

8-2012

# From Confederate Expatriates to New South Neo-Filibusters: Major Edward A. Burke and the Americas

Michael Powers

Clemson University, [mpowers320@yahoo.com](mailto:mpowers320@yahoo.com)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all\\_theses](https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_theses)

 Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Powers, Michael, "From Confederate Expatriates to New South Neo-Filibusters: Major Edward A. Burke and the Americas" (2012).  
*All Theses*. 1487.

[https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all\\_theses/1487](https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_theses/1487)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact [kokeefe@clemson.edu](mailto:kokeefe@clemson.edu).

FROM CONFEDERATE EXPATRIATES TO NEW SOUTH NEO-FILIBUSTERS: MAJOR  
EDWARD A. BURKE AND THE AMERICAS

---

A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
History

---

by  
Michael Shane Powers  
August 2012

---

Accepted by:  
Dr. Paul Christopher Anderson, Committee Chair  
Dr. Orville Vernon Burton  
Dr. Rachel Moore

## ABSTRACT

The traditional historiography of the American South presents the New South creed as a vision emphasizing national reconciliation based upon the advancement of Southern commerce and industry. In addition, scholars broadly define New South spokesmen as men who came to maturity after the Civil War and did not involve themselves in state or national politics. An examination of Major Edward Austin Burke, however, reveals that at least one pivotal New South booster was a Confederate veteran and leading political figure; it also suggests the presence of an international component inherent in the New South paradigm of the 1880s. It is the argument of this thesis that increased commercial ties with the Americas was an inseparable part of the New South creed, and that this component was used as a fundamental means to reconcile North and South in imperial pursuits.

This study analyzes Burke's rise to Democratic party boss of Louisiana, his ascension as a leading New South spokesman, and his transformation into the embodiment of a commercial and industrial "neo-filibuster" – defined here as New South ideologues who became the imperialist vanguard of an American, and not a partisan, South. The neo-filibusters were different from their antebellum forbears, but also different from Confederate expatriates who emigrated to Latin America immediately after defeat in the Civil War. Still, those expatriates who left the South after defeat are an effective counterpoint for later neo-filibusters. Those who impetuously left the South between April 1865 to December 1868 sought to live in isolation while endeavoring to reconstruct the Old South in a new environment. Despite their motivations, this work

suggests that Confederate expatriates nonetheless strengthened the ties between the South and the Americas in important ways.

The thesis also argues for a certain continuity of economic vision between the Old and New Souths. A significant number of antebellum Southerners, exemplified by J.D.B. DeBow, favored industrial pursuits, state activism and internal improvements. Their motivation for modernization, however, was to bolster the “peculiar institution” of slavery and strengthen a regional way of life. New South spokesmen such as Burke shed the allegiance to slavery, which allowed for a nationally espoused ideal of Southern commercial and industrial progress.

The examination of Burke’s residence in Honduras as a neo-filibuster from 1889 until his death in 1928 places the history of the American South in a broad international context. Instead of staging ersatz invasions or vainglorious coup d’états, neo-filibusters like Burke were part of the larger nineteenth century international trend of imperialism – control through capital investment and exploitative political influence in underdeveloped countries.

## DEDICATION

To my grandfather and grandmother, whose stories were the foundations of my interest in Southern history; and to my mother and father, for their unfaltering support and embodiment of Christ's love.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my committee, without whom this thesis would not be possible. Dr. Paul Anderson offered invaluable direction and editing of the manuscript. His tutelage went above and beyond obligations as my advisor; he challenged my conceptions of the American South while always having an open door to answer questions about the uncertain life of a graduate student. My coursework with Dr. Rod Andrew, Jr. has formed the background of my graduate education and has been not only intellectually stimulating, but enjoyable. I would also like to thank Clemson's History Librarian, Priscilla Munson, for providing helpful research guides in the early stages and cheerfully answering questions throughout the research process.

Two history teachers that I had the great fortune of learning from in the public school system of Gainesville, Florida deserve special mention. My 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade American history teacher at Howard Bishop Middle School, Dr. Jamie Morris, ignited the spark of my love of the past and is an example of the kindness and dedication of the very best schoolteachers. Likewise, in 11<sup>th</sup> grade American History at Eastside High School, David Jones brought history alive through his remarkable storytelling.

I would also like to thank the amazing people I have met during my all too brief study at Clemson University. Madeleine Forrest, Mallory Neil, Parissa DJangi and Anna Braunscheidel have been great colleagues and friends from seminar rooms to football tailgates. I have enjoyed the many, many discussions and debates about everything from Southern culture to the philosophy of science with Matt Henderson, an invaluable friend. Geoffrey Mikota has been a kindred spirit through untiringly optimistic fishing trips that were indispensable breaks from the rigors of class work. The afternoons and evenings

spent with Jeremy Capps, Zack Emery, Manjeet Singh, and Bart Snyder have also made up many of my fondest memories of my graduate career thus far. Finally, I consider myself the luckiest graduate student at Clemson to have worked with Cathy Sturkie, who has been a second mother to me.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE PAGE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER	
1. CHARLES SWETT AND CONFEDERTE EXPATRIATES IN THE AMERICAS.....	6
2. MAJOR EDWARD A. BURKE: FROM DAY LABORER TO DEMOCRATIC PARTY BOSS AND NEW SOUTH BOOSTER.....	27
3. THE WORLD’S INDUSTRIAL AND COTTON CENTENNIAL AND BURKE AS NEW SOUTH NEO-FILIBUSTER IN HONDURAS.....	56
CONCLUSIONS.....	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	80



