ready for business." On December 10, Martí registered at the St. Denis Hotel in New York City under the name "D.E. Mantell" of Central Valley. He was described as "a short, swarthy, well-dressed man." Borden arrived two days later and visited the shipping clusters around the Maritime Exchange in lower Manhattan. He inquired about a small steamship, but when none were available to suit his specifications, he turned to yacht brokers.<sup>9</sup>

In mid-December, Borden chartered the yacht *Lagonda* for \$2,400 monthly on behalf of D.E. Mantell, a wealthy "English gentleman about to cruise in the West Indies." He also paid \$300 to insure the vessel for \$30,000 with the New York Marine Underwriters. The *Lagonda*, owned by the Reverend William L. Moore of New York City, was "a schooner rigged wooden steam yacht of 120 tons burden." A reporter described it as a black "rakish-looking craft and very trim in her rig and equipment." Its dimensions were 120 tons burden, "126 feet long, 19.5 beam and 10 feet deep, and was built in Brooklyn in 1884." The *Lagonda* had "compound engines with cylinders of 16 and 28 inches and 16-inch stroke, capable of developing twelve and one-half knots an hour." It was docked in South Brooklyn with eleven tons of coal and other property belonging to Edwin Gould, son of millionaire Jay Gould, who had it chartered during the summer. After Gould's property was put ashore, its master, Captain Nelson offered Borden the left-over coal for forty dollars. Borden later unsuccessfully tried to get the fuel free of charge from Gould, before buying a supply from the Communipaw Coal Company.<sup>10</sup>

A few days after contracting the *Lagonda*, Borden made a bid to yacht broker M. Hubbe for the steam yacht *Amadis*, owned by George H. Kimball of Cleveland, Ohio. The vessel, one hundred feet in length, eighteen feet in width, and with a draft of seven feet,

8. Cernuda, *La Gran Enciclopedia Martiana*, 4: 104, 108, 118-20; "Bagged by Baltzell," (Jacksonville) *Florida Times-Union*, 13 January 1895, 1; Franco, *Antonio Maceo*, 65-67.

9. Jorge Mañach, *Martí: Apostle of Freedom* (New York, 1950), 331; "Off on a Secret Cruise," *World*, 11 January 1895, 2.

10. "Off on a Secret Cruise," 2; "Bagged by Baltzell," 1; "The Fernandina Muddle," *Florida Times-Union*, 14 January 1895, 1.

was built the previous year at Castine, Maine. Its engine, capable of twelve knots per hour, had been salvaged from a wrecked light-house tender. The *Amadis* could accommodate nineteen people, including a crew of ten. It lacked a cargo compartment, and freight "could only be carried by stowing it in the state room and on deck." Borden paid the monthly fee of \$1,400 with a certified check signed by "D.E. Mantell." He claimed that Mantell was in a hurry to cruise the West Indies and proposed taking the yacht from its dock at Rockland, Maine, to Fernandina. After acquiring the two vessels, Borden sought engine-room and deck crews. He contracted the reputable Captain Griffing at Manning's Basin in South Brooklyn, without mentioning that he had already chartered the *Lagonda*. Griffing became suspicious upon hearing from Nelson that Borden had hired two crews, but Borden "explained at much length" that he had commissioned the vessels for different parties.<sup>11</sup>

Colonel Fernando López de Queralta, a veteran of the Ten Years' War and leader of the *Lagonda* expedition, refused to sail at the last minute. Apparently feeling insecure about chartering the yacht under false pretenses, he assured Martí that he could contract a ship for the overt purpose of a filibuster expedition, as he had done for former Honduran President Marco Aurelio Soto. López de Queralta was the only revolutionary who declined to operate illegally. He feared being forced to remain in Cuba after disembarking or facing prosecution upon return to the United States. He insisted that Martí accompany him the next day to visit a shipbroker to whom he had already revealed their plans and Martí's pseudonym. Although Martí knew that no steamer was available and that the broker had a "doubtful reputation," he erred by going with López de Queralta to a supposedly secret meeting. Instead, it was in a "noisy office with a vulgar broker" who Martí later would suspect of informing the yacht owners. Martí credited Borden with controlling the damage, making it possible for the yachts to sail.<sup>12</sup>

López de Queralta committed another blunder when part of the expeditionary armament, kept in storage for more than a year,

11. "Off on a Secret Cruise," 2; "Held Up By Uncle Sam," *Savannah Morning News*, 16 January 1895, 8; James F. Kilbreth to John G. Carlisle, January 15, 1895, Miscellaneous Letters of the Department of State, Microcopy 179, National Archives [hereafter cited as MLDS].

12. Cernuda, *La Gran Enciclopedia Martiana*, 4: 206-13; Rubens, *Liberty*, 72-73.

was to be sent by railroad to Borden's warehouse. He disregarded Martí's explicit orders and labeled the cargo as "military articles" in the shipping manifesto. He even forwarded ammunition crates uncovered. The railroad company refused to handle the cargo, and eleven days were lost before it was covertly sent by steamship in late December. Martí never resolved whether López de Queraltá behaved with "wickedness or awkwardness," but he did replace him with Serafín Sánchez.<sup>13</sup>

In the meantime, Borden left New York by train with ten crewmen and Captain John Dahl, a friend of Captain Nelson. They were accompanied by Cuban revolutionaries Patricio Corona, whose alias was T.A. Miranda, and Manuel Mantilla, who introduced himself as John Mantell, the son of D.E. Mantell. Mantilla claimed that his father was English and his mother Venezuelan and that he had attended preparatory school in Poughkeepsie. He was described by Dahl as a "dark-complexioned . . . somber youth" who did not appear "the ordinary English type" but rather "looked like an Indian." Martí had known the Mantilla family since boarding in their Brooklyn residence in January 1880. His affair with the married thirty-four-year-old Carmen Mantilla produced a daughter, María, on November 28, 1880. After forty-two-year-old Manuel Mantilla died of heart disease in February 1885, Martí became a surrogate father to the seven Mantilla children. He received Carmen's approval for her oldest son to go on the filibuster mission. On December 24, Mantilla arrived with Borden and their dozen companions in Rockland, Maine, to board the *Amadis*.<sup>14</sup>

When Captain Dahl and three crewmen refused to take Mantilla and Corona on the *Amadis* because the charter prohibited passengers, Borden replaced them with Captain David S. Weed, his mate, and a first engineer. Suspicious of the terms of agreement, the new master notified the owner that the *Amadis* might be

13. Cernuda, *La Gran Enciclopedia Martiana*, 4: 190, 209-13; Rubens, *Liberty*, 72.

14. "Off on a Secret Cruise," 2; "Detained the Yacht *Amadis*," *Herald*, 16 January 1895, 14; "Held Up By Uncle Sam," 8; Rubens, *Liberty*, 71; Maria Mantilla, Certificate of Birth, Brooklyn, No. 10214, 28 November 1880; and Manuel Mantilla, Certificate of Death, in the City of New York, No. 519022, 18 February 1885, both in New York City Department of Records and Information Services, Municipal Archives. Martí's affair with Carmen Mantilla is still a source of controversy. In January 1985, María Mantilla's son, Hollywood movie actor César Romero, told this writer that he was the grandson of José Martí, a statement that he often made publicly.

