

Omits mention of prior hopes support in N. Orleans in 1849, 1850
No mention of slave traders, only Carrman (p. 247)
Louisiana sugar planters opposed annexation.
Omits masonic motivation

SLAVOCRACY AND EMPIRE

NEW ORLEANS AND THE ATTEMPTED EXPANSION OF SLAVERY, 1845-1861

by
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In this illuminating study of the role played by New Orleans interests in Southern expansionism, Professor Urban contrasts the benign Jeffersonian imperialism of the Cuban invasions with the "white man's burden" justification of the Nicaraguan adventure and the patent endorsement of outright slavery in the contest for Kansas. Despite the bitterness wrought by these expansionist failures, the merchants of New Orleans—denied territorial acquisition—were moved only by the election of Lincoln to join with plantation interests in demanding severance from the Union. Professor Urban, who holds the Ph.D. from Northwestern University, has published studies of Southern imperialism and related subjects in *Hispanic American Historical Review*, *La Revista bimestre cubana*, *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, and *The Journal of Mississippi History*.

SLAVOCRACY AND EMPIRE, 325 pp.
Xerox, \$35.90; Microfilm, \$38.00.

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PLANTATION SOCIETY
I, 2 (June 1979), 227-251.

SOUTHERN EXPANSIONISM: URBAN INTERESTS IN THE CUBAN FILIBUSTERS

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In the two decades before the Civil War, American expansionists and Cuban planters sought various means of annexing Cuba to the United States. Among the principal reasons why Cuban sugar planters in the 1840s favored incorporation into the United States, according to Philip S. Foner, was their fear that British influence would force Spain to abolish slavery on this Caribbean island.¹ Moreover, Cuban sugar interests were anxious to be free of the old Spanish mercantile system with its stifling restrictions on trade and industry. By becoming part of the United States, Cuban planters and merchants would no longer be required to pay American import duties on sugar and would be in a better position to tap American banking capital and technology.

Discontent among Cuban planters increased the potential for overthrowing the Spanish regime on the island. Drawing upon his contacts with wealthy Cuban sugar owners, General Narciso López launched three military expeditions from the United States between 1849 and 1851 in the hope of conquering Cuba and then annexing it to the American republic.² Born in Venezuela in 1797, López began his military career by joining the Spanish army in the attempt to suppress Simón Bolívar's movement. After Spain's withdrawal from Venezuela in 1823, López resided in Cuba and Spain where he received prestigious military and political posts and married a daughter of an influential Cuban planter family. López' fortune declined in the early 1840s when the removal of Gerónimo Valdés, the captain-general of Cuba and his patron, caused López to lose his political appointments. As a private businessman, López also experienced hard times when his iron and coal mine operations

The author gratefully acknowledges the advice and encouragement of John Hebron Moore of Florida State University and Thomas Philpott and Standish Meacham of the University of Texas, Austin.

¹ Philip S. Foner, *A History of Cuba and Its Relations with the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1962), II, 41-63; See also Basil Rauch, *American Interest in Cuba* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), 101-210; Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 25-30; Robert Granville Caldwell, *The López Expeditions to Cuba, 1848-1851* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1915), 1-122; Melvin J. White, "The New Orleans Riot of 1851," *Tulane Graduate's Magazine* (April, 1914), 216-226; Chester S. Urban, "New Orleans and the Cuban Question during the López Expeditions of 1849-1851: A Local Study in 'Manifest Destiny,'" *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XXII (Oct. 1939), 1095-1167.

² Philip S. Foner, *A History of Cuba*, 42.

failed. Blaming the Spanish authorities for his political and financial losses, López planned a revolt for July 1848 in order to remove the Spanish presence from the island. Spanish officials discovered his plot before he could bring his plans to fruition, and López fled to the United States.

López' arrival bolstered the hopes of American expansionists. According to Foner, Basil Rauch, and other students of diplomacy, Southern annexationists were attracted to López, whose efforts promised to assure the continuation of slavery in Cuba.³ The acquisition of Cuba offered the South political advantages. The election of pro-slavery senators from Cuba enhanced the likelihood that Southern politicians would maintain parity with their Northern colleagues in the struggle for control of the United States Senate. Along with other militant Southerners, John C. Calhoun feared that his region would be completely encircled by capitalist, free-labor systems with the abolition of slavery in Mexico and the West Indies, as well as the extension of Northern capitalism into the Western United States. The acquisition of Cuba was the South's one hope of escaping the tightening noose around her neck.

In *The Political Economy of Slavery*, Eugene Genovese stresses that a pre-bourgeois ideology and the absence of technological innovation among planters retarded the American South's economic growth. He maintains that agricultural reforms, particularly the reconversion of exhausted soil into productive fields, were impossible under the Old South's economic system. In Genovese's opinion, "[t]he grave effects of slavery in retarding capital formation, inefficient labor, and preventing the rise of a home market made the task of the reformers virtually impossible."⁴ Soil exhaustion and the ineffectiveness of agrarian reforms further urged upon Southern planters the advantages of Caribbean expansion.

Genovese's exploration of the forces underlying Southern expansionism concentrates on the rural dimension of the movement. This essay extends the analysis to the urban sources of the Cuban annexation movement. While Southern planters in the 1850s sought new lands to replace their worn-out fields, New Orleans merchants searched for new markets to diversify their old trade patterns, as they suffered a decline in the Midwestern trade and the loss of traditional cotton markets to more aggressive urban competitors. Faced with a recession in the 1851 cotton market and plagued by a web of financial constraints, New Orleans businessmen, with the aid of lawyers, journalists, land speculators, and politicians,

actively worked on behalf of López' plans for invading Cuba. Prospective success in Cuba would open new markets to New Orleans merchants; present unlimited opportunities to attorneys trapped in the lower rungs of the legal profession; offer lucrative investments to real estate speculators; and furnish ambitious Whigs and Democrats a popular issue for advancing their careers. This diverse assemblage of New Orleans residents organized speaking and fund-raising committees to finance López' 1851 assault on Cuba. After learning on August 21, 1851, of the slaughter of the American volunteers in Cuba, followed by López' death on September 1, 1851, members of these annexation committees led riotous attacks on Spanish property in New Orleans. The American mobs destroyed cigar stores and coffeehouses whose owners and employees were suspected of being spies employed by the Spanish consul in New Orleans. Rioters felt that these spies had disrupted their efforts to organize the López expedition of August 1851 and would again inform Spanish authorities of local plans to form any future retaliatory expedition against Cuba.

THE ECONOMIC CLIMATE OF THE 1850s

Declining economic fortunes constituted a prime reason why many New Orleans businessmen joined the López annexation committees. In the early 1840s, New Orleans merchants had enjoyed boom times, exercising unchallenged control of Midwestern farm production and the cotton trade. But by 1851 Northern railroads had begun to divert the Midwestern trade from New Orleans to the East. Ambitious merchants in Charleston and Memphis were engaged in constructing railroad links to their cities in hope of siphoning off part of the cotton that traditionally flowed to New Orleans. The New Orleans business community lacked the financial resources to repel the hostile advances of their economic competitors. The combination of limited banking facilities, lack of major railroad links, unfavorable waterfront conditions, and high insurance rates created long-term obstacles to continued prosperity in New Orleans. The financial resources of New York banks provided Northern merchants with three to four times the amount of credit available to New Orleans traders.⁵ In 1850 New York merchants possessed over forty-eight million dollars in commercial capital, while their New Orleans counterparts controlled slightly less than ten and one-half million dollars. A superiority in working capital gave New York buyers the dual advantage of paying

³ *Ibid.*, 31-40; Basil Rauch, *American Interest in Cuba*, 151-180.

⁴ Eugene Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 136.