## INTRODUCTION

Even in the wake of the Confederate collapse and Northern occupation during Reconstruction, Southerners were constrained neither by the Gulf of Mexico nor the Mason-Dixon line. Antebellum Southerners had already shown a predilection for mobility, frequently moving west and even north in search of economic opportunity. The unprecedented expansion of the United States encouraged imperial impulses, perhaps nowhere more so than south of the Potomac. William Walker and the thousands of Southerners who took part in jingoistic expeditions or aided antebellum filibusters demonstrated the power of an expansionist vision. While filibusters of the antebellum period are well represented in Southern historiography, the motivation and make-up of Southerners who left for the Americas after 1877 is under researched. Likewise, the dominant U.S. historiography does not acknowledge nascent imperialism until the 1890s. Still more inviting is an absence in New South scholarship. Historians of that period largely limit their focus on a New South creed stressing *national* reconciliation, within *national* boundaries, through commerce and industrial expansion.

This thesis seeks to place postbellum Southerners and their New South creed in an international context. As commercial and industrial “neo-filibusters,” New South ideologues were the imperialist vanguard of an American, and not a partisan, South.

A brief analysis of Southern exiles who left the South for the Americas as bitter expatriates, mainly from April 1865 to December 1868, serves as an effective counterpoint for the later New South neo-filibusters. These unreconstructed Southerners were largely isolationist and stoutly devoted to the production of cash crops. On the

whole they attempted to reconstruct the Old South in a new environment. They did not depart for the tropics of Latin America motivated by the nascent commercial and industrial imperialism that came to dominate the later decades of the nineteenth century. Despite their motivations, however, Confederate expatriates strengthened the ties between the South and the Americas in important ways. Regular steamship services, currency exchanges, and the prospect of shorter routes for both commerce and communication were all critical consequences of Southern exile in the Americas.

Antebellum filibusters sought territorial expansion as a Southern permutation of Manifest Destiny; the exiles following Confederate collapse often emigrated rashly and out of despair, eventually to stagger back to the South in failure. New South filibusters were animated by a different vision, and, whatever their imperial designs, acted in the grand hope of taking an international creed to the Americas. Major Edward Austin Burke, the personality who dominates the second and third chapters, was their embodiment. Burke left Texas, where he had served in the Confederacy and subsequently failed in postwar business ventures, and arrived in New Orleans in 1870 all but penniless. His quick rise to state Democratic party boss and successful politicking at the national level led embittered enemies to question the fidelity of his life's story and even his service to the Confederacy. One acerbic Republican foe who was not beneath fabricating colorful rumors of leading Louisiana Democrats claimed that Burke was really "A.E. Burk" who had "absconded" from Illinois. Another bit of gossip spun by the

Major's enemies had it that Burke was actually a Union spy who personally delivered "a great deal of valuable information" to Admiral David Farragut in the capture of Mobile.<sup>1</sup>

A surprising number of historians appear not to question such unfounded accusations and continue to spread the notion that Burke was "an adventurer of obscure origin," "probably from Ohio or Illinois," but who "appear[s] to have been Northern." At least one scholar even questions whether Burke served in the Civil War for any side. (Numerous mentions of Burke in the *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* put proof to his Confederate service beyond all doubt). Burke's service in the Confederacy, his actions as a paramount figure in the Democratic struggle to overthrow Republican control of Louisiana, and his ascension as a leading New South zealot – not to mention his sworn oath on three passport applications- allow one to confidently assert that the Major was of Southern birth.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever doubts historians may have about Burke's origins, they have universally highlighted the Major's moxie and political acumen. C. Vann Woodward calls Burke a "cool-headed and daring gambler;" even "in a period as crowded with picturesque rogues as was the Gilded Age...there were few who could match his splendid audacity." Burke is also often cited as a prime example of the skullduggery and corruption so prevalent in the postbellum South. The discovery in 1889 that Burke had

---

<sup>1</sup> "The Louisiana Officials: Letter from Gov. Wells, A Reply to Democratic Falsehoods," *New York Times*, Feb 19, 1878. As quoted in William Ivy Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics, 1877-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 28.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Butler Simkins, *A History of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 323; Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 27; C. Vann Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951), 192; A.H. Cole to C.D. Hill, August 10, 1864, in *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, (Washington, 1880-1901), ser. 1, XLI, pt. 2, 1052. Cited hereinafter as *O.R.*

stolen \$1,777,000 during his tenure as State Treasurer led one historian to dub the Major the “most brazen thief in Bourbon annals.”<sup>3</sup>

Yet Burke’s remarkable audacity and scandal-pocked career have perhaps distracted historians from assessing the significance of his New South vision. Most generally, he does not fit the mold of the typical New South booster first suggested by Paul M. Gaston, whose work on the New South creed remains the seminal book in the field. Gaston found that New South prophets were men typically born in the 1850s or later who did not serve in the Civil War and who, afterwards, did not play an active role in postbellum politics. Burke not only served in the war but was a leading figure in Louisiana politics, and used both his service and his power to advance his vision. The most notable component of that vision was its fundamental relationship with the Americas. As Gaston sketches it, the New South was a paradigmatic idea of national reconciliation based upon industrial and commercial prosperity. A study of Burke’s cosmopolitan worldview demonstrates that international trade and the anticipated commercial domination of the Americas was a crucial component of a New South that featured international expansion as a necessary means of regional prosperity and national reconciliation.<sup>4</sup>

The World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition of 1884-5 in New Orleans was the clearest manifestation of Burke’s vision. The exposition was not merely “regional in orientation” as one historian asserts, but an event demonstrating that the

---

<sup>3</sup> Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction*, 192; C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South: 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 71; Simkins, *A History of the South*, 322.