used for smuggling. Kimball instructed him to follow orders but to "keep his eyes open." After three or four days, Borden ordered Weed to meet him in Boston with the *Amadis* and departed by train with the Cubans. Mantilla and Miranda continued to New York and boarded the *Lagonda*.<sup>15</sup>

In Boston, Borden tried in vain to hire a steamship. He was introduced to Gjert Lootz, agent for the 484-ton steamer *Baracoa*. Lootz considered Borden "a most delightful gentleman-charming and attractive." The Norwegian vessel had a crew of sixteen under Captain Solomon Clausen, a "splendid officer" who had been sailing for twenty-five years. The *Baracoa* was "a veritable 'tramp,' both in design and equipment," with a white iron hull (red below the waterline) and capable of eleven knots an hour. The steamship had been in the fruit trade for most of the previous year, but during the last ten weeks remained idle in Boston. The Fernandina shipper chartered the vessel for \$2,375, on behalf of "Abe Moreas" of Tampa. The charter specified that for one month, starting on January 6, "the *Baracoa* was to run to Fernandina and there take on cargo, and go on a cruise to the West Indies." It was provided that the steamship "could go from one West Indian port to another with 200 passengers and some machinery." Borden claimed that these would-be "laborers," accompanied by two or three foremen, would be working on one of the islands, although he did not specify the ports of call. He asked that the between-deck cargo partition be left open, to facilitate sending "a load of phosphate from Florida to the West Indies and reload at some port on the islands with a cargo of bananas."<sup>16</sup>

Borden met the *Amadis* when it arrived in Boston to repair its pump and replenish its coal supply. He told Captain Weed to sail to Savannah and then wire him at Fernandina for further instructions. Meanwhile, the *Lagonda* sailed from New York on January 1, 1895, under the stipulation that Captain Griffing was to "take no cargo" and "allow no one on board who was not either personally known to him or vouched for by proper credentials, and under no

15. "Off on a Secret Cruise," 2; "Took Arms By Thousands," *Florida Times-Union* 16 January 1895, 1; "Held Up By Uncle Sam," 8.

16. "*Lagonda* Under Seizure," *World*, 13 January 1895, 1; "On a Filibustering Expedition," *Herald*, 13 January 1895, 11; "Made Rev. Mr. Moore Mad," *Florida Times-Union*, 20 January 1895, 8; "The Fernandina Muddle," 1; "Held Up By Uncle Sam," 8.

circumstances to take the yacht out from any port at night." Upon the first sign of trouble, he was to head for the nearest port and seek the protection of the Collector of Customs. Upon departure, the *Lagonda* damaged its stern on some wreckage at Long Branch and had to return for repairs. Three days later, it started again for Fernandina to take on coal and stores.<sup>17</sup>

After the yacht set sail, rumors on the New York waterfront of its destination reached a reporter for *World*, the sensationalist yellow journal edited by Joseph Pulitzer. The reporter questioned M. Hubbe, the broker for the *Amadis*, who voiced his suspicions with one word: "filibusters." Another intrigue started by a stevedore weeks earlier was that "on some steamship bound south there were shipped \$30,000 worth of small arms." Reportedly, it was a Mallory line steamer that docked in Fernandina around Christmas time with a prepaid consignment for Borden, who was still in Boston. The cases were marked with only "a carelessly made cross in black marking ink."<sup>18</sup>

On January 7, 1895, editors at *World* telegraphed T.A. Hall, its correspondent in Fernandina, asking that he look out for the *Lagonda* and the *Amadis*, "suspicious crafts" which had departed three days earlier. Hall, a county judge and newspaper editor, immediately showed the dispatch to George L. Baltzell, the Collector of Customs who had been appointed to the \$500-a-year post five months earlier. Two days later, the *Lagonda* arrived at Borden's wharf. Mantilla and Corona "proceeded to make themselves agreeable to the prominent people of Fernandina. They were soon favorites in the town, spent money freely and numerous cold bottles were opened at their expense." Mantilla was described as "a young smooth-faced handsome gentleman. He dresses neatly and speaks English with a very slight foreign accent." The reckless behavior of the foreigners threatened the clandestine purpose of their mission.<sup>19</sup>

17. "Off on a Secret Cruise," 2; "Bagged by Baltzell," 1; "Took Arms By Thousands," 1.

18. "Off on a Secret Cruise," 2; "Arms Consigned to Mr. Borden," *Herald*, 15 January 1895, 12.

19. G.L. Baltzell to Secretary of the Treasury, 19 January 1895, MLDS; "Roster of the Employees of the Custom House-Port of Fernandina," 7 April 1895, RG 36, Bureau of Customs, Letters Sent 1891-1912, Fernandina, Fla., entry 1497, National Archives; 1895 State Census, Nassau County; "Bagged by Baltzell," 1; "Borden's Smile is Broad," *Florida Times-Union*, 18 January 1895, 1.

On the following day, the 10th, New York City informant James Batewell wrote to John G. Carlisle, the Secretary of the Treasury in Washington, D.C., that the *Lagonda* and *Amadis* were on "a filibustering expedition." He indicated that one vessel carried "a number of fishermen's dories" exclusively for "landing a large number of men on the coast of whatever country the expedition is intended for." Batewell added that "both yachts have a supply of coal on board for a long voyage and their movements and arrangements have been made with the greatest secrecy. They were both chartered by the one man, so it is no pleasure trip." Although the informant requested that his name "be kept secret for my own protection," he still claimed "the proportion of the award in case of confiscation which is allowed by our Government in such cases." The next day, Batewell wrote again, enclosing an article from New York's *World* and asking that his "claim for reward be recognized if the yachts or arms and ammunition or other property of the expedition be confiscated."<sup>20</sup>

Martí, still in New York making last minute preparations, became alarmed on January 11 when he read a lengthy article in *World* entitled "Off on a Secret Cruise" and subheaded "Insurance Companies Cancel the Policies on Both Yachts—Old Salts Think They Are Off to Filibuster or Smuggle." The newspaper detailed all of Borden's suspicious activities during the previous month, concluding that "the general opinion is that the yachts are bound either to Hayti, Honduras, or Nicaragua." When rumors reached the companies that had insured both vessels, "it was this, with the fear that something was irregular in the cruise of the two that led them to cancel the policies" and notify the owners. One writer for *World* stated that Rev. Moore "has telegraphed to Fernandina to Capt. Griffing, of the *Lagonda*, to return to this port upon the first suspicious actions of the charterers."<sup>21</sup>

Kimball, owner of the *Amadis*, was also startled by the recent turn of events. He wired inquiries to Fernandina and Savannah, but was told that his yacht had not appeared. Kimball sent additional advices to Captain Weed at both ports to seek government protection in case of danger. He then departed for Boston, not knowing that the *Amadis* had just left Norfolk, Virginia, after taking on water, and was headed for Savannah.<sup>22</sup>

20. James Batewell to Secretary of the Treasury, 10 January, 11 January 1895, MLDS.

21. Mañach, *Martí*, 334; "Off on a Secret Cruise," 2.

22. "Lagonda was Searched," *World*, 12 January 1895, 12; "Detained the Yacht Amadis," *Herald*, 16 January 1895, 14.