⁵ Stephen A. Caldwell, *A Banking History of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1935), 31-41; *DeBow's Review*, X (May, 1851), 587; *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, February 15, 1856; *New Orleans Daily Orleanian*, January 31, 1851.

higher prices for Midwestern farm products and extending credit over longer periods. New York's large monetary supply kept lending rates down to five or six percent, whereas, in the tighter New Orleans money market, interest rates usually ranged between eight and ten percent. During the speculative fever that gripped the 1851 cotton season, New Orleans merchants watched local interest rates balloon to eighteen percent.⁶

The scarcity of investment capital hurt New Orleans' chances of building a railroad network to link its port with distant towns in Tennessee and Texas, imperative to the maintenance of the city's dominant role in Tennessee and Alabama cotton markets. Planters in those states were gradually abandoning the old steamboat routes to New Orleans in favor of the higher prices and faster transportation offered by the entrepôts of Charleston and Savannah. Disturbed by the shifting trade patterns, the *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin* lamented: "The New Orleans trade of Northern Alabama is almost entirely gone, and that of East Tennessee is rapidly going. But a short time ago, all the cotton in the Tennessee valley came to New Orleans."⁷ Another editor predicted that "completion of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad will take from the commerce of New Orleans at least 300,000 bales of cotton."⁸

Confronted with a dismal economic future, New Orleans merchants became even more disgruntled when local banks decided not to invest large amounts of surplus cash in the city's railroad projects.⁹ New Orleans bankers justified their decision by noting that the railroads were not well conceived and that their capital could realize greater returns from more lucrative opportunities in city real estate and insurance. Lack of investment interest among local bankers partially explains New Orleans' failure to construct an efficient, large-scale railroad system before the Civil War.

The high costs of loading and unloading vessels along the New Orleans levee also prompted local businessmen to attempt railroad development. Local shippers blamed exorbitant waterfront costs for the reduction in the port's volume of trade. During the business year of 1847-1848, 3177 seagoing vessels docked in New Orleans, but by the 1850-1851 season, this number had dropped to 2019 (36%).¹⁰ Captains of ocean-traveling

⁶ *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, March 21 and April 23, 1851; *New Orleans Daily Orleanian*, January 31, 1851.

⁷ *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*, March 29, 1851.

⁸ *New Orleans Daily Delta*, June 13, 1851.

⁹ Merl Reed, *New Orleans and the Railroads: The Struggle for Commercial Empire, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), 66-108; *DeBow's Review*, X (April, 1851), 440-445.

¹⁰ *New Orleans Daily Delta*, May 21 and June 13, 1851.

ships and inland river steamboats complained about the taxes and fees they were required to pay for landing in New Orleans, averring that New Orleans had the highest levee taxes in the United States. Each vessel arriving in port had to pay a five dollar fee to the port warden and an additional tribute to the harbor master. According to the editor of the *New Orleans Daily Delta*, the port warden fees, wharfage taxes, and levee dues annually amounted to about a million and one-half dollars.¹¹ These were relatively prohibitive taxes; Mobile, Apalachicola, and Charleston offered planters and shippers cheaper rates for use of their dock facilities. To highlight the glaring difference between New Orleans and her Southern competitors, the *Daily Delta* disclosed that loading and docking fees in Mobile were only one-third what they were in New Orleans.

Once goods were landed on the city's levee areas, high drayage costs added to the headaches of local merchants. In the early 1850s Louisville merchants successfully stripped New Orleans of her control of the Upper South tobacco trade, in large part because drayage costs for tobacco were sixty percent cheaper in Louisville.¹² The poor condition of the roads connecting the levees with inland warehouses and cotton presses required New Orleans draymen to charge higher rates than their Louisville counterparts. Encouraged by the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce, Peter Conrey, Jr., initiated a drive to change this unfortunate state of affairs by replacing dray traffic with a modern intra-city railroad system.¹³ Newspaper editorials supporting Conrey's plans claimed that reliance on drays for hauling the city's freight cost four to five million dollars annually, while the estimated expense of the levee rail system would be three hundred thousand dollars.

High fire and shipping insurance rates constituted an additional strain on the financial resources of the New Orleans mercantile community. A private company in 1833 acquired a monopoly over the town's water supply, when it received the exclusive rights to build and operate the only water works in New Orleans.¹⁴ This company built a system in the central business area near the river that provided adequate amounts of water for 60,000 people. But by 1850 the New Orleans Water Works Company had taken no steps to enlarge and extend its facilities to meet the demand of a population which had burgeoned to 116,000 inhabitants, many of whom lived in outlying districts not served by the water com-

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *New Orleans Daily Orleanian*, August 1-2, 1851; *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*, February 13, 1852.

¹³ *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, May 3, 1851.

¹⁴ *New Orleans Daily Delta*, January 25, 1851 and August 10, 1854; *New Orleans Piragune*, October 22, 1858 and January 28, 1859.

pany's pipelines. Store rents and housing costs escalated under the inflationary demand of citizens competing for scarce office space and dwellings in neighborhoods with accessibility to the water supply. The high prices of office units and warehouses increased the operating costs of local merchants and put them at a further disadvantage in competition with Northern and Southern traders.

Besides onerous fire insurance costs, New Orleans merchants felt the sting of heavy insurance premiums levied on goods entering the port by the water traffic. Merchants were at the mercy of a Board of Insurance Underwriters which held a near monopoly of the city's financial position by charging higher shipping insurance rates than had prevailed in an earlier competitive atmosphere.¹⁵ Anxious to safeguard their monopoly, members of the insurance syndicate lobbied for the passage of a bill in the Louisiana legislature which imposed stiff taxes on out-of-state insurance firms.

The cumulative impact of the long-term barriers against New Orleans' commercial growth became apparent in 1851 when the city's Midwestern trade declined precipitously. Compared to the 1848-1849 farm receipts of Upper Mississippi River goods, the 1850-1851 business year saw a 25% decrease in flour; a 28% decline in beef; a 31% reduction in bacon; a 41% contraction in lard; a 54% decline in corn; and a 59% decrease in pork.¹⁶ To make matters worse, New Orleans cotton buyers, in their anxiety to retain control over this Southern staple, overspeculated in the cotton crop. Operating under the false belief that the cotton harvest would be unusually small as a result of drought and excessive heat, merchants paid top prices to growers in advance to corner the cotton crop. The confident smiles on the faces of New Orleans traders turned to despair upon the discovery that the South was bringing in a bumper crop—2,350,000 bales, an increase of 250,000 over the previous season.¹⁷ The price of cotton fell precipitously from 13½ cents in January 1851 to 6½ cents in August. The *New Orleans Price Current* reported that the reduction in cotton prices had touched off "a reaction more disastrous than any that has occurred in the cotton trade since 1825."¹⁸

THE NEW ORLEANS ANNEXATION COMMITTEES

The 1851 economic downswing facilitated López' efforts to solicit funds

¹⁵ *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*, May 3, 1855; *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, January 28 and March 14-16, 1859; *DeBow's Review*, IX (August, 1850), 240.

¹⁶ *New York Times*, January 31, 1852.

¹⁷ *New Orleans Price Current*, September 1, 1851; *New Orleans Louisiana Courier*, April 26, 1851; *DeBow's Review*, XVIII (March, 1855), 383.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

How could they donate money during hard times?

and recruit committeemen among New Orleans business leaders. During 1851 López lived in the home of Laurence J. Sigur, who sold his ownership of a local newspaper to raise \$40,000 for a ship to carry the López expedition. Through Sigur, López enlisted the support of local merchants by pointing out the salutary benefits that the New Orleans economy would derive from the acquisition of Cuba. Heavy taxes under Spanish rule prevented American merchants from developing strong trade patterns with the island. After suffering a disastrous decline in the spring of 1851, Midwestern merchants in New Orleans were particularly eager to support any attempt to open up the Cuban marketplace to American goods. During the three years between 1848 and 1850, only 2.4% of the flour and 8% of the meat imported by Cuba came from the United States.¹⁹ Merchants in Spain easily captured the Cuban flour market from American competitors, because of a discriminatory duty system which placed a \$10.31 surcharge on each American barrel of flour, but only a \$2.52 tax on every Spanish barrel. One American journalist, familiar with Cuba's economy, asserted that the American annexation of Cuba would increase the annual trade of New Orleans by twenty-five million dollars.²⁰ The lure of new Cuban markets offered New Orleans businessmen a chance to replace the loss of traditional Midwestern and Southern trade ties. The acquisition of Cuba was even more appealing to business leaders, when they considered that outfitting the López expedition would prove much cheaper than the construction of Texas and Tennessee railroads.