<sup>4</sup> Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York: Knopf, 1970), 48, 41-2.

reconciliationism inherent in the New South creed was necessarily set in an international context. As Director-General, Burke molded the exposition to reflect his desire that Southern commerce and industry be felt in every port and nation of the Western hemisphere – an American vision in the broadest sense. The nascent imperialism of this aspect of the New South creed allowed Northerners and Southerners to reconcile their differences and unite in the pursuit of increased tropical commerce.<sup>5</sup>

Burke's transition from international New South booster to neo-filibuster began at the exposition itself, where he met Honduran President Louis Bogran. President Bogran was impressed by Burke's gregariousness and especially his desire that the South lead American investment in Central America. In the immediate aftermath of their meeting Bogran granted the Major significant mining concessions in Honduras. Burke visited his mines at least twice shortly thereafter, but political defeat in the 1888 elections and the public revelation of his alleged embezzlement proved the immediate catalysts for the Major to become a neo-filibuster in the Americas. Instead of relying on ersatz invasions or vainglorious *coup d'états* in the mold of William Walker, Burke's neo-filibusterism was part of the larger imperial trend of control and exploitative political influence through capital investment. Burke would live out the rest of his life in Honduras, influencing Honduran politics until his death and never faltering in the belief that his mining concessions would yield immense riches for himself and for the vision he went to Honduras to establish.

---

<sup>5</sup> John Samuel Ezell, *The South Since 1865* (New York: MacMillian Company, 1963), 331.

## CHAPTER ONE

### CHALRES SWETT AND CONFEDERATE EXPATRIATES IN THE AMERICAS

*Many have gone, and more will go without giving the subject the consideration it demands, but make the leap in the dark, and without calculating the result if they fail to leap the chasm, and should reach the bottom of an unfathomable abyss of future misery, want and suffering.* – Charles Swett, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1867.

Southern exiles were those who left their state and the South for reasons that were not primarily economic. Most exiles left impetuously out of fear at the beginning of Reconstruction. According to Daniel Sutherland, Confederate patriots were most likely to take flight during two periods. The first was between the surrender at Appomattox and March 1866. In this time of extreme disarray, those Confederates who feared the jail cell or the noose, mainly politicians, departed the country. President Johnson's veto of the Freedmen's Bureau Bill and the Civil Rights Bill momentarily stemmed the tide of exiles, but the passage of the Reconstruction Acts in 1867 by the new Congress began the second wave of exile emigration. It appeared as if "the South was doomed to second-class citizenship in the re-United States," ruled by former slaves and their Yankee backers.<sup>6</sup> From the approval of the Reconstruction Acts in the spring of 1867 until

---

<sup>6</sup> Daniel E. Sutherland, "Looking for a Home: Louisiana Emigrants during the Civil War and Reconstruction," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 21, no. 4 (1980): 347.

December 1868, more diehard Southerners, mainly from the middling ranks departed for the Americas, especially Mexico and South America.<sup>7</sup>

The motivation for exiles was more than fear of Yankee reprisals and African American rule. Not a few proud Confederates came to the conclusion that defeat brought about a stain upon Southern honor that could only be rectified through exodus. Still others left their native South out of contempt for how its citizens handled four years of Civil War. These diehards loathed backstabbing politicians and a weak citizenry that allowed surrender.<sup>8</sup> Yet they did not equate their choice with disloyalty. The overwhelming majority of exiles, like the later neo-filibusters, took great pride in their Confederate service and their Southern heritage.

Extreme Confederate expatriates represented perhaps the greatest antithesis of the later New South men such as Burke – they renounced allegiance to the United States and lost faith in the principles of republican government. The Old South had exhibited conservative tendencies by flirting with various ideas of strengthening the planter oligarchy; yet none had gone so far as to support a monarchical form a government. But significant numbers of exiles in the Americas did just that. For the bitterest stripe of Confederate exiles, their experience in war and Reconstruction destroyed their belief in republicanism. The bombastic (and still exceedingly wealthy) Richard Talley Johnson of Mansfield, Louisiana purchased an estate within sight of the church steeples of Belize City in early 1868. The former Confederate colonel clearly articulated the extent of his pessimism in a letter home: “The republicanism of Washington, Jefferson, and Madison

---

<sup>7</sup> Daniel E. Sutherland, *The Confederate Carpetbaggers* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 25, 26, 27.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 13, 14.

has long since been ‘played out’; and in confirmation of this assertion you have the evidence transpiring daily before your eyes...I had rather obey one master in the person of a monarch, yea even the Autocrat of Russia, than to be the slave of hundreds of thousands of sovereigns with no other qualifications to rule than ignorance and brutality.”<sup>9</sup>