In the meantime in Fernandina, an argument erupted between Borden and the captain of the *Lagonda*, who had changed the yacht's destination to Puerto Limon, Costa Rica. This violated the charter, and while it would not have invalidated the insurance, it would have impaired any claim for damages. Borden wired the *Lagonda's* owner: "Griffing refuses to sail until second payment and insurance are paid, neither of which is due according to charter party. Crew paid Jan. 1. Will hold you responsible for all damages caused by delay." And Borden's problems seemed to compound. Collector Baltzell, accompanied by Hall, clambered aboard the *Lagonda* later that day. Mantilla introduced himself as John Mantell, whose father had chartered the yacht. Borden invited the visitors on a two-hour trip up the St. Mary's River to take on a supply of fresh water and wash out the boilers. While Baltzell and Hall found nothing peculiar during the journey, upon returning to Fernandina, Hall received another telegram from editors at *World*, insisting that he watch the "very suspicious" *Lagonda*. When Baltzell read it, he immediately wired Captain Rogers, of the Revenue Cutter *Boutwell* in Savannah, requesting his urgent presence.<sup>23</sup>

Rogers replied on the 11th that his vessel, laid up for repairs since October, was disabled and suggested that Hall telegraph the Treasury Department for the cutter *Merrill*. That morning, the Rev. Moore sent a telegram to Captain Griffing, ordering him to remain at Fernandina until the charter expired on January 18th or until Borden produced "a bona fide insurance policy." Borden replied with an offer from the charterer to buy the yacht if allowed to proceed to sea, which Moore rejected. Griffing then visited Collector Baltzell, voluntarily surrendered his sailing papers, "reported that a number of suspicious boxes had been put on the yacht the night before and asked if any suspicions had been directed towards the yacht." At noon, Baltzell sent his Deputy Collector, fifty-seven-year-old W.B.C. Duryee, to board the *Lagonda* at Borden's wharf. The deputy noticed "twenty or more cases of merchandise of suspicious nature" below deck, but Borden refused to let him examine the contents. This violated the terms of the char-

23. G.L. Baltzell to Secretary of the Treasury, 19 January 1895; "*Lagonda* Was Searched," 12; "*Lagonda* Under Seizure," *World*, 13 January 1895, 1; C.A. Macatee to John G. Carlisle, 30 October 1894, RG 36, Customs Bureau, Special Agents Reports and Correspondence 1865-1915, C.A. Macatee, box 305, National Archives.

ter, which explicitly stipulated that "no cargo should be taken aboard." When Duryee reported back, Baltzell quickly administered the oath of office of Special Inspector of Customs to thirty-five-year-old C.B. Higginbotham, the local deputy sheriff. Higginbotham, "a stout man, with a red mustache and dressed much like a farmer," was assigned to a permanent watch of the yacht and to prevent anyone boarding without the Collector's permission. Baltzell hesitated to proceed in an official manner because Captain Griffing had voluntarily delivered his sailing papers, and instead wired Treasury Secretary Carlisle for instructions. Before replying, Scott Wike, the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, sent a copy of Baltzell's telegram to Secretary of State Walter Q. Gresham, asking for suggestions on proper procedure.<sup>24</sup>

The next morning, Saturday the 12th, Baltzell received an answer from Wike, indicating that the *Lagonda* case had been reported to Secretary of State Gresham. Another message indicated that the Treasury Department was expecting a report from the New York Collector regarding the yachts. Yet a third telegram, sent by the Treasury Department to Baltzell that morning, advised him to "take action accordingly, report fully and immediately what further suspicious circumstances attach to the vessel." The Western Union messenger boy, either by accident or design, delivered this last note to Borden instead of the Collector. Borden alleged not to have seen to whom it was addressed when he opened it and, before rerouting the message to the Collector, he returned to the *Lagonda* with Mantilla. Captain Griffing watched as the crates on board were opened and a few containing guns and cartridges were hastily thrown overboard by orders of Mantilla. The Cuban youth probably reacted in panic, since it would have been safer and less costly to return the crates to Borden's warehouse.<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, the *Lagonda's* owner met with James F. Kilbreth, the Collector of Customs of the Port of New York. Rev. Moore stat-

24. G.L. Baltzell to Secretary of the Treasury, 19 January 1895; S.W. Paul to John G. Carlisle, 21 January 1895; Oath of Office, C.B. Higginbotham, 11 January 1895, RG 36, Bureau of Customs, Letters Received 1890-1906, Entry 1498, National Archives; 1895 State Census, Nassau County; "The Fernandina Muddle," 1; George L. Baltzell to Secretary of the Treasury, 11 January 1895, MLDS; S. Wike to Secretary of State, 11 January 1895, MLDS.

25. S. Wike to Collector of Customs, 12 January 1895, MLDS; G.L. Baltzell to Secretary of the Treasury, 19 January 1895; "A Cuban Expedition," *Charleston (S.C.) News & Courier*, 13 January 1895, 1; "Bagged by Baltzell," 1; "Took Arms By Thousands," 1.

ed that "he chartered his vessel according to law and subsequently learned from the master thereof that the person who chartered her was not acting in good faith and had attempted to take the vessel to Costa Rica." Kilbreth advised Moore to revoke the charter and inform "the Collector of Customs at Fernandina to detain the *Lagonda* under sections 5289 and 5290," Title LXVII, Article 136, of the Revised Statutes of the United States, which Moore did, instructing Baltzell by telegram at noon to detain the *Lagonda* without bond, because the charter had been violated and canceled. Baltzell immediately wired Treasury Secretary Carlisle for instructions and sent his Deputy Collector, J.W. Howell, a fifty-year-old lumber merchant, to search the *Lagonda*. Howell returned two hours later, reporting that the crates on board contained used knapsacks, canteens, and belts which could be used for the plantation purposes alleged by Mantilla.<sup>26</sup>

While Baltzell conferred with his deputy, thirty-three-year-old railroad agent E.D. Lukenbille entered the Customs office accompanied by African-American stevedores William J. Ray, Ranaldo McDonald, Samuel Cribb, James F. Christopher, and brothers Edgar and Rufus Johnson. They carried "two large heavily strapped boxes, 5 feet long and 12 by 18 inches square at the ends" containing thirty machetes (manufactured by Collins & Co. of Hartford, Connecticut), ninety-six haversacks, and six canteens, which they had found floating on the Amelia River. This prompted Baltzell to board the *Lagonda* at 5:00 p.m., confiscate the cartridge boxes on board, and seize the vessel under the legal statutes quoted by the New York Collector. When the Cubans refused to open their luggage trunks for inspection, Baltzell had