In analyzing the 1851 López supporters, we should distinguish between men enlisting in the López army and those serving on his New Orleans speaking and fund-raising committees. Only a small number of New Orleans clerks, customhouse employees, and artisans fought in Cuba at López' side. The vast majority of his military personnel were professional foreign soldiers, sons of Southern planters, and young clerks from other cities.²¹ After resigning his New Orleans customhouse post for a military command in López expeditionary forces, William L. Crittenden attracted volunteers to the López cause in Southern and Midwestern towns by promising young recruits Cuban sugar plantations and fabulous cash bonuses. Crittenden knew the appeal of his inducements among an audience composed of numerous young clerks already disenchanted with their jobs' low salaries and heavy work schedules. Crittenden's speeches also struck a responsive chord among the sons of Southern planters who

¹⁹ *New York Times*, May 23, 1854.

²⁰ *Ibid.*; *New Orleans Louisiana Courier*, September 3 and 6, 1854.

²¹ *Daily Cincinnati Commercial*, August 4, 1851; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, September 3, 1851.

Sigur ideologically motivated, publicly denied financial motivation.

faced the increasingly difficult task of acquiring farms, as inflation rapidly increased the price of land and slaves.²²

The hope of great wealth and rapid social mobility also influenced the personal decisions of New Orleans citizens serving on the annexation committees. Forever on the lookout for a chance to rise in the city's hierarchy, lawyers and journalists vied with one another in securing prominent places on these committees. In fact, sixteen lawyers and four journalists composed the majority of thirty professional men on the annexation panels. (See Table I.) Few attorneys stood any chance of breaking into the elite rank of the New Orleans legal fraternity. Thirty lawyers received two-thirds of the city's legal trade, while three or four hundred other attorneys scrambled after the remaining one-third.²³ López' promise of Cuban plantations and cash rewards was an opportunity that many young and middle-aged lawyers, stuck in the mire of the local legal profession, could ill afford to ignore.

Lawyers were not alone in suffering bruises in the search for wealth and fame. Many journalists must have second-guessed their decision to enter the extremely competitive newspaper industry. High failure rates among newspapers and a constant turnover of their personnel produced scant job security for editors and reporters. The promise of Cuban sugar plantations to newspapers supporting the López cause was prime reason why most New Orleans journals decided to publish only favorable stories concerning the 1851 Cuban invasion. Among the ardent supporters of the

²² *Louisville Daily Democrat*, August 25, 1851.

²³ It is difficult to confirm the accuracy of newspaper claims regarding the surplus of attorneys in pre-Civil War New Orleans. Census materials tend to underestimate the number of transient and less affluent lawyers who entered and left the city. By ignoring this group of transient attorneys, census data depict a more prosperous legal community than probably existed. Despite this bias, an analysis of 170 lawyers listed in the 1850 city census suggests that López' offer of lucrative cash bonuses and plantations probably had appeal among lawyers, especially those men between the ages of twenty-one and forty (see Tables III and IV). Lawyers in their twenties generally did not own real estate and were not likely to survive in the competitive environment among New Orleans lawyers (only thirty percent remained in the city by 1860). Landless and having only a marginal chance of succeeding in the local bar establishment, these young attorneys were apt to seek their fortunes in the López invasion of Cuba. Although lawyers in their thirties had a higher rate of geographical persistence than their younger associates (52% compared to 30%), this older group of attorneys still encountered difficulty in acquiring real estate: 67% possessed no real estate. Among the sixteen lawyers on the Cuban annexation committees, ten owned no real estate, according to the 1852 city tax records and the 1850 census. One attorney possessed \$1000 worth of landed property, while four other men owned between \$3,500 and \$8,000 in real estate. Only one attorney, Christian Roselius, had more than \$8,000: he owned \$100,000 in immovable property. López' generous offers of large Cuban plantations whetted the appetite of many of these sixteen attorneys who had little chance of rising from the ranks of non-propertied and small landowners to the elite class of Christian Roselius and other land barons. *New Orleans Daily Orleanian*, January 24, 1852 and August 5, 1856.

possible Cuban relative motivated.
López mission, Durante Da Ponte skillfully used his position on the *New Orleans Picayune* to publish stories about the Cuban Creoles' desire for independence and the cruel behavior of the Spanish regime in Cuba.²⁴ Despite his prestigious job on the *Picayune*, this twenty-one-year-old editor was not above violating the law to supplement his income. Although owning less than a thousand dollars, Da Ponte acted fraudulently as a straw bail bondsman when posting bonds that exceeded his wealth. Another struggling journalist was J. H. Maddox who assumed control of the nearly bankrupt *New Orleans Daily Crescent*.²⁵ The survival of Maddox's journal depended on its ability to secure advertisements in a highly competitive newspaper market where proprietors resorted to cutthroat activities in order to survive. Maddox experienced difficulty in securing advertisers, because three rival journals exercised a monopoly over local steamboat advertisements and the *New Orleans True Delta* furnished

ideological motivation not mentioned

²⁴ In the period from 1849 to 1851 when López was raising funds for his expeditions, the New Orleans press was economically depressed. J. C. Prendergast, editor of the *New Orleans Daily Orleanian* and a supporter of the 1851 filibuster, stated that during the fall of 1849 the *Picayune* and the *Commercial Bulletin* were the only two journals among the eight city newspapers earning a profit. Prendergast complained that these two journals were securing a large number of advertisers by offering to print advertisements for 50% less than the usual rate. Moreover, this Irish editor pointed out that the standard rate for newspaper advertisements in New Orleans was below that charged in New York City, despite the fact that printing costs in New Orleans were twice as high. New Orleans newspapers also suffered from unstable labor costs. The job rate demanded by printers fluctuated between 37½ and 75 cents per 1,000 ems. Moreover, newspapers had to replace type and other printing equipment every year or two. According to a printer for the *Daily Orleanian*, "Types for a daily paper may be used two years, but the edges and hair threads are very apt to break off; the *Picayune* changed her type every year; it is very general for the up town [Second Municipality] papers to change their type every year." Burdened by low advertising rates, fierce advertising competition among local journals, high labor costs, and frequent capital investments, a small newspaper like the *Daily Orleanian* had difficulty in surviving and little hope of ever earning a large profit. In competing against other city papers, the *Daily Orleanian* had a capital stock worth only \$3,000, compared to \$13,000 for the *Daily Crescent* and the \$15,000 capital stock of both the *Commercial Bulletin* and the *True Delta*. *William Brooks v. Stanton & Company*, Fifth Civil Court (doc. no. 5046), July 8, 1851. All the civil courts records cited are stored in the New Orleans Public Library; H. B. Cenas, public notary, vol. 48, February 1, 1851; *Ibid.*, vol. 53, April 15, 1852; James Graham, public notary, vol. 3, May 25, 1853; J. C. Prendergast v. P. O. Reilly (doc. no. 3,297), March 31, 1851; *New Orleans Daily Orleanian*, November 13, 1849 and April 12, 1851.

²⁵ J. H. Maddox became editor of the *Daily Crescent* when Leonard Matthews, a private banker and insurance director, and John Leeds, owner of the largest iron factory in Louisiana, bought the journal for \$13,000. When Matthews died in 1854 he left an estate valued above \$85,000. Maddox probably published pro-López articles only after obtaining the permission of either Matthews or Leeds. The fact that the *Daily Crescent* did print filibuster stories suggests that many business leaders, such as Matthews and Leeds, who did not publicly join annexation committees, nonetheless supported López' adventure. *Butler and Brothers v. J. H. Maddox and Co.*, Third Civil Court (doc. no. 3729), May 26, 1851; *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, June 14 and November 18, 1852; Hilary B. Cenas, public notary, vol. 61, December 14, 1854 (Notarial Archives, New Orleans Civil District Court Building).

bribes to obtain the sheriff's notices. Through publishing pro-López features and collecting funds for the Cuban invasion, Maddox sought to ingratiate his newspaper with local businessmen and politicians.