Men of the cloth were likewise capable of discarding their belief that God favored the American form. Reverend Ballard S. Dunn of St. Phillip’s Church in New Orleans who had recently purchased a 614,000 acres estate dubbed “Lizzieland,” wrote *Brazil, the Home for Southerners* to encourage further Southern emigration to South America.<sup>10</sup> Speaking to the planter class, Dunn assured potential exiles that the sacrosanct rights of Southern males, the “rights of property” and patriarchy - “every man [is] lord supreme, in his own domicile,” - was guaranteed in Brazil. It became clear just what type of property Dunn alluded to when he reiterated that even unnaturalized citizens could own slaves and still be under the full protection of constitutional law.<sup>11</sup>

For Dunn, republican government was expendable. He juxtaposed Spanish American republics with those of the Brazilian Empire to make his point. Dunn favored the conservative model of Brazil over the republics of the Americas and hoped the comparison might appeal to the planter class he aspired to persuade: “so far from being Spaniards...the Brazilians despise that treacherous race; and point to Mexico, Central America, and the South American republics, when they would warn their sons against the

---

<sup>9</sup>Donald C. Simmons, Jr., *Confederate Settlements in British Honduras* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001), 51.

<sup>10</sup> Ballard S. Dunn, *Brazil, the Home for Southerners: Or, A Practical Account of What the Author, And Others, Who Visited That Country, For the Same Objects, Saw and Did While In That Empire* (New Orleans: Bloomfield & Steel, 1866), 44.

<sup>11</sup> Dunn, *Brazil, the Home for Southerners*, 39, 40.



folly, villainy, and insecure character of republicanism. If any intelligent Brazilian who loves liberty and security, and can appreciate good government, were asked, what he most abhors,” Dunn proclaims, “he would doubtless answer, ‘Spanish American Republicanism.’”<sup>12</sup> In addition to the ways in which he distinguished the exiles by their lukewarm allegiance to republicanism, Dunn also vividly exemplified how exiles and New South neo-filibusters placed different emphasis on economics as a motivation for venturing in the Americas. The latter ventured as part of the vanguard of American imperialism, but Dunn stressed that the true Southern exile took residence in the Americas solely out of “manly motives” of duty. Dunn advised those potential emigrants motivated only by economic advancement to remain at home. The Reverend only wanted true Southern expatriates with noble motives of immutable honor to begin anew a society dedicated to ideals higher than commercial gain.<sup>13</sup>

Still, an unintentional byproduct of the emigration tide of Confederate exiles was the origin of the South’s, and particularly New Orleans’s, increased connections with the Americas. The first of these factors was simple logistics. Before 1866, there was no regular steamship service between the United States and several of the desired destinations of Confederate emigrants. That year a former Confederate corporal, William S. Cary, established the first steamship line directly connecting British Honduras with its North American neighbor at New Orleans. The South’s largest city as well as the region’s primary port, New Orleans’s central position on the Gulf of Mexico made it the natural hub of exile traffic.

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, i.

Businessmen in the Crescent City hoped the short travel time of four days to Central America would allow them to savor the profits of tropical fruit. Central Americans heartily anticipated the benefit of cheaper U.S. manufactured goods coming from New Orleans as opposed to far away New York. Beyond material concerns, the exchange of ideas between the South and the Americas promised to flow through New Orleans like the Mississippi, as newspapers and mail could bypass the ports of the Eastern seaboard.<sup>14</sup> The businessmen of Belize City valued the commercial link to New Orleans and the new customers the exiles represented to such an extent that after the unfortunate wreck of Cary's steamer, the *Extract*, they agreed to subsidize the steamship the *Trade Wind* at an annual rate of \$20,000 to ensure the continuation of regular service.

The demand of exiles also created a boom in New Orleans for currency exchange, a hallmark business in international commerce. J. Avet advertised his currency exchange service on 60 Old Levee in the New Orleans *Times* and the *Daily Picayune*. Prudent Southern exiles took advantage of Avet's specialization in converting U.S. dollars to British Honduran dollars, which were more desirable in the Americas due to a higher valuation against the more stable British pound.<sup>15</sup>

The desire of Louisiana exiles to continue the antebellum emphasis on sugar production was also one of the first, yet unintentional, concrete connections between the postbellum South and the Americas. The anticipated agricultural connection between the sugar bastion of Louisiana and its hopeful replacement in British Honduras was a significant factor in the establishment of a regular steamship service. The political culture and economic motivation of these exiles was wholly different than later New

---

<sup>14</sup> Simmons, Jr., *Confederate Settlements in British Honduras*, 20-21.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 1, 39.

South zealots; nonetheless their activities formed a nascent connection. As sugarcane's profitability was realized by 1866, British Honduran officials and merchants began to target planter class immigrants from the sugar region of the lower Mississippi Delta. Their efforts were largely successful in attracting a geographically and vocationally homogenous group of Southerners to the extent that the colony had only a scattering of exiles from states other than Louisiana or Mississippi.<sup>16</sup>

Charles Swett and his fellow passengers aboard the *Trade Wind* were just the type of men British Honduran officials had in mind. Of the thirteen former Confederates of "affluent circumstances" on the journey to the Central American colony, ten were Louisianans, including a freedmen named William Owens whom Swett, tongue-in-cheek, described as an "American citizen of African descent" accompanying his former owner, Colonel J.E.F. Harrison of Tenses, Louisiana.<sup>17</sup> Swett recounted his journey in an 1868 pamphlet called *A Trip to British Honduras and to San Pedro, Republic of Honduras*. His pamphlet demonstrated the bitterness and hardships faced by exiles in the Americas.