26. Sections 5289 and 5290, Title LXVII, Article 136, of the Revised Statutes of the United States, read "The several collectors of the customs shall detain any vessel manifestly built for warlike purposes and about to depart the United States, the cargo of which principally consists of arms and munitions of war, when the number of the men shipped on board, or other circumstances render it provable that such vessel is intended to be employed by the owner to cruise or to commit hostilities upon the subjects, citizens or property of any foreign prince or state of any colony, district or people, with whom the United States are at peace, until the decision of the president is had thereon, or until the owner gives such bond and security as is required of owners of armed vessels by the previous section"; quoted in "The Fernandina Muddle," 1; James F. Kilbreth to John G. Carlisle, 15 January 1895, MLDS; G.L. Baltzell to Secretary of the Treasury, 19 January 1895; 1895 State Census, Nassau County; "Bagged by Baltzell," 1.

them broken open and confiscated some letters in Spanish. The collector then ordered Captain Griffing, Mantilla, Corona and the crew to remain on board until further notice. Mantilla became "considerably agitated," insisting that he had not violated the law and that the arms were needed on his father's plantation due to the unsettled state of Costa Rica. Baltzell then wired Frank Clark, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, requesting to see him at once. He also notified Treasury Secretary Carlisle that he had "taken charge of the yacht *Lagonda*" after examining its cargo, found "private telegrams [that] indicate that the yacht has or is about to engage in some kind of suspicious traffic," and requested further instructions. A Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union* reporter heard rumors that the "arms were intended for the Cuban patriots."<sup>27</sup>

That evening, a Treasury Department telegram was received in the Savannah Office of Special Agent Charles A. Macatee ordering detention of the *Amadis* by the Collector of Customs, Captain J.H. Rodgers of the Revenue Cutter *Boutwell*, and Captain Laird, the boarding officer on duty at the Barge Office. The next day, the *Savannah Morning News* announced that "The expedition is supposed to be under the direction of Marti, the Cuban patriot."<sup>28</sup>

On Sunday, January 13th, at 7:00 a.m., the steamer *Baracoa* arrived at Fernandina after a six-day voyage from Boston. The assistant state health officer, thirty-seven-year-old Dr. J.L. Horsey, boarded the ship and gave it a clean bill of health. Baltzell and his deputy then gave it a thorough examination but found only water ballast and sea stores. The commotion alarmed Captain Clausen, however, who "became suspicious and wired the charterer, A. de Moraes, at Tampa, for orders. The telegraph company sent back word that no such person could be found." Clausen then told

- 
27. G.L. Baltzell to James McKay, 26 February, 6 March 1895, RG 36, Bureau of Customs, Letters Sent 1891-1912, Fernandina, Fla., entry 1497, National Archives; 1895 State Census, Nassau County; G.L. Baltzell to Secretary of the Treasury, 12 January, 19 January, 1895; "*Lagonda* Under Seizure," 1; "Steam Yacht *Lagonda* Seized," (New York) *Sun*, 13 January 1895, 4; "Bagged by Baltzell," 1; "The Fernandina Muddle," 1; "Borden's Smile is Broad," 1.
28. C.A. Macatee to John G. Carlisle, 14 January 1895, RG 36, Customs Bureau, Special Agents Reports and Correspondence 1865-1915, C.A. Macatee, box 305, National Archives; "Filibusters in Florida," *Savannah Morning News*, 13 January 1895, 1; "No News of the *Amadis*," *Savannah Morning News*, 14 January 1895, 8.

Borden that he would inspect all cargo to be boarded, and "Borden grew alarmed, and offered to cancel the charter."<sup>29</sup>

That morning, accompanied by Deputy Collector J. W. Howell, Mantilla and Corona left Fernandina with their baggage on the first available train, "saying that they were going to Jacksonville to settle the matter up," and would return the next day. Mantilla told a local reporter that "all the cavalry equipments on the yacht were for use on his father's plantation in Costa Rica, the sabers being used to cut cane and other growing crops." He threatened to "sue the newspapers and to make a claim against the United States government for big damages." The Cubans registered at the Hotel Placide on Main Street under their pseudonyms and spent all afternoon conferring with an attorney. The newly redecorated five-story Placide advertised a modern elevator, "superior cuisine and service," and rooms for "\$2.50 to \$3.50 per day." By 4:00 p.m., Mantilla and Corona were again on the move, telling Howell that they were returning to Fernandina. Instead, they were hidden by Charlie Hernández in the home of Cuban exile Joseph A. Huau, a cigar manufacturer in Jacksonville for over twenty years. (Two days later, they clandestinely left for New York).<sup>30</sup>

29. Coastwise Vessels Entered, January 1895, RG 36, Bureau of Customs, Record of Entrances and Clearances 1894-1902, Fernandina, Florida, National Archives; 1895 State Census, Nassau County; G.L. Baltzell to Secretary of the Treasury, 19 January 1895; "Baracoa Back in New York," *World*, 21 January 1895, 5; G.L. Baltzell to Secretary of the Treasury, 13 January 1895, MLDS; "The Fernandina Muddle," 1.

30. Charlie Hernández was "the son of a wealthy man who had given all he possessed to the cause of Cuba during the Ten Years' War." He "had been educated in Brockton, Massachusetts, and there acquired many New England qualities, thoughts and habits. He had repeatedly proved his worth to Martí as a confidential messenger." Joseph A. Huau was educated in the U.S. during the 1860s, before returning to Cuba in 1868. His father, Dr. José Hipólito Huau Cadarete, had been the surgeon-general of the Spanish army in Cuba. In January 1869, Huau and his brother-in-law Henry Fritot were imprisoned in the Morro Castle at Havana for being implicated in the Ten Years' War. His father joined them in exile after he secured their release that year; Rubens, *Liberty*, 71, 73, 142; "The Fernandina Muddle," 1; "Hotel Arrivals," *Florida Times-Union*, 14 January 1895, 5; "All Filled With Arms," *Florida Times-Union*, 15 January 1895, 1; "Hotel Placide" advertisement, *Florida Times-Union*, 5 November 1890, 2; "Hotel Placide" advertisement, *Florida Times-Union*, 15 January 1895, 3; "Took Arms By Thousands," 1; "Miranda and Mantell," *Florida Times-Union*, 17 January 1895, 2; "Arms Consigned to Mr. Borden," *Herald*, 15 January 1895, 12; *Webb's Jacksonville Directory, 1876-77* (New York, 1876), 94-95.