Besides touching lawyers and journalists, economic stress spurred the ambitious schemes of New Orleans merchants. Many business leaders supported the López expedition in hope of reviving the city's economy. The mercantile class of merchants, brokers, and grocers comprised twenty-five of the annexation committeemen.²⁶ The severe 1851 reduction in tobacco and grain receipts stimulated nine grocers and two tobacco merchants to raise funds for the López adventure. As the second largest New Orleans supplier of corn to rural plantations, T. G. Mackey, a prominent committeeman, saw the acquisition of Cuba as an opportunity to expand his grain trade into this previously closed marketplace.²⁷ Hardware merchants and ship chandlers such as J. M. Relf had no intention of sitting idly by as the city's commerce languished. From his office above the Louisiana State Bank, Relf specialized in furnishing parts and supplies to steamboats engaged in the Midwest trade.²⁸ Cuthbert Bullitt, a member of Maunsel White and Company and later a prominent Recon-

²⁶ *New Orleans Daily Delta*, July 23, 26, and 29, 1851; *Ibid.*, August 2, 24, and 29, 1851; *Ibid.*, September 7 and 9, 1851.

²⁷ T. G. Mackey and William A. Hyde were part owners of the New Orleans Dry Dock No. One located in Algiers, across the river from New Orleans. The lack of personal papers and limitations of local census and tax records make it difficult to determine the wealth of men who worked on the 1851 pro-López annexation committees. The census data do show that C. D. Yancey, a cotton press owner, increased his real estate holdings from \$12,000 to \$130,000 during the decade after 1850. In an 1856 bankruptcy suit, E. Wood Perry listed assets of \$35,398.04. According to the inventory of S. W. Oakey, who died in the same year, this annexation committee member owned 120 shares of the Opelousas Railroad, twenty shares of the Jackson Railroad, and fifty shares of the Tehuantepec Railroad. This prominent cotton merchant left an estate appraised at \$92,621.46. As one of the owners of the *Commercial Bulletin* and the *Daily Crescent*, Leonard Matthews, a member of the Board of Directors of the Sun Mutual Insurance Company, was another wealthy participant in the López annexation committees. Like Oakey, he owned 100 shares of the Jackson Railroad and forty shares of the Opelousas Railroad. At his death in 1854, Matthews' estate was worth \$85,207.30. According to newspaper stories between 1849 and 1851, Matthews owned 100 shares of the Tehuantepec Railroad and was a director of both this Central American railroad and of the New Orleans and Jackson Railroad. The wealth of Yancey, Oakey, and Matthews suggests that some of New Orleans' most prominent business leaders joined with struggling lawyers, journalists and merchants suffering from the 1851 cotton recession and loss of Midwestern markets, and with land speculators and ambitious politicians, in launching the 1851 López expedition. 1850 United States Census, Second Municipality, 76; 1860 United States Census, First Ward, 70; H. B. Cenas, public notary, vol. 61, December 14, 1854; *Ibid.*, vol. 61, March 20, 1855; *Ibid.*, vol. 66, September 1, 1856; T. O. Stark, public notary, vol. 14, May 26, 1856; *New Orleans Louisiana Courier*, October 6, 1849; *New Orleans Daily Delta*, October 25, 1850; *New Orleans Bee*, May 1, 1851.

²⁸ In 1852, J. M. Relf with two partners bought the Steamboat Emperor for \$12,500. Relf owned one-eighth of the boat. *Henry Turner v. J. M. Relf and Co. and C. L. Bancroft*, Fourth Civil Court (doc. no. 4,878), December 22, 1851; H. B. Cenas, public notary, vol. 54, July 10, 1852.

struction politician, openly worked on behalf of the Cuban filibuster. Bullitt's firm in the late summer of 1851 suffered from overspeculation in cotton and a decline in Midwest produce.²⁹ Financial stress in great part induced this prestigious mercantile house to labor zealously for Cuban annexation.

Limited job opportunities and economic decline were the primary reasons why many lawyers, journalists, and merchants participated in pro-López events. Rather than being pushed to López' side by declining financial circumstances, the dream of unlimited wealth and political notoriety attracted land speculators and politicians into the annexation camp. Among his fund-raising activities, General López sold Cuban bonds at ten percent of their face value.³⁰ Notwithstanding the probability that the filibuster would fail, the purchase of such bonds could dramatically transform an investor's economic status. Despite the absence of any surviving subscription book containing the names and amounts of investors, it is plausible to assume that many members of the speaking and fund-raising committees bought Cuban stock. A look at New Orleans tax and census records reveals that sixty percent of the Committee members owned no real estate, while thirteen percent held between \$1000-\$2000 in land. Another eighteen percent of the committeemen had property worth between \$2000-\$10,000. Only an elite one percent of these López supporters owned over \$50,000 in land (See Table II). Most of the committeemen probably could not contribute over several hundred dollars, but a López victory promised to parlay even these modest investments into substantial sums of money.

American-born and French Creole landlords were noteworthy in their omission from the annexation forums. Content to live in New Orleans or Europe, these old New Orleans property-owners increased their fortunes by collecting revenue from their numerous rental holdings. More adventuresome than the circle of old elite landowners were immigrant real estate investors such as Patrick Irwin, Michael Aspill, and Christian Roselius. Born either in Ireland or Germany, these three self-made men reached the top of New Orleans' economic pyramid by speculating in the local real estate market. Land speculation in Cuba fascinated Patrick Irwin, who in 1852 paid taxes on over \$42,000 worth of property.³¹ After

²⁹ *New York Times*, January 25, 1852; *Thomas A. Jackson v. Maunsel White and Co.*, Fifth Civil Court (doc. no. 5,712), March 23, 1852; *New Orleans Picayune*, June 27, July 18, and October 2, 1866.

³⁰ *New York Times*, October 23, 1851; *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, September 16, 1851.

³¹ Nine Irish and three Germans belonged to the 1851 Cuban annexation committees. According to the 1850 census, three of the nine Irish owned no real estate. Four of the other Irish participants owned between \$4,000-\$16,000 in land. The remaining two, Patrick Irwin and Michael Aspill, were more affluent. According to the 1852 city tax records, Irwin owned

arriving in New Orleans from Ireland, Irwin grew rich by investing in undeveloped lots and omnibus routes. According to Louisiana journalists, the career of Christian Roselius illustrated the rise from rags to riches. Landing penniless in New Orleans, Roselius amassed a fortune of over fifty thousand dollars in assessed property after several decades.³² Local census and tax records do not disclose the real estate transactions of Roselius and other pro-Cuban committeemen outside New Orleans. Newspaper advertisements, however, reveal that seven members of the annexation panels speculated in Texas land schemes and United States military bounty claims.³³

In some cases, political considerations coincided with or superseded economic aspirations in drawing men to join the López forums. Among the ninety-nine out of 153 committeemen whose party backgrounds are known, sixty-nine were Democrats (of whom at least sixteen were states' rights proponents) and thirty were Whigs.³⁴ Secession sentiment among Democrats and anti-Fillmore animus among Whigs produced a temporary coalition between these traditional rivals. A López triumph in Cuba would represent a crucial step in forming an independent Southern republic, in the eyes of states' rights advocates like Felix Huston, a Louisiana planter who, in the end of August 1851, became the chairman of the the New Orleans fund-raising activities.³⁵ Men of Huston's persuasion

\$42,175 in land, while Aspill had \$23,800 in real estate. By 1860, Irwin owned over \$100,000 in New Orleans property, and Aspill controlled \$75,000 in landed property. These data suggest that Irish from non-propertied, middling, and upper strata all supported the López assault on Cuba. Besides the desire to speculate in Cuban real estate, these nine perhaps supported López because of the long-standing Irish antipathy towards the English. Britain was contending with the United States to control Cuba's economy and political destiny. Among the Germans, C. Auch owned no property, George Dermeyer owned \$20,000 in land, and Christian Roselius owned \$100,000 in real estate.

³² 1852 New Orleans Tax Records, 89; *New Orleans Louisiana Courier*, May 27, 1843 and July 29, 1851.

³³ Newspaper advertisements and notarial sales provide a small clue to the economic interests of New Orleans citizens in San Juan, Nicaragua, where goods were carried across the narrow stretch of land separating the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. J. V. Perez, one of the annexation committee leaders, managed the Verandah Hotel in San Juan de Nicaragua. Another New Orleans annexation member, T. D. Harper, owned a hotel and operated a commission and forwarding business in this Central American city. The American conquest of Cuba promised to increase trade between San Juan and Cuba, as well as intensify American interest in controlling Nicaragua. *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, April 28 and July 1, 1853; *New Orleans Daily Delta*, October 25, 1850 and February 9, 1851; James Graham, public notary, vol. 2, November 20, 1852; *Ibid.*, vol. 4, December 10, 1853; *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*, January 8, 1852 and February 28, 1853.