Of New England birth, Swett came with his family to the newly opened Southern frontier of Warren County, Mississippi, in 1836. By the outbreak of war Swett had established himself on the outskirts of Vicksburg as a Whig slave owner with a plantation worked by seventeen slaves. Despite his Northern birth and hesitant support for secession, Swett answered the call to war in the model of an aspiring Southern cavalier and attempted to raise a cavalry company. Upon the request of Governor Pettus, however, Swett formed an artillery company, which the state government and county

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 66-7, 121.

<sup>17</sup> Sharon Hartman Strom and Frederick Stirton Weaver, *Confederates in the Tropics: Charles Swett's Travelogue* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 64, 62.

citizens combined to outfit. Formally known as the Warren County Light Artillery, but, upon his election of captain, colloquially known as Swett's Battery, the company went on to perform admirably in the Army of Tennessee.<sup>18</sup>

At the end of the war, Swett was elected as one of two Warren County representatives to the convention of August 1865 charged with making a new state constitution, a required step for Mississippi's readmission to the Union. The delegates molded a document that nullified secession and outlawed slavery, yet made no provisions for enfranchising freedmen. In the state elections on October 2, 1865, Swett was elected to the Mississippi legislature, which promptly established Black Codes. White Mississippians breathed a cautious sigh of relief that perhaps they would be allowed to govern their state without Yankee interference. Plans for home rule were dashed, however, with a Republican landslide in the national mid-term elections of 1866 and the initiation of Congressional Reconstruction. The subsequent Reconstruction Acts mandated another Mississippi constitution. Home-rule whites like Swett were swept from office and replaced by freedmen and their white sympathizers, the so-called carpetbaggers and scalawags.<sup>19</sup>

Significant economic hardships added to white Southerners' political misfortune. Four years of war disrupted the planter model of credit cycles. Often using slaves as collateral, antebellum planters could borrow to adequately prepare for the upcoming crop and then pay off the interest, if not the entire debt, once the crop was harvested and sold. An ever advancing Union army and a strangling naval blockade meant tight credit and

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, ix, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 13.

accumulating debt while emancipation served as the disappearing act for planter collateral, often subjecting the “Big House” to foreclosure.<sup>20</sup>

The bitterness of defeat intensified the climate of political and economic dismay that served as the backdrop for Swett’s “Prefatory Remarks” in his travelogue. Swett was an agent of a colonization society sent to Central America on reconnaissance to determine the feasibility of emigration. His introduction serves as an excellent insight into the motivation and mindset of Southerners contemplating expatriation.<sup>21</sup> Biased against emigration, Swett made it clear in his “Prefatory Remarks” that he could, as with his hesitancy towards secession, be persuaded to emigrate to Central America if able to “find sufficient inducement.”<sup>22</sup> Swett especially warned against impetuous decisions. The proud legacy of the Founders and the recent hardships and sacrifices of war meant that the South was “doubly ours,” with a fateful decision to abandon it made only after “the most careful and exhaustive consideration.”<sup>23</sup>

Swett’s introduction also demonstrates a clear distinction between Confederate exiles and New South neo-filibusters: exiles viewed planter class political control and successful cash crop agriculture as the bellwether for prosperity both in the South and the Americas. Swett considered himself of the planter class; his peers were his targeted audience. He made this clear by conceptualizing Southern exiles into classes – the “lazy and indolent” who “can be very well spared from our own ‘Sunny South’” and an industrious planter class that could “to a great extent recuperate our now shattered

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 53.

fortunes.”<sup>24</sup> Speaking for his class, Swett lamented the planters’ downfall and the current state of free labor in large-scale agriculture as significantly unprofitable. A stagnant agriculture for Swett and Southern exiles was no small matter, for unlike the emphasis in the New South ideology still to come, staple crop production was the backbone of everything important to the South and a fundamental component of its identity. It was the “successful cultivation of the soil,” not industrialization and commerce, that “will insure prosperity in every business and pursuit.”<sup>25</sup>

The root of all evils in the South, according to Swett, was the political subjugation of white Southerners. “We are politically nothing, taxed beyond precedent, denied representation,” he moaned, with “the party in power striving by every means in its power to place an inferior race in a position of political importance, and to even elevate to social equality a people it was undoubtedly the intention of our Creator should occupy a position below us.” Using familiar rhetoric of honor and arms, Republican rule was Swett’s rallying cry to the planter class to remain in the South and combat political subjugation until home-rule was achieved or defeat allowed for an honorable retreat to foreign shores. “Let us make a determined effort to save the old ship that has weathered so many storms,” Swett pleaded, and “if, after using every means at our command, the vessel is wrecked, we may then seize a plank and trust to the Giver of all Good to waft us to a harbor of safety.”<sup>26</sup> Once a valiant effort was made and a suitable alternative

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 56.

residence found, Swett was resolved “to repose in a land far distant from the scenes of my childhood.”<sup>27</sup>