Two U.S. deputy marshals were out "unusually late" that night looking for the fugitives and watched the Huau residence for two days. Huau told a Jacksonville newspaper reporter, "my sympathies are with the Patriots, but my firm conviction is that annexation to the United States is the only solution of the Cuban question." The journalist mingled with a group of Cubans who were "discussing the matter in Spanish on one of the street corners." One cursed, "The traitor of Fernandina, may lightning strike him." A veteran of the Ten Years' War exaggerated to the reporter that they still had "\$500,000" in the revolutionary treasury "sufficient to arm 50,000 men." He bragged that "As Uncle Sam has captured one yacht how many do you think have gotten through and how many more do you think will get through?" Other imprudent cigar makers boasted that "they had known all about this movement for the past six weeks," and that Martí had been secreted in Savannah, expecting to board the *Amadis* in disguise, but was now "in closer hiding." In fact, Martí had recently arrived in Jacksonville and checked into the Travellers Hotel under an assumed name. There, he summoned expedition leaders Enrique Collazo, José María Rodríguez, and López de Queralta. They were joined by Enrique Loynaz and Tomás Collazo. Martí incessantly paced the room while repeatedly blaming López de Queralta for the fiasco. The group exempted Martí from fault, who then wired Gonzalo de Quesada in New York to bring him the last \$1,500 of the revolutionary funds. Attorney Horatio Rubens, who served as general counsel for the PRC, was instructed to gather information at Fernandina, choose a course of action, and report to Martí at Jacksonville. The twenty-five-year-old Jewish New Yorker had received a law degree in 1891 from Columbia University, where he had been a classmate of Quesada.<sup>31</sup>

Pulitzer's *World* boasted that due to their "exclusive story," the Department of the Treasury had taken "a most active interest" in the affair. It proudly alleged that "Acting entirely on The World's information, the department telegraphed instructions to the special inspectors at Fernandina and Savannah to co-operate with the Collectors of Customs and to investigate both of the yachts." The yellow journal also indicated that "Mr. Moore thanked The World for saving his yacht, and said that if it had not been for the exclu-

31. "Arms for an Army," *World*, 15 January 1895, 3; "All Filled With Arms," 1; "Took Arms by Thousands," 1; Rubens, *Liberty*, 30, 71-72.

sive publication the craft would never have been heard from again." Kimball, the owner of the *Amadis*, had been reading the newspaper accounts in Boston and, on January 13th, anxiously wired Captain Weed at Savannah: "Don't leave port until further advice."<sup>32</sup>

Later that day, Captain Griffing appeared before Batzell and "stated that he had a confession to make and that he wished to make it in the presence of Mr. Borden." When Borden was confronted with Griffing's account of jettisoning the crated weapons the previous day, he confessed. Baltzell immediately contacted the Treasury Department, adding that he had found nothing suspicious on the *Baracoa*, but was watching it closely. He then wired Treasury Department Special Agent S.W. Paul, in charge of the 8th District in Tampa, to proceed to Fernandina. That evening, Major John W. Anderson, Special Inspector of the Treasury Department in Jacksonville, arrived in Fernandina and advised Baltzell to seize all the suspicious crates consigned to the *Lagonda*. When told that Mantilla and Corona had left for Jacksonville, he immediately wired U.S. Marshal McKay to arrest them.<sup>33</sup>

The next day, Monday the 14th, the Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union* reported that "Jose Marti, the Cuban revolutionist lecturer, has recently visited every place in this country where there is a Cuban society or club, and delivered addresses calculated to stir up the patriotism of his countrymen, has given rise to the reports that the arms found on board the *Lagonda* was to be taken to the Cuban patriots." The peppery New York *Herald*, published by the cynic expatriate James Gordon Bennett, also implicated the Cuban leader in the affair, while *World* published a sketch of Martí, speculating that he was D.E. Mantell and that he "had gone to Florida some weeks ago." The publicity prompted the Spanish Minister in Washington, Emilio de Muruaga, to identify Mantell as "the son of Cuban agitator Marti," and officially requested that the United States government investigate the matter.<sup>34</sup>

32. "Lagonda Under Seizure," 1; "Held Up By Uncle Sam," 8.

33. S.W. Paul to John G. Carlisle, 21 January 1895, RG 36, Customs Bureau, Special Agents Reports and Correspondence 1865-1915, S.W. Paul, Box 360, National Archives; "Arms Consigned to Mr. Borden," 12; "All Filled With Arms," 1; "Took Arms by Thousands," 1.

34. "The Fernandina Muddle," 1; "The Mysterious Fleet," *World*, 14 January 1895, 3; "Still Holding the *Lagonda*," 4; "Released the *Amadis*," *Herald*, 17 January 1895, 5.

That same morning, Baltzell and Anderson proceeded to the waterfront office of N.B. Borden & Co. They asked the clerk for the keys to the adjoining warehouse, but he refused to comply until Borden was summoned. Anderson then informed Borden that "he had reason to believe that cases were stored in the warehouse which were similar to those found in the yacht." According to Anderson, Borden "appeared very much 'rattled,' in fact very much as if a dynamite bomb had been exploded under him." After regaining his composure, Borden promised to attend to the request as soon as he saw a party off at the train just then. He later returned with an attorney from Baker & Drew, the most prominent law firm in Fernandina.<sup>35</sup>

In the warehouse, the federal officers seized 140 crates containing "27 cases rifles; 9 boxes center fire caps; 5 boxes revolvers; 76 cases cartridges; 2 cases canteens; 4 cases rubber blankets; 1 case cartridges E.F. #2; 1 case leather belts; 7 cases sacks and belts; 18 cases sabers or cutlasses." Among the weapons were "One hundred Winchester rifles, 200 Remington rifles and 100 Colts' revolvers." The largest lot of rifles had been shipped "directly from the factory of the Remington Arms Company at Ilion, N.Y." Total value of the seizure was estimated by some "at about \$25,000 and others as high as \$40,000." Borden pretended to be "very much amused and surprised at the discovery that the boxes contained arms." Baltzell assigned two hastily appointed special inspectors, John Cone, a thirty-four-year-old lumber inspector, and W.B. Smith, a forty-four-year-old with no occupation, as permanent guards at the warehouse. A few of the crates were transferred to the Custom House. Suspecting that these weapons were intended for the *Baracoa*, Baltzell wired the Treasury Department of his seizure and requested advise on what to do with the *Baracoa*.<sup>36</sup>

The Collector received a reply telegram from C.S. Hamlin, Acting Secretary of the Treasury, ordering him to report the case

35. "All Filled With Arms," 1; "Took Arms by Thousands," 1.