³⁴ The New Orleans newspapers were the sources for identifying the political affiliations of men serving on the López committees.

³⁵ Basil Rauch, *American Interest in Cuba*, 274; Philip S. Foner, *A History of Cuba*, 31-40, *Concordia* [La.] *Intelligencer*, October 12, 1850; *New Orleans Bee*, September 13, 1850; *Mississippi Free Trader* (Natchez, Miss.), August 13, 1851.

vehemently denounced the efforts of President Millard Fillmore, a Whig, to prevent the López landing in Cuba. A leading states' rights journal declared that Northern monopolies, especially "monster companies" in New York City, dictated Fillmore's actions, such as the president's opposition to New Orleans' plans for building a railroad across the Tehuantepec Isthmus in Mexico.³⁶

Dissident Whigs, such as I. N. Marks, C. M. Waterman, and J. A. Kelly, joined Democrats in lambasting Fillmore's opposition to the Tehuantepec Railroad and his invocation of American neutrality to thwart the López expedition. Waterman, a hardware merchant, and Marks, a member of E. J. Hart and Company, who later left that firm and became one of the two largest importers of refined sugar in New Orleans, saw the economic potential of Cuba for reviving the city's languishing commerce.³⁷ In addition, Marks openly sided with the López cause in an attempt to gain leadership of the Second Municipality Whig machine. Samuel J. Peters, the acknowledged Whig leader in this district since 1836, stepped down in 1851 without naming his replacement. Marks, as city alderman and president of the New Orleans Whig Central Committee, vied bitterly with Randall Hunt, a Whig congressional candidate, for Peters' vacant position. During July 1851 Marks claimed that Hunt had employed bullies and packed a Whig nominating convention with criminals and vagrants in a concerted effort to secure the reins of the Second Municipality Whig party.³⁸ In retaliation, Marks used his power as an alderman to replace policemen who did not promote his cause with officers willing to solicit voters on his behalf.

In the summer of 1851 the issue of a Cuban invasion engendered further dissension among the Hunt and Marks wings of the Second Municipality Whig organization. In early August 1851 Randall Hunt at the state Whig convention outmaneuvered his opponents by defeating a measure which supported López' Cuban invasion. Moreover, Hunt pleased Fillmore partisans in Louisiana by securing the passage of a resolution affirming the 1850 Compromise.³⁹ By supporting such pro-Fillmore amendments, Hunt aligned himself with S. J. Peters and his adherents, who supported President Fillmore's policies. In exchange for Peters' aid,

³⁶ *New Orleans Louisiana Courier*, July 30, 1851.

³⁷ Charles M. Waterman in 1851 was chairman of the Committee on Internal Improvements for the New Orleans General Council; *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, August 26, 1851; 1851 *New Orleans City Directory*; *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, August 29, 1851; 1853 *New Orleans City Directory*; *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, November 15, 1850.

³⁸ *New Orleans Bee*, May 16, 1850; *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*, August 13, 1855; *New Orleans Daily Delta*, April 15, May 30 and July 8, 1851; *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, November 15, 1851.

³⁹ *New Orleans Daily Delta*, August 13, 14, 1851.

Fillmore generously granted jobs and money to the friends of this old New Orleans Whig. In open defiance of the president's wishes, Marks ignored Fillmore's order prohibiting the Cuban invasion by publicly collecting funds for the López filibuster. Marks hoped that this pro-López stand would attract enough votes in 1852 to secure his elevation as head of his municipality's Whig Party. J. A. Kelly was another influential Whig who joined Marks in opposing Fillmore's Cuban policy. Kelly sailed as a commissioned officer in early August with the López expedition. He fought with López in Cuba, being caught by the Spanish in the fall of 1851. In the following year, Kelly returned to New Orleans where he became president of the local Winfield Scott Association, with the hope of depriving Fillmore of the 1852 Whig presidential nomination.⁴⁰

THE ANTI-SPANISH RIOT OF 1851

On August 3, 1851, General López set sail for the town of Bahía Honda on Cuba's western coast. Before departing, López, together with J. A. Kelly, thanked merchants for raising funds and supplies on behalf of their expedition. Without referring to the merchants' specific activities in outfitting López' steamers, one journalist noted that "Our [New Orleans] merchants have poured in of their abundance to the cause and vessels are now fully equipped and ready for sea with all the sinews and munitions of war."⁴¹ Landing in Cuba on August 11, López received his first setback when the local Creole inhabitants refused to aid his campaign. He desperately needed the military strength of the Creole populace, since his small band of four hundred volunteers could offer little resistance to the thousands of Spanish soldiers garrisoned in Cuba. Hoping to maximize the odds for survival in this hostile environment, López decided to lead the main body into the mountainous terrain of the island's interior, while ordering Colonel William Crittenden's company of 130 men to guard the expedition's supplies on the coast.

Spanish troops quickly took advantage of López' decision to divide his troops by easily capturing Crittenden and fifty of his subordinates. José Guitierrez de la Concha, Captain-General of Cuba, wishing to deter future American filibusters, arranged a summary trial for Crittenden's party and later upheld the military court's decision to execute the American invaders. Published stories in nearly all the New Orleans newspapers stated that those of Crittenden's men "who were not killed by the discharge of the Spanish firing squads were dashed upon by the soldiers and beaten to death with the butt-ends of their muskets. Their mangled

⁴⁰ *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, May 12, July 10, and July 12, 1852.

⁴¹ *Concordia Intelligencer*, August 16, 1851.

corpses were then thrown into a ditch."⁴² By reporting this and other alleged atrocities, New Orleans journals hoped that the slaughter of Crittenden's brigade would stir a lukewarm American public to retaliate against Cuba. The ever-present Felix Huston contributed ten thousand dollars and assumed the chairmanship of the New Orleans committees for launching a follow-up invasion.

Besides sparking the impetus for another Cuban expedition, the incendiary newspaper accounts triggered a riot against Spanish residents in New Orleans. Most of the Americans in López' volunteer force belonged to Crittenden's company.⁴³ Many of the young American soldiers executed by the Spanish firing squads were clerks and sons of prominent New Orleans merchants. Moreover, three of the slaughtered men were members of the Washington Artillery, a private New Orleans military company which included prominent merchants.⁴⁴ Dr. J. J. Kerr, who spoke on behalf of López' expedition, grieved over the news that Spanish firing squads had executed his son, Victor. The New Orleans police during the August 21 riots arrested St. Leon Fazende, a close friend of Victor Kerr, for destroying Spanish property.⁴⁵ Felix Huston's nephew, who was an officer in Crittenden's outfit, also perished in Cuba. Merchants and López sympathizers during the afternoon and evening of August 21, 1851, expressed their rage over the death of American volunteers by attacking the New Orleans Spanish Consulate and the newspaper office of *La Unión*, an outspoken critic of American annexation plots on Cuba. Rioters charged that J. Y. Laborde, the Spanish Consul in New Orleans, had bribed *La Unión*'s editors to publish false accounts of the López expedition. Annexationists especially resented this newspaper's insistence that Creole planters in Cuba were not in open rebellion against the Spanish authorities, as most New Orleans journals had reported. Because of the doubt raised in many citizens' minds by *La Unión*'s stories, pro-López merchants had encountered difficulty in raising money for the 1851 filibuster. On August 21, when the reports of Crittenden's slaughter reached New Orleans, *La Unión* further alienated López supporters by denying that any massacre had occurred.

⁴² *New Orleans True Delta*, August 22, 1851; *New Orleans Picayune*, August 20, 26, 1851; *New Orleans Louisiana Courier*, August 21 and September 1, 1851. Concerning the alleged slaughter of Crittenden's force the *Louisiana Courier* stated that "One of the waiters [at a Havana barroom] showed to everybody as a proof of the glorious act he had performed, the testicles of one of the victims, which he had cut."