The *Trade Wind* arrived in Belize City in early January of 1868. Undoubtedly Swett did not expect much in the way of civilization in Central America, as the “very beautiful and fairy-like scene” of the layout of the colonial capital surprised him.<sup>28</sup> The quaint city skyline that Swett admired, however, was juxtaposed with its streets, which Swett found teeming with Confederate expatriates.<sup>29</sup> Misleading information and inadequate planning were chronic problems for exiles no matter the country of destination. British Honduras was no exception. Not a few made what Swett described as the “leap into the dark” only to “reach the bottom of an unfathomable abyss.”<sup>30</sup> Indeed impetuosity was another significant difference between exiles and later neo-filibusters like Burke, for whom Latin American residence was the result of a calculated business decision. Unfortunate exiles, on the other hand, left the destitute South and quickly became destitute themselves in a foreign land like British Honduras. Those considered fortunate moseyed through the streets of Belize City peddling furniture and jewelry with a Southern drawl in desperate attempts to raise funds for a return voyage. Their numbers

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>29</sup> Donald C. Simmons, Jr., has questioned the veracity of the official number of ex-Confederates emigrating to the Americas in the postbellum period. Those without the means to travel by chartered steamer often opted for less expensive but more dangerous sailing vessels. The U.S. Customs did not approve as passenger ships a significant number of the more antiquated form of travel. Therefore, many an exile evaded detection in the bowels of cargo hold or met the ship after inspection. Such factors coupled with the general difficulty of counting every emigrant lead Simmons to estimate that the official count of fifteen hundred Southerners might easily be three times that number and maybe as high as seven thousand. See Simmons, *Confederate Settlements in British Honduras*, 38.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 54.

soon elicited public complaints and headaches for officials. The irony was certainly not lost on the Southern vagabonds: those previously used to a strict racial order that had tightly regulated even the movements of blacks were now social outsiders, even as “colored” citizens of Belize City, many of whom were civil servants, confidently walked the sidewalk.<sup>31</sup>

Despite being paternalistic imperialists, later neo-filibusters exhibited neither the same degree of hostility as expatriates towards people of color in the Americas nor with the same frequency. Many Southerners exiles appeared to bring more bellicosity than baggage to their new homes. Regardless of class or station, a number of former Confederates could not bring themselves to deal with any British Honduran of color and even extended their disdain to Europeans who did so. To add insult to injury, Confederate exiles were incensed to discover upon their arrival that the British colonists called all those from the United States “Yankees.” Despite several letters to newspaper editors and British Honduran officials from Southerners insisting on the distinction it appears the difference between “Yankees” and “Southerners” was still lost on the citizens of the Central American colony.<sup>32</sup>

Often, so did distinctions of color. The *British Honduras Colonist and Belize Advertiser* published an outraged editorial in the wake of an altercation between a Southern exile and his black employee. After the laborer resisted the ex-Confederate’s instructions, the latter resorted to the manner of racial control typical in the Old South – violence - and returned with a shotgun to confront his employee. A fight ensued and the weapon discharging during the melee. Neither party was injured but the editor took the

---

<sup>31</sup> Simmons Jr., *Confederate Settlements in British Honduras*, 56.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 59.



occasion to speak for the citizens of British Honduras and offer a stern warning to belligerent newcomers. “These Southern gentlemen,” the editor sarcastically seethed, must “keep their violent and lawless passions under control, it would be better that they remained under the tender and merciful care of Major-General Butler and the Authorities who have succeeded him in the Southern States than come here to disturb our repose and to raise up a feeling against them in the breasts of the people of the Colony, which might be productive of very serious consequences.” If Southerners did not take heed of the warning, the editor brazenly declared that “they will be in as serious trouble on a small scale as every they were in Texas, Louisiana, or Virginia on a larger one.”<sup>33</sup> Not all exiles had noteworthy altercations with the colored populace, but the colonial press reported them frequently, helping shape public opinion on immigrants from the American South.

At least a few Southerners were able to make more objective observations of the colony’s relatively liberal racial attitudes. A former member of the Mississippi State Legislature, W.A. Love, was not threatened by what he estimated to be the ninety-seven percent black and colored population of Belize City. Writing to the *Hinds County Gazette*, Love insisted that the “negroes and colored people are very polite to white people” while the civil servants of color “are as polite and as affable a set of officers I ever saw.” Of a worship service in a black Methodist church, Love wrote that he had never seen a “more decent and well behaved congregation” with worshippers “looking

---

<sup>33</sup> “It is with No Little Regret,” *British Honduras Colonist and Belize Advertiser*, 24 October 1868, 2. As quoted in Simmons Jr., *Confederate Settlements in British Honduras*, 56-57.

more like ladies and gentlemen than you could well imagine.”<sup>34</sup> Charles Swett was likewise impressed with the tact of British Hondurans of color. Attending a Wesleyan service, likely the same as Love’s, Swett observed that his party was “politely conducted to a seat, and every attention shown that could be anywhere given.” He “never saw a more quite and attentive congregation.”<sup>35</sup>

That both Love and Swett did not feel threatened or indignant in the presence of an overwhelming black majority is worthy of note, especially considering the hard racial attitudes held by many of their fellow Southerners in the Americas. Yet when one considers their apparent progressiveness in the context of the perceived racial relations of the American South Love and Swett’s outlook was more similar to home attitudes than at first glance. Expatriates such as the individual who accosted his employee clung to the shibboleths of the Old South and reacted negatively to an overwhelming presence of free people of color exhibiting any sign of respectability or status. Exiles like Love and Swett tolerated such circumstances by distinguishing a fine line between freedmen’s respectability and their deference.