36. G.L. Baltzell to Secretary of the Treasury, 19 January 1895, MLDS; "The Filibustering Fleet," *Savannah Morning News*, 15 January 1895, 1; "All Filled With Arms," 1; "Arms Consigned to Mr. Borden," 12; "Borden & Co. Had Arms," *Sun*, 15 January 1895, 1; "The *Lagonda* Still Detained," *New York Times*, 15 January 1895, 6; 1895 State Census, Nassau County; G.L. Baltzell to John Cone and W.B. Smith, 11 February 1895, RG 36, Bureau of Customs, Letters Sent 1891-1912, Fernandina, Fla., entry 1497, National Archives; and G.L. Baltzell to Secretary of the Treasury, 14 January 1895, MLDS.

to the local U.S. Attorney. Hamlin simultaneously reported the matter to the Attorney General and asked Secretary of State Walter Q. Gresham whether he desired that the *Lagonda* "be seized or longer detained." Gresham quickly answered Hamlin that the Department of State was "without information that would justify it in asking that the yacht *Lagonda* be longer detained." Baltzell then had the *Amelia River* dragged around the *Lagonda* on the afternoon of the 14th. The U.S. District Attorney in Jacksonville arrived in Fernandina that evening, inspected the weapons in Borden's warehouse, and took charge of the case before returning home that night.<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile, heavy gales on the 14th forced the *Amadis* to stop at Morehead City, North Carolina, where a close observation by journalists "failed to disclose arms or cargo." Its owner, Kimball, wired Borden of the vessel's location. Borden replied that afternoon that since he "was unable to hear from Mr. Mantell or know of his whereabouts, that he would order the *Amadis* back to her home port" and cancel the charter. The next day, when the vessel arrived at Tybee Island, Georgia, via the intra-coastal waterway, it was immediately seized by Boarding Officer T.H. Laird. Customs Collector J.F.B. Beckwith ordered the *Amadis* up the Savannah River to moor next to the revenue cutter *Boutwell* at the Montgomery Street wharf, placing it under the custody of Captain J.H. Rogers. A thorough examination of every compartment by Beckwith and Treasury Special Agent Macatee revealed only its coal stored in bags on the deck. Captain Weed informed the authorities that his instructions at Boston were to sail to Savannah and then wire Borden at Fernandina. He did not know the purpose of the charter or its destination, "but supposed it was intended as a pleasure cruise." Weed received two telegrams from Kimball that awaited his arrival and showed them to the Collector of Customs and a *Savannah Morning News* reporter. One, sent earlier that day from Boston, stated in part: "Charter forfeited, return immediately. Retain charters' property." Weed decided not to wire Borden after reading newspaper accounts of the previous three days regarding the seizure of the *Lagonda* and the weapons

---

37. C.S. Hamlin to Attorney General, 14 January 1895, MLDS; C.S. Hamlin to Secretary of State, 14 January 1895, MLDS; W.Q. Gresham to C.S. Hamlin, 14 January 1895, MLDS; "All Filled With Arms," 1; "Bad for Broker Borden," *Florida Times-Union*, 24 January 1895, 2.

at Fernandina. Macatee wired the Secretary of the Treasury at 8:16 p.m. to report the detention of the empty *Amadis* and its charter forfeiture, and requested instructions.<sup>38</sup>

Rumors that the *Amadis* was taking a revolutionary expedition to Costa Rica led that government to send troops from San José to Puerto Limón on January 15th. As a result, Cuban exiles in Puerto Limón indiscreetly announced that the "expedition organized in Florida was against Spanish rule in Cuba." In Jacksonville, Cubans were "greatly excited over the seizures at Fernandina, and believe that the arms were intended for co-patriots." A *World* reporter claimed that Martí was known to have been at both Jacksonville and Fernandina during the past week. On the 15th, Rubens and Quesada arrived at Fernandina from New York and made legal inquiries. As they were boarding the train for Jacksonville that evening to meet Martí, Borden urged Rubens not to leave because Treasury Special Agent S.W. Paul had just arrived. The attorney reassured Borden that since "some special agents were not specially intelligent, and, so long as he gave no information, he would be safe." Rubens and Quesada met with Martí and the expedition leaders in the Travellers Hotel where the PRC's legal counsel assured them that the confiscated weapons could be recuperated since "Mere purchase, possession, or even shipment, of arms was not illegal at that time." After an hour-long meeting, there was a consensus to renew their efforts to make the revolution successful. Rubens accompanied Martí, Quesada, and Rodríguez on the train back to New York, while the other Cuban conspirators went to Tampa and Key West.<sup>39</sup>

On the 15th, Baltzell replied to a telegram he received from the owner of the *Lagonda*, requesting the release of his vessel to him personally. The Customs Agent asked Rev. Moore to travel to Fernandina so that they could consult on the matter. He then wired U.S. District Attorney Frank Clark, asking if he should detain

38. "That Filibustering Yacht," *Charleston News & Courier*, 15 January 1895, 1; "Arms for an Army," 3; "All Filled With Arms," 1; "Took Arms By Thousands," 1; "Held Up By Uncle Sam," 8; C.A. Macatee to John G. Carlisle, 16 January 1895; C.A. Macatee to Secy. Treasury, Western Union Telegram, 15 January 1895, RG 36, Customs Bureau, Special Agents Reports and Correspondence 1865-1915, C. A. Macatee, box 305, National Archives; "Detained the Yacht *Amadis*," 14; "The *Amadis* in Port," *Charleston News & Courier*, 16 January 1895, 1.

39. "No Owner for the Fleet," *World*, 16 January 1895, 14; "In and About the Town," *Florida Times-Union*, 16 January 1895, 8; Rubens, *Liberty*, 72-73, 141.

the *Baracoa* after its charter had been canceled and its captain had requested permission to sail. Clark responded the following morning, authorizing the release of the *Baracoa* but not the *Lagonda*. Baltzell then cleared the *Baracoa*, which immediately departed. When the steamer arrived in New York five days later, *World* called it "the troopship of D.E. Mantell's disorganized navy."<sup>40</sup>

On the morning of the 16th, the Savannah Collector informed the Treasury Department that nothing was found on the *Amadis* "contrary to law or that would indicate a violation of the neutrality laws." Beckwith added that the charter had been canceled, its captain had been instructed to return to New York, and he requested procedural instructions. Acting Secretary Hamlin replied that the facts did not warrant detaining the *Amadis* and advised the Collector to "Act accordingly and report." As a result, the *Amadis* was released that evening. Captain Weed stated that he would remain a day or two in Savannah until he could "coal and get in good sea going condition."<sup>41</sup>

That same evening, Treasury Special Agent Paul discussed the situation with Baltzell, who then wired the U.S. District Attorney asking if he proposed taking any further steps regarding the Fernandina seizures. Clark replied on the 17th that he had fully studied the law and would not proceed against the *Lagonda* and the arms unless the Collector of Customs had further evidence. Baltzell and Paul went by train to Jacksonville and consulted with Clark and Rev. Moore, who had just arrived from New York and registered at the Carleton Hotel. The U.S. District Attorney ordered Baltzell to release the *Lagonda* but to hold the weapons until further notice. The Collector of Customs spent the night at his father-in-law's house and, the next day, had breakfast at the Carleton with Moore. They both then traveled to Fernandina on the 11:00 a.m. train. Baltzell dis-

---

40. G.L. Baltzell to Secretary of the Treasury, 19 January 1895, MLDS; "End of the Filibuster Scare," *Savannah Morning News*, 17 January 1895, 1; "The Florida Filibusters," *Charleston News & Courier*, 18 January 1895, 2; "*Baracoa* Back in New York," *World*, 21 January 1895, 5.