⁴³ *Vicksburg Weekly Whig*, October 1, 1851; *New Orleans True Delta*, September 21, 1851; *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, September 20, 1851.

⁴⁴ *New Orleans Daily Delta*, August 24, 1851.

⁴⁵ *State v. Capt. R. O. Smith, St. Leon Fazende, E. T. Abell, W. H. Wilder, and J. B. Sorapurru*, First District Criminal Court (doc. no. 7,052), December 5, 1851, New Orleans Criminal Court Building; *New Orleans Daily Orleanian*, August 23, 1851.

A large mob attacked *La Unión's* establishment in order to silence this dissident journal. According to a local French-language journal, the crowd's action in leveling *La Unión* was "well organized and coolly directed."⁴⁶ "Several hundred men of upper class backgrounds" initiated the assault on the newspaper office and physically participated in its destruction.⁴⁷ While destroying the press and its font of type, rioters refrained from harming *La Unión's* Spanish employees. The mob apparently hoped that the silencing of this outspoken journal would furnish them with sufficient time for planning another Cuban invasion for September 1851.

The anti-Spanish mob then proceeded to smash Spanish fruit stands and coffeehouses, moved by the feeling that the Spanish monopoly of the city's fruit trade was responsible for the exorbitant cost of fruit. Many local physicians and journalists contended that the scarcity of fresh fruit had a negative impact on the town's health.⁴⁸ These vocal critics stressed that the increased consumption of fruit would greatly reduce disease and mortality rates. Concerned citizens expressed alarm at the high costs of fruit in August 1851 when cholera and yellow fever were claiming a minimum of thirty to forty victims per week.⁴⁹ During the same month, Felix Huston imported thousands of peaches from his rural Louisiana plantation with the aim of breaking up the Spanish fruit monopoly. By retailing his peaches at a dime a dozen, Huston undercut the prices of his Spanish competitors, who often sold their peaches at twenty-five cents each. The mob's destruction of Spanish fruit stands on August 21 represented the violent completion of the task which Huston had begun peacefully several weeks earlier.

Successful in ravaging the Spanish fruit stands, rioters then unleashed their fury on Spanish coffeehouses and cigar stores.⁵⁰ American mer-

⁴⁶ *Le Courrier de la Louisiane*, August 22, 1851; *New Orleans Picayune*, August 22, 1851.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *New Orleans Louisiana Courier*, January 13, 1841, May 15 and July 26, 1851; *New Orleans Daily Delta*, June 25 and July 1, 1851; *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, November 14, 1850; *Mississippi Free Trader*, July 5, 1851.

⁴⁹ *Daily Cincinnati Commercial*, August 16, 1851.

⁵⁰ All of the following cases appeared in the Third Civil Court, where nine Spanish coffeehouse keepers and two cigar store operators sued the city of New Orleans for its negligent failure to prevent American rioters from destroying their property: *José Gutiérrez v. City of New Orleans* (doc. no. 4,813), June 23, 1852; *F. Romagosa v. City of New Orleans* (doc. no. 4,625), July 1, 1852; *Jayme Monfa v. City of New Orleans* (doc. no. 4,626), July 1, 1852; *A. Hernández v. City of New Orleans* (doc. no. 4,627), July 1, 1852; *Sylvester Anglada v. City of New Orleans* (doc. no. 4,678), August 12, 1852; *Jacinto Aleix v. City of New Orleans* (doc. no. 4,676), August 10, 1852; *Antonio Rovira v. City of New Orleans* (doc. no. 4,628), July 1, 1852; *Juan Carbo v. City of New Orleans* (doc. no. 4,629), July 1, 1852; *Gracia Gelpi v. City of New Orleans* (doc. no. 4,634), July 3, 1852; *Mateo Beltran v. City of New Orleans* (doc. no. 4,640), July 5, 1852; *Rafael Lauricella v. City of New Orleans* (doc. no. 4,813), August 21, 1851.

chants objected to the presence of these stores, which sold smuggled Cuban cigars at reduced prices, because Spanish merchants and storekeepers evaded paying import duties on these items. Moreover, Spanish coffeehouse proprietors often escaped paying city taxes by bribing policemen. Some increased their revenue by illegally selling liquor to slaves and by employing runaway bondsmen.⁵¹ Besides such longstanding points of friction between American and Spanish residents, pro-López enthusiasts accused certain Spanish coffeehouse and cigar store proprietors of being spies who aided the New Orleans Spanish consul in defeating the 1851 López foray. The activities of Antonio Costa, a Spanish merchant and cigar store operator, displeased López sympathizers, who destroyed his store on August 21. In early August, Costa had travelled to Havana to offer Spanish authorities the use of several ships for defending Cuba against the imminent López invasion.⁵² Costa's behavior further incensed New Orleans citizens when they learned of his part in identifying the names and ranks of Crittenden's company to Spanish military leaders.

During the afternoon of August 21 American rioters dismantled the New Orleans Spanish Consulate and gutted the Consul's privately owned cigar store.⁵³ Rioters charged that J. Y. Laborde, the Spanish Consul, had used local spies to warn Spanish authorities in Cuba of López' plan. By destroying the consulate, American annexationists had destroyed the center of the Spanish spy ring in New Orleans. The pro-López mobs also destroyed the stores of agents employed by Laborde. In their violent activities, rioters sacked the cigar store of A. Fernández, accused of being a Spanish spy.⁵⁴ The crowd vented its ire on B. Gonzales' cigar store at

⁵¹ On August 21, 1851, a mob of three or four hundred pro-López rioters destroyed Jacinto Aleix' coffeehouse where liquor was sold to both whites and slaves. According to a witness, "The coffeehouse was arranged in two rooms, one for the whites and the other for the colored people." This establishment "was well frequented and had a good number of customers. The coffeehouse of Mr. Aleix gives about \$4,000 a year clear profit." Aleix and other Spanish coffeehouse keepers grew rich by selling liquor to slaves, as police often overlooked this illicit trade. Moreover, an examination of 128 cases in which persons were indicted for selling liquor illegally in the First District Court between 1850 and 1860 reveals that this tribunal had a conviction rate of only twenty percent. Realizing that the police and courts were laggard in cracking down on foreign-born coffeehouse keepers trading with slaves, the American mob resorted to vigilante action in order to close down these Spanish retail cabarets. *Jacinto Aleix v. City of New Orleans* (doc. no. 4,676), August 10, 1852; *New Orleans Bee*, March 3, 1842; *New Orleans Daily Orleanian*, December 22, 1852.

⁵² Antonio Costa had financial ties to Jacinto Aleix (*supra*, note 51). During February 1851, Costa, a member of the commercial firm of Ysidro Quadras & Co., gave Aleix power of attorney to act for his firm when he was absent from New Orleans. *Vicksburg Weekly Whig*, August 27, 1851; Joseph Lisbony, public notary, vol. 7, February 20, 1851.

⁵³ *New Orleans True Delta*, August 22-24, 1851; *New Orleans Daily Orleanian*, August 23, 1851.

⁵⁴ *New Orleans Daily Orleanian*, August 23, 1851.

the corner of Gravier and St. Charles streets. Merchants were angry at this Spanish agent for discouraging young men from enlisting in the Cuban invasion by informing them that American newspapers had lied about the alleged Creole rebellion in Cuba.⁵⁵ On August 21 Gonzales publicly challenged the veracity of reports regarding the slaughter of Crittenden's company. The rioters completed their attack on Spanish property by destroying fourteen other coffeehouses and cigar stores.

Police arrested only a few of the rioters. Critics charged that police officers had made no attempt to apprehend merchants involved in the riotous proceedings.⁵⁶ William H. Wilder was the best known of five men standing trial on the charge of rioting before the First District Criminal Court. Wilder, a middle-aged Democratic lawyer and politician, had achieved political prominence by winning seats in the state legislature and the city council.⁵⁷ He was noted for his zealous activity on behalf of New Orleans business and railroad leaders. As a Third Municipality councilman, Wilder labored for the economic prosperity of his district by cracking down on prostitution and by supporting bills for the construction of new levee warehouses and for the elimination of all taxes, particularly the exorbitant drayage and food surcharge, which placed New Orleans at a disadvantage in competing against rival cities. Adhering to the *laissez-faire* philosophy of Jacksonian Democrats, Wilder opposed the Spanish imposition of unnecessary taxes on American goods imported by Cuba. After the prominent annexationist, F. M. Crozat, furnished bail for his release on August 22, 1851, Wilder served the fund-raising committee for a follow-up expedition against Cuba.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*; *New Orleans Daily Delta*, August 22, 1851.