Swett, indeed, had bemoaned the environment of political subjugation that plagued the South as Republicans endeavored to “place an inferior race in a position of political importance, and to even elevate to social equality” former slaves.<sup>36</sup> The injustice stemmed from the belief that African Americans were outside the divinely

---

<sup>34</sup> W.A. Love, “Social Customs in British Honduras,” *Hinds County Gazette*, 9 August 1867, 1. As quoted in Simmons Jr., *Confederate Settlements in British Honduras*, 57, 58.

<sup>35</sup> Strom and Weaver, *Confederates in the Tropics*, 66.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 56.

ordained social and political hierarchy. Swett may have appeared to change his tune in his glowing report of race relations in Belize City – but the rhetoric Swett employed demonstrated that he perceived the free people of color in British Honduras knew their “place.” In fact, both Swett and Love described blacks citizens of the colony as “quite,” “polite,” and “well behaved.” Their language was laden with accepted Southern and Victorian tropes of racial and social deference to one’s superiors. It also still conveys the paternalistic outlook of exiles; if one were to substitute “children” at every mention of people of color, the writings would read the same. Love made it clear that “the subject of social equality does not seem to have entered into the minds of either the black, colored, or white race.” – despite people of color holding positions of responsibility and possessing proper Victorian manners.<sup>37</sup> In short, while both Love and Swett presented a Belize City whose citizens of color assuredly had more social liberties than the blacks of the antebellum South, the white Southerner was still given his proper respect. Perhaps that was special pleading on the part of two men tacitly promoting exile emigration. But the paternalistic outlook of many exiles, as well as the ways in which they perceived deference among people of color, marked at least one continuity between Confederate exiles and New South neo-filibusters such as Edward Burke. Neither was able to think outside the accepted Victorian norms of racial hierarchy.

Swett spent almost two weeks in British Honduras visiting many of the eleven Confederate settlements. He wrote that several members of his party wanted to add a spontaneous trip to Spanish Honduras to “verify or disprove by ocular demonstration the

---

<sup>37</sup> As quoted in Simmons Jr., *Confederate Settlements in British Honduras*, 57.

extravagant stories we have heard of the Republic.”<sup>38</sup> Spanish America had long held an enchanting spell, a combination of mysticism and idyllic images founded on romantic notions of limitless natural bounty. According to historians Sharon Strom and Frederick Weaver, “British Honduras possessed neither the economic potential nor the imperialist drama of Spanish Central America.”<sup>39</sup> Indeed diverse groups from the United States were drawn to Latin America by the mid-nineteenth century. Scientists studying the Amazon, artists attracted to the unrestrained nature and adventurers who began a new, highly popular genre of exotic travel literature all contributed to Southerners’ familiarity and interest in Latin America.<sup>40</sup>

Swett and his party arrived in the Honduran port of Omoa on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1868. The long voyage and the physical toll of exploring the rugged tropical terrain apparently began to wear on him. Despite the onset of a crotchety disposition, exacerbated by various illnesses contracted during his time in Spanish Honduras, Swett provided valuable information about the lifestyle and mindset of Confederate exiles in the Republic of Honduras, particularly in Medina, a settlement in the northwest section of the country. A former Confederate cavalry officer, Major Abednego Greenberry Malcolm, was the leader of thirty families of Southern emigrants who founded the expatriate community in the spring of 1867, naming it Medina after the country’s recently elected President.

---

<sup>38</sup> Strom and Weaver, *Confederates in the Tropics*, 69.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>40</sup> James William Park, *Latin American Underdevelopment: A History of Perspectives in the United States, 1870-1965* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 8.

Despite a reputation for greeting foreigners with disdain and previous contact with William Walker's filibusters, the neighboring small village of San Pedro Sula granted Malcolm's settlement the full use of the village's public lands. The village also pledged to respect the property of Southern expatriates, so long as the immigrants likewise would "not oppose any Central American, or citizens of any friendly nations who may come to settle."<sup>41</sup> In return, Major Malcolm, whom the legislative bill officially called "a native of the United States of North America," pledged to "establish machines and manufactories in the country, and to teach to the natives of the soil the use and management of the same, and other trades," build a road for commerce and communication, and establish secondary schools open to native Hondurans. Most likely to ensure his benefactors that he would not attempt to reinstate slavery or overthrow the government as his Southern predecessor William Walker had done, Malcolm also swore to "live in good harmony with the natives, fraternizing with and helping each other," to abide by Honduran laws, "and to contribute on their part, to the respect, observance and execution of the same."<sup>42</sup>

The seventy-odd exiles of Malcolm's settlement were in the stages of erecting permanent residences when Swett's party arrived in late January 1868. Swett's travelogue again confirmed that exiles were endeavoring to remodel the Old South in new soil, particularly through staple crop agriculture. While British Honduras attracted

---

<sup>41</sup> Strom and Weaver, *Confederates in the Tropics*, 43, 44; *A Municipal Act of the Authorities of San Pedro, for the Protection of Foreign Immigrants*, 22 April, 1867, in Strom and Weaver, *Confederates in the Tropics*, Appendix A, "Documents Concerning the Settlement of Medina, Honduras," Document 3.