41. J.F.B. Beckwith to Secretary of the Treasury, 16 January 1895, MLDS; C.S. Hamlin to Collector Customs, 16 January 1895, MLDS; J.F.B. Beckwith to J.G. Carlisle, 17 January 1895, MLDS; "The *Amadis* Released," *Savannah Morning News*, 17 January 1895, 8; "Yacht *Amadis* Released," *World*, 17 January 1895, 3; "Released the *Amadis*," *Herald*, 17 January 1895, 5; "The *Amadis* Released," *Sun*, 17 January 1895, 7; "The *Amadis*," *Florida Times-Union*, 17 January 1895, 2.

missed his deputy inspector from the *Lagonda*, since the Mantell charter expired that day, and returned the yacht's papers to Captain Griffing who turned over to Baltzell three Remington carbines and four boxes of damaged cartridges "which he stated he had recovered from the bottom of the Amelia River at Fernandina." Four other Remington carbines were pulled out of the river a week later by Captain T.J. Wasson, of the schooner *H.B. Homan*. The *Lagonda's* owner satisfactorily settled the charter with Borden before sailing with the *Lagonda* for Jacksonville in the afternoon. As they left port a salute was fired. The *Lagonda* docked at Clark's wharf on Washington Street, where crowds of Jacksonville citizens gathered to see it. Sympathy for the filibusters was expressed by John A. MacDonald who wrote to the *Florida Times-Union* that "The only wonder is that one hundred thousand young Americans do not join the Cubans and in defiance of customs and cussedness go over to Cuba and help this brave people to secure their liberty."<sup>42</sup>

The Spanish consul in Savannah, Narciso Pérez Petinto, traveled to Fernandina on January 22nd under orders from the Spanish Minister at Washington, D.C., to investigate Borden's role in the conspiracy. Borden "refused absolutely to discuss the matter with him," and as a result was replaced as Spanish vice consul by R.S. Schuyler of Fernandina. Three days later, District Attorney Clark said that "nothing more would be done by the government in regard to the affair," and ordered Collector Baltzell to release the weapons to Borden, including those taken from the river. The next day, the 26th, the Jacksonville law firm Cooper & Cooper filed a federal court claim on behalf of the owner of the *Amadis* "for damages for violation of contract" and requested "writs of attachment against the arms in Mr. Borden's

42. Coastwise Vessels Cleared, January 1895, RG 36, Bureau of Customs, Record of Entrances and Clearances 1894-1902, Fernandina, Florida, National Archives; G.L. Baltzell to James McKay, 26 February 1895, RG 36, Bureau of Customs, Letters Sent 1891-1912, Fernandina, Fla., entry 1497, National Archives; G.L. Baltzell to Secretary of the Treasury, 19 January 1895, MLDS; "In and About Town," *Florida Times-Union*, 16 January 1895, 8; "Borden's Smile is Broad," 1; "A Voice for Cuba," *Florida Times-Union*, 18 January 1895, 4; "Let Loose the *Lagonda*," *Florida Times-Union*, 19 January 1895, 2; "A Gospel Ship, not a Filibuster," *Charleston News & Courier*, 19 January 1895, 1; "Parson Moore as Close as a Clam," *Charleston News & Courier*, 20 January 1895, 2; "Release of the *Lagonda*," *Savannah Morning News*, 19 January 1895, 1; "*Lagonda* at Jacksonville," *Charleston News & Courier*, January 20, 1895, 1.

warehouse." Kimball claimed that he and crew were still owed money by Borden.<sup>43</sup>

Attorney Rubens returned to Fernandina a few days later by train with Quesada, who continued on to Tampa with the orders for the insurrection, signed on January 29th by the revolutionary leaders. Rubens was going to settle the lawsuit pending against Borden by the owner of the *Amadis* and try to recuperate the expedition weapons. Borden took inventory of the crates in his warehouse and reported to Baltzell the disappearance of three small boxes of cartridges, three Colt revolvers, and five Winchester rifles. The Collector questioned the watchmen he had placed in the warehouse, and they gave sworn statements that "they kept close and careful watch and nothing was taken from the warehouse during the time they were in charge."<sup>44</sup>

A month later, Consul Schuyler reported to the Spanish Minister in Washington that the rebel arms had been returned to Borden after he had denied under oath that the arms were the property of Mantell, and Rubens had "offered an agreed amount in settlement" to Kimball's attorney. Rubens shipped the crates by railroad under his own name to a stable in Philadelphia, until the next opportunity to smuggle them into Cuba. Gómez, Martí, and Maceo disembarked in Cuba after the general uprising occurred on February 24th where the latter two later perished on the battlefield.<sup>45</sup>

43. "The *Amadis* Released," 8; "Borden Bounced," *Savannah Morning News*, 24 January 1895, 2; "Removed by Senor Petinto," *Savannah Morning News*, 25 January 1895, 3; "Arms of the *Lagonda*," *Savannah Morning News*, 26 January 1895, 5; "N.B. Borden in Town," *Florida Times-Union*, 23 January 1895, 8; "Borden and His Guns," *Savannah Morning News*, 26 January 1895, 5.

44. Rubens, *Liberty*, 141; G.L. Baltzell to John Cone and W.B. Smith, 11 February 1895; and G.L. Baltzell to N.B. Borden, 14 February 1895, both in RG 36, Bureau of Customs, Letters Sent 1891-1912, Fernandina, Fla., entry 1497, National Archives.

45. The Fernandina weapons were secretly forwarded from Philadelphia to Wilmington, Del., in September 1895. The cargo was again captured by federal authorities during a failed filibuster expedition attempt. Spanish Minister Muruaga was forced to renounce his post on 14 March 1895, after publicly criticizing Secretary Gresham over the *Allianca* affair; Rubens, *Liberty*, 141, 174; E. de Muruaga to W.Q. Gresham, 11 March 1895, RG 36, Bureau of Customs, Letters Received, 1890-1906, entry 1498, National Archives; "Senor Muruaga Must Go," *New York Times*, 21 March 1895, 1; "Muruaga Prepared to Go," *New York Times*, 22 March 1895, 1.