⁵⁶ *New Orleans Picayune*, December 15–17, 1851.

⁵⁷ *State v. W. H. Wilder et al.*, First District Criminal Court (doc. no. 7,052), December 5, 1851; *New Orleans Louisiana Courier*, January 19, April 2, October 20, and November 3, 17, and 30, 1846; *Ibid.*, October 19, 1847; *Ibid.*, January 22, 1850 and March 28, 1851.

⁵⁸ William H. Wilder's age, nativity, and wealth seem to be characteristic of the 153 men on the Cuban annexation panels (see Tables V, VI, and VII). At age 37, Wilder represented the most numerous age bracket—39 (26%). Moreover, Wilder was born in South Carolina. More committeemen were born in South Atlantic States—26 (17%)—than in any other region of the United States. In fact, of the twenty-six men born in that area, eight were born in South Carolina itself. According to the 1850 census, Wilder owned no real estate. Although some affluent men sat on the annexation committees (*supra*, notes 27 and 31), Wilder's lack of wealth was typical of the majority of committeemen who possessed no land or had modest holdings. Only ten men were listed in both the 1850 and 1860 census. A few, like C. D. Yancey, Patrick Irwin, and Michael Aspill, witnessed spectacular growth in their real estate holdings. The lack of census data for the remaining 143 committeemen prevents any definitive statement about their individual occupational and economic mobility. Table VII compares the known wealth of 48 committeemen (31%) in 1850 and 39 committeemen (26%) in 1860, offering a rough comparison of this group of men over the 1850 decade. In comparing real estate between 1850 and 1860, the only noticeable difference was the decrease in non-ownership of property from 19% to 13%. The 1860 census is more revealing

By destroying the Spanish consulate and *La Unión*, pro-López cliques in New Orleans made it more difficult for Spanish authorities in Cuba to gather intelligence of the impending invasion of the island. Newspaper silence about the tumultuous events of the August 21 riot furthermore obscured these events from national view, thus averting the criticism of those skeptical of the purposes of López and New Orleanians. Realizing the political delicacy of the situation, the *New Orleans Picayune* omitted all reference to the sacking of the Spanish Consulate in its riot coverage.⁵⁹ A New Orleans correspondent of the *Concordia Intelligencer*, a rural Louisiana newspaper, commented on the tactics used to suppress information about the August 21 upheaval sent back to his home journal. The frustrated reporter wrote that on the day of the rioting "I found that my despatches sent on the arrival of the [ship] *Empire City* [with the news of Crittenden's demise], and of the rioters' conduct afterwards although received at the New Orleans telegraphic office and promised immediate transmission, never had been sent through."⁶⁰ Despite all precaution to conceal annexationist activities and riotous conduct of local citizens, stories in the *True Delta* jeopardized the plans for launching a retaliatory invasion against Cuba. In challenging the alleged truth of Crittenden's massacre, the editor of this independent journal relieved Spanish soldiers in Cuba of any charge of mistreating Crittenden's men. Moreover, the *True Delta* asserted that "Mr. Spear, the special messenger . . . states that he was present at the execution of the persons captured [Crittenden's Company] and the reports current of their mutilated bodies are entirely untrue. They were conveyed in handsome hearses to the grave and decently buried."⁶¹ The dissemination of this story nationwide cast a serious shadow of doubt on the moral propriety of another Cuban filibuster.

The *True Delta* further incurred the wrath of city businessmen by publishing anti-bank and anti-railroad articles.⁶² Already angered over the *True Delta*'s charge that they had fabricated the events of Crittenden's massacre, members of the annexation committees, many of whom

than its 1850 predecessor, for it furnishes data for both real and personal wealth. By 1860, committeemen tended to be clustered in the \$2,000–\$25,000 brackets. By including personal wealth, the 1860 census shows that committeemen tended to occupy the middle rungs of the ladder, the 1850 census had placed them at the bottom. The problem arises of whether these 1860 figures attest to economic mobility over the 1850 decade, or whether these figures would be identical to such findings if the 1850 census had included personal wealth. Table II, based primarily on the 1852 tax records, which listed only real estate and excluded personal wealth, presents the most accurate index to the land holdings of the 1851 López committees. *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, August 29, 1851.

⁵⁹ *Daily Cincinnati Commercial*, September 3, 1851.

⁶⁰ *Concordia Intelligencer*, September 6, 1851.

⁶¹ *New Orleans True Delta*, September 2 and 23, 1851.

⁶² *Ibid.*, November 6, 1850; March 18 and April 13, 1851.

were prominent railroad sponsors, foresaw the chilling effect such newspaper stories would have on their economic plans. They displayed consternation at the *True Delta's* attack on local banking and railroad schemes. The paper charged that the planned Tehuantepec Railroad was a hoax; that business leaders had resorted to fraudulent tactics in promoting the Jackson and Great Northern Railroad; that because of excessive loans to local cotton speculators, the Louisiana State Bank had been largely responsible for the 1851 cotton recession; and that this New Orleans bank had flooded the South with worthless paper currency which it refused to redeem.⁶³ The editor of the *True Delta* identified Peter Conrey, Jr., president of the Louisiana State Bank and chairman of the Tehuantepec Railroad, as the arch-villain behind these Machiavellian plots.⁶⁴ Retaliating, Conrey, in alliance with his business friends, organized a boycott against advertising in this dissident newspaper.

Members of the annexation committees resented the *True Delta's* vilification of Conrey's character. Conrey was one of the few city bankers who had fought indefatigably for New Orleans railroad expansion. As a banker and director of three railroads, Conrey was among the most important business figures in the city.⁶⁵ These slurs on his reputation tarnished the image of the local business community. His colleagues, moreover, objected to the untimely publication of the anti-Conrey articles, at a time when his enterprises were on the brink of bankruptcy as a result of overspeculation in the 1851 cotton crop.⁶⁶ Conrey's business associates suspected that greed, rather than idealism, underlay the *True Delta's* attack on this prominent banker; they felt that the journal had printed these articles in order to break the Conrey boycott and to coerce merchants into advertising in its columns.

On September 5, 1851, the news of López' capture and execution in Cuba shocked New Orleans citizens. The General's death spelled the end of plans for further invading Cuba. In their grief and frustration, annexa-

⁶³ *Ibid.*, October 13, 1850 and March 21, 1851.

⁶⁴ *New Orleans True Delta*, August 13, 1851; *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, October 31, 1850.

⁶⁵ *New Orleans Louisiana Courier*, January 11, 1847; *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*, February 24, 1851 and December 24, 1852.

⁶⁶ *New York Tribune*, July 1, 1851; *New York Times*, November 15, 1851; *Seaman, Will and Peck v. Peter Conrey, Jr.* (doc. no. 5,063), July 16, 1851; *Leonard Sturtevant & Co. v. Peter Conrey, Jr.* (doc. no. 5,070), July 23, 1851; *B. Tatout & Co. v. Peter Conrey, Jr. and Samuel Jaudon & Co.* (doc. no. 5,075), July 30, 1851; *James Robb & Co. v. Peter Conrey, Jr.* (doc. no. 5,087), August 9, 1851; *T. J. Tabb v. Peter Conrey, Jr.* (doc. no. 5,089), August 13, 1851; *Bank of Tennessee v. Peter Conrey, Jr.* (doc. no. 5,108), September 12, 1851; *Martin Ownen and Co. v. Peter Conrey, Jr.* (doc. no. 5,102), August 29, 1851; *E. J. Dupont de Nemours & Co. v. Peter Conrey, Jr.* (doc. no. 5,196), August 12, 1851. All these cases are in the Fifth Civil Court.