Although the Fernandina Plan was dismembered mostly by the efforts of Baltzell, he did not receive any special official recognition. To the contrary, Special Agent Paul sent a scathing report to the Secretary of the Treasury on January 21st, denouncing the "inexcusable delay on the part of the Collector in reporting this case and, in view of his acknowledged ignorance on how to act, in not seeking the aid and advice of the officers of the Government near him." Paul blamed Baltzell for moving too slowly in the seizure of the *Lagonda* and the weapons, and for allowing Mantilla and Corona to escape, therefore failing to discover the destination of the expedition. Paul doubted that this was "a full-fledged expedition" against Cuba and believed that Martí "was interested in it to the extent that he desires to show to the Cubans in this country, who had contributed to the revolutionary fund that he had collected, that he was trying to do something." Paul may have been unfairly demeaning Baltzell due to previous animosities. When the Treasury Department had asked Paul in November 1894 to justify the necessity of Baltzell's request for a new \$75 boarding boat, Paul rejected it by claiming that the old one was "both suitable and convenient." Six months after the Fernandina incident, Baltzell was still trying to get government reimbursement for \$5.02 that he spent sending official telegrams.<sup>46</sup>

In June 1895, Baltzell received a circular from the Treasury Department relative to the enforcement of the Neutrality Law. He assured the Commissioner of Customs on June 13, 1895, that "this law, so far as lays in my power, will be strictly enforced." The same day, Baltzell informed the Secretary of the Treasury: "I deem it my duty, in view of the fact that there are or will be, filibustering expeditions from this port, to the island of Cuba, to report: that I have carefully enquired into the facts, and find there is no foundation for such reports, and that I consider such reports or rumors to be entirely sensational."<sup>47</sup>

This proved to be an erroneous assumption because filibuster expeditions, in spite of efforts by the United States and Spain to

46. S.W. Paul to John G. Carlisle, 21 January 1895; and S.W. Paul to John G. Carlisle, 10 December 1894, both in RG 36, Customs Bureau, Special Agents Reports and Correspondence 1865-1915, S.W. Paul, box 360, National Archives.

47. E.F. Chamberlain to Collector of Customs, 1 July 1895, RG 36, Bureau of Customs, Letters Received 1890-1906, entry 1498, National Archives; G.L. Baltzell to C.S. Hamlin, 11 April, 1895; G.L. Baltzell to B.F. Dillon, 13 May 1895; G.L. Baltzell to E.F. Chamberlain, 13 June 1895; and G.L. Baltzell to Secretary of the Treasury, 19 January 1895, all in RG 36, Bureau of Customs, Letters Sent 1891-1912, Fernandina, Fla., entry 1497, National Archives.

stop them, continued reaching Cuba for the next three years. Five months after the Fernandina fiasco, Baltzell was instructed by the Treasury Department to detain the filibuster vessel *Laurada*, which was expected to dock in Fernandina before it was seized in Charleston, South Carolina. A year later, the filibuster steam tug *Dauntless* arrived in Fernandina on October 30, 1896, without arousing suspicion. It had just unloaded thirty-two expeditionaries, a dynamite gun and its shells, 1,100 rifles, 1,000 pounds of dynamite, one million cartridges, and medicine at the delta of the San Juan River in Santa Clara, Cuba. Another filibuster ship, the *Commodore*, operated from Fernandina and neighboring waters. These vessels and others maintained clandestine operations until the United States went to war with Spain in April 1898.<sup>48</sup>

Although Borden resigned most of his vice consulate posts, he continued to be instrumental in assisting filibuster expeditions to Cuba. Borden became very prosperous after Cuban independence in 1902. Five years later, he married twenty-year-old Florence Reynard, the daughter of a Brooklyn sea captain, and in 1908, built the Villa Las Palmas mansion, which still stands today at 315 Alachua Street. He bought seven valuable lots for his estate through "Fernandina's enterprising real estate agent," George L. Baltzell. The animosity between them, as a result of the Fernandina Plan, had certainly vanished a decade later. In 1925, the Cuban Government presented Borden with a diploma for meritorious service in the war of independence.<sup>49</sup>

Rubens continued to serve the cause of Cuban independence and defended in court scores of filibusters charged with violating the Neutrality Act. In February 1898, he prompted a diplomatic incident that forced the resignation of the Spanish Minister in Washington, Enrique Dupuy de Lome. The attorney had received from a Cuban separatist a purloined letter from the Minister to a friend in Havana, describing President William McKinley as "weak and catering to the rabble and, besides, a low politician who

---

48. H.H. Buckman to G.L. Baltzell, 18 November 1895, RG 36, Bureau of Customs, Letters Received 1890-1906, entry 1498, National Archives; Coastwise Vessels Entered, October 1896, RG 36, Bureau of Customs, Record of Entrances and Clearances 1894-1902, Fernandina, Florida, National Archives; *Cuba en la Mano*, 629; Federal Writers Project, Guide to Fernandina, Florida, Jacksonville Public Library.

49. Wendy Philcox, "The Rise and Fall of N.B. Borden: The Final Years," *Amelia Now* (fall 1993): 36-41; *The Fernandina Record*, 13 March 1908.

desires to leave the door open to himself and to stand well with the jingoes of his party." Rubens released the document to William Randolph Heart's *New York Journal*, which published a facsimile on its front page. He then personally gave the original missive to McKinley. In consequence, Dupuy de Lome cabled his resignation to Madrid five days before the *U.S.S. Maine* exploded in Havana harbor. Rubens was in Havana, wearing his colonel's uniform of the Cuban Liberation Army, at the independence ceremonies on May 20, 1902. The Cuban Congress later conferred on him the title "Great Friend of Cuba," and he became president of a railroad company on the island, which made him a millionaire.<sup>50</sup>

The Fernandina filibuster fiasco cannot be blamed on a single incident or person, as some writers have previously done. The culpability is shared by the misjudgments of the main conspirators, which initiated a chain of events that culminated in disaster. Martí was careless in signing the Fernandina Social Club register and by accompanying López de Queraltá to confer with the distrustful shipbroker. Borden raised suspicions when hiring two yacht captains who knew each other, by flagrantly trying to circumvent the sailing charters, and by confessing to the Collector when confronted with the *Lagonda's* captain. López de Queraltá's desire to operate within the law led him to reveal the plan and Martí's pseudonym to a dubious sailing agent and to bungle the arms shipments. Mantilla attracted undue attention to himself upon arriving in Fernandina and erred by dumping the crated weapons into the river instead of returning them to Borden's warehouse. The Cuban rebels in the United States and Costa Rica were indiscreet when exaggerating details to journalists and boasting that the expedition was bound for Cuba. Informant James Batewell was motivated to collect the government bounty for the confiscation of the expeditionary yachts and armament, and the yellow press was fulfilling its sensationalist role. In spite of these mistakes, the Fernandina failure did not derail the planned uprisings throughout Cuba on February 24, 1895. Instead, it inspired Cuban exiles and their supporters in the United States to continue the war effort by organizing numerous filibuster expeditions to the island in order to gain national independence.

50. Rubens, *Liberty*, 287-92; "The Worst Insult to the United States in its History," (*New York Journal*, 9 February 1898; Herminio Portell Vilá, *Vidas de la Unidad Americana* (Havana, Cuba, 1944), 235-41; Cernuda, *La Gran Enciclopedia Martiana*, 1: 321.