tion committeemen blamed the *True Delta's* untimely revelations for the failure to mount an expedition to rescue López and liberate Cuba.⁶⁷ Vowing vengeance, annexationists encouraged their followers to attack the *True Delta's* offices. During the evening of September 6, 1851, Benjamin Bynum, a lawyer, along with banker William Bell, lumber dealer David Calder, and builder David Lloyd, led forty men in an armed assault on the *True Delta's* premises.⁶⁸ As an impoverished criminal lawyer, Bynum had enthusiastically joined the López cause. Several days before the September 6 incident, General John Henderson, a famous López backer and committeeman, had commissioned Bynum as an officer of the forthcoming Cuban expedition.⁶⁹ Under Henderson's direction, Bynum recruited several hundred volunteers in rural parishes, before returning to New Orleans to lead the abortive charge on the *True Delta's* printing office. Besides arresting Bynum, the police apprehended James M. Gilbert, a clerk employed by S. H. Page, a tea merchant serving on the annexation panels, who would become a candidate in 1852 for the Orleans Parish tax assessor's office.⁷⁰ General Henderson put up Bynum's bail, while J. L. Carman, another prominent Cuban committeeman and a large slave trader, paid for Gilbert's release on bond.⁷¹

CONCLUSION

A decline in Midwestern trade coupled with overspeculation in the 1851 cotton market induced New Orleans merchants and their friends to support López' third and final expedition against Cuba. American mobs on August 21 destroyed the Spanish Consulate and stores, partially to seek revenge for the alleged massacre of Crittenden's company and partially to prevent the transmission of information to Havana about Felix Huston's retaliatory expedition against Cuba. The rioters demolished seventeen Spanish establishments (twelve coffeehouses and five cigar stores); nine of these coffeehouse keepers and two cigar store operators in 1852 sued the city of New Orleans for damages of \$70,391.17.⁷² The destruction of twelve coffeehouses involved 15% of the seventy-eight Spanish coffeehouses listed in the 1850 census. Fear of further violence caused some two hundred Spanish citizens (approximately ten percent of New Orleans' Spanish population) to flee the city in late August 1851.

⁶⁷ *New Orleans Daily Orleanian*, September 16, 1851.

⁶⁸ Second Municipality Police Arrest Book, September 4-6, 1851. New Orleans Public Library.

⁶⁹ *New Orleans Daily Orleanian*, August 25, 1850; *Concordia Intelligencer*, September 13, 1851.

⁷⁰ *New Orleans True Delta*, September 6, 1851.

⁷¹ *New Orleans Daily Orleanian*, September 16, 1851.

⁷² *Supra*, note 50.

Commenting on the exodus, one editor noted: "They are old citizens, a majority of them have disposed of their property here, and take with them all their capital."⁷³

The criminal justice system in New Orleans evinced no enthusiasm for punishing the anti-Spanish rioters. Police arrested only a handful of rioters and refrained from apprehending merchants engaged in the violent activities. William H. Wilder and four accomplices were the only rioters arrested on either August 21 or September 6 who were ultimately brought to trial. During the 1852 winter session, a jury in the First District Criminal Court found four of the defendants innocent and recommended mercy for the fifth after finding him guilty.⁷⁴ No evidence exists in the court's docket book or trial records to suggest that Judge John C. Larue ever sentenced this convicted rioter. Larue was an ambitious Democratic leader who, according to the *True Delta*, had obtained his seat on the criminal court by reversing his anti-banking Jacksonian views in favor of Whig banking schemes in the state legislature.⁷⁵ Larue had often spoken in behalf of American annexation of Cuba, and had promoted New Orleans' commercial growth. He owned twenty shares of stock in the Tehuantepec Railroad. Before becoming a criminal court judge, Larue, in 1850, had been one of two attorneys representing Narciso López during the federal prosecution brought against the General as a consequence of the second of his Cuban expeditions.

⁷³ *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, March 22, 1848; *New Orleans Daily Orleanian*, August 29, 1851.

⁷⁴ First District Criminal Docket Book, 1850-1856. New Orleans Criminal Court Building.

⁷⁵ *New Orleans True Delta*, October 19, 1850 and March 9, 1851; *New Orleans Bee*, February 5, 1842; *New Orleans Louisiana Courier*, June 10, 1850 and September 2, 1856.

TABLE I
1851 New Orleans Annexation Committees*

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Merchants	38	25%
Manufacturers	0	0%
Bankers	0	0%
Political Officeholders	20	13%
Professionals	30	20%
Clerks	6	4%
Hotel and Coffeehouse Keepers	7	4%
Skilled Laborers	6	4%
Semi- and Un-Skilled Laborers	2	1%
Others	18	12%
Unknown	26	17%
	153	100%

* Sources: 1850 United States Census for New Orleans and city directories between 1849 and 1852.

TABLE II
Real Estate and Slave Holdings
of the 1851 Cuban Annexation Committee*

	Number	Percentage
No Property	84	55%
\$1000-\$2000	21	14%
\$2001-\$10,000	35	23%
\$10,001-\$25,000	8	5%
\$25,001-\$50,000	3	2%
\$50,001-\$100,000	2	1%
Over \$100,000	0	0%
	153	100%

* Sources: 1852 New Orleans tax records and the 1850 United States census for New Orleans.

TABLE III
Geographical Persistence of New Orleans Lawyers
Between 1850 and 1860*

Age	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Over 60	Total
Number	16 of 53	31 of 60	18 of 34	7 of 17	2 of 6	74 of 170
Percentage	30%	52%	53%	41%	33%	44%

* Sources: 1850 and 1860 United States Census.

TABLE IV

Real Estate Ownership Among New Orleans Lawyers in 1850*

Age	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Over 60	Total
No Real Estate	79%	67%	44%	29%	67%	62%(106)
\$1000-\$2000	4%	3%	6%	6%	0%	4%(7)
\$2001-\$10,000	11%	17%	24%	12%	0%	15%(26)
\$10,001-\$25,000	4%	5%	3%	6%	16.5%	5%(8)
\$25,001-\$50,000	2%	1.5%	9%	17.5%	16.5%	6%(9)
\$50,001-\$100,000	0%	5%	14%	17.5%	0%	6%(11)
Over \$100,000	0%	1.5%	0%	12%	0%	2%(3)
Total	100%(53)	100%(60)	100%(34)	100%(17)	100%(6)	100%(170)

* Sources for Tables III and IV were the New Orleans censuses of 1850 and 1860, as well as the 1860 city directory. In reading Table IV, the percentages are totalled only downwards, not horizontally. For instance, in the 21-30-year-old age bracket of those who owned no property, the 79% is a percentage of 53, rather than 106.

TABLE V

Age Distribution of the Annexation Committeemen*

Age	Number	Percentage
0-20 years	0	0%
21-30 years	14	9%
31-40 years	39	26%
41-50 years	77	11%
51-60 years	6	4%
Over 60	0	0%
Unknown	77	50%
Total	153	100%

* Sources: 1850 and 1860 United States Census.

TABLE VI

Nativity of the Annexation Committeemen*

Place	Number	Percentage
Louisiana	14	9%
Gulf Coast States**	4	3%
South Atlantic States***	26	17%
Upper South States†	6	4%
New England	6	4%
Other Northern States	8	5%
Ireland	9	6%
Germany	3	2%
Other Foreign Countries	7	5%
Unknown	70	45%
Total	153	100%

* Sources: 1850 and 1860 United States Census.

** Gulf Coast States: Texas, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida

*** South Atlantic States: Maryland, Virginia, District of Columbia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia

† Upper South States: Tennessee, Kentucky, Arkansas

TABLE VII

Wealth Distribution of the Annexation Committeemen*

Wealth	1850 Real Estate	1860 Real Estate	1860 Personal Estate	1860 Real and Personal Wealth
None	19%	13%	4%	4%
\$1000-\$2000	2%	1%	7%	3%
\$2001-\$10,000	5%	5%	13%	8%
\$10,001-\$25,000	4%	4%	7%	5%
\$25,001-\$50,000	0%	1%	7%	3%
\$50,001-\$100,000	1%	1%	7%	1%
Over \$100,000	0%	1%	0%	2%
Unknown	69%	74%	74%	74%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

* Sources: 1850 and 1860 United States Census of New Orleans. This table relies only on census data concerning wealth, while Table II drew such information mainly from 1852 city tax records and added wealth data from the 1850 census only when these figures were unavailable in the city tax lists.