<sup>42</sup> *A Municipal Act of the Authorities of San Pedro, for the Protection of Foreign Immigrants*, 22 April, 1867, in Strom and Weaver, *Confederates in the Tropics*, Appendix A, "Documents Concerning the Settlement of Medina, Honduras," Document 3.

sugar planters from the Lower Mississippi Delta, Spanish Honduras attracted Kentuckians like Malcolm and other Southern exiles prospecting in cotton. Despite the presence of what Swett described as an “army worm” that destroyed significant portions of the crop, the Medina community was sticking with cotton production. Swett noted that the most optimistic calculations hoped that a mere fifty percent of the seeds planted would survive to produce a finished product – notwithstanding the further difficulty of getting the crop to market in a region of such woeful infrastructure.

The stubbornness and proclivity for the Southern way of life even extended into diet. Malcolm planted his garden just as he would have back home in Kentucky growing snap-beans, okra, pumpkins, black-eyed peas, kale, an assortment of greens, and sweet potatoes.<sup>43</sup> The choice of one’s food goes beyond nutrition; it is a statement of one’s identity and can represent an important social and political choice. The decision to incorporate nothing of the diet of one’s new place of residence demonstrated the isolationism and reactionary nature of Malcolm and his community of Confederate exiles.

Swett’s irritable nature by this point in his journey has a benefit for historians: it actually served to compromise his filter when complaining about native citizens. Swett’s complaints conveyed inconsistencies common to Southerners of the period. At first glance, Swett merely invoked the stereotype of lazy and indolent Latin Americans. In biting sarcasm, Swett at one-point claimed that while their guide John was on hand for an expedition, he “of course could not think of making a start till morning, this being the natives’ peculiar habit in all such cases.” Five days later he frustratingly recorded “it is always delay with these people, who have no idea of the value of time except as a means

---

<sup>43</sup> Strom and Weaver, *Confederates in the Tropics*, 93, 94.

of measuring distances from one point to another.” When the native guides arrived by sunrise at six in the morning, Swett still found occasion to grumble that the hour “is an early start for these people, though we should have been off an hour or more earlier.”<sup>44</sup> Swett’s ideas were consistent with the remarkably persistent American perception of Latin Americans as preferring to languish in the sweltering tropical sun rather than attempt to make use of near limitless and pristine natural resources.<sup>45</sup>

At other times in his travelogue, however, his attitudes showed an acute contradiction. While riding a stretch of perilous rapids in the interior of Spanish Honduras, Swett remarked at the talent of a native “boy” who possessed the “utmost skill,” poling the boat so as to avoid a virtual obstacle course of river banks, “fallen trees,” “sunken logs, and...over-hanging limbs.”<sup>46</sup> While perhaps Swett’s mindset towards natives did not allow him to admit it, his journal made clear the danger of serious injury or death without such a knowledgeable, and hardly indolent, native boatman.

Eight days after the incident in the rapids, another native “boy,” or very possibly the same river rescuer, again marveled the white Southern onlookers. In the midst of a tranquil ride down the river, the “boy” dropped his pole and dove into the river at what appeared to Swett as no provocation. When he resurfaced with an eight-pound turtle, Swett admitted that no one in his party had seen any signs of the turtle. The native tactic “beats any fishing we have seen, and proves a decided independence of hook and line.”<sup>47</sup>

These two stories of Swett and the “boy” are significant because they display the attitudes of exiles towards native Latinos. One can assume that Swett uses the term

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 98, 101.

<sup>45</sup> Park, *Latin American Underdevelopment*, 33.

<sup>46</sup> Strom and Weaver, *Confederates in the Tropics*, 99.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 102, 103.

“boy” not in a racially derogatory manner but because he was an adolescent Latino as Swett, by contrast, called another native guide by John, his given name, and he called the freedman accompanying the group by William. Nonetheless, each of Swett’s positive comments about the natives revolved around exploits reflecting manual outdoor skills. Swett presented polite, yet lazy, natives who navigated rivers and caught turtles, but who make no impression with their intellect. In short, Victorian social norms and his Southern background allowed Swett to bestow compliments about a native Latino’s athletic ability without forcing him to move beyond a paternalistic worldview.

The final instance in Swett’s journal relating to the natives sheds the most light on the dynamic between Latin Americans and Confederate expatriates. With baggage and party members ready to make one of their last expeditions in Spanish Honduras, Swett lamented again that the laborers hired to transport the cargo did not arrive until an hour after sunrise. Their spokesman then had the audacity to demand a higher price for rations than previously agreed upon, which the party reluctantly supplied.<sup>48</sup> From Swett’s point of view the native Latinos were lazy swindlers. Yet they clearly were the ones who held the power in the economic relationship. The chronic labor shortage ubiquitous throughout Central America meant that native guides had the liberty to make pushy white foreigners wait an hour - and they still demanded a raise.

Swett was back in New Orleans by March 12, 1868 and prepared to head home to Mississippi. In his closing remarks, Swett stayed true to his original inclination to recommend that potential exiles stay in the South. Swett claimed he saw “no one in Honduras, who left the United States, whose condition in that respect appeared enviable.”

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 104.



While Swett conceded that the insistence of exiles to plant cotton above all else was a “very great mistake,” his subsequent arguments against expatriation remain rooted in agricultural concerns.<sup>49</sup>

Of those Swett encountered in British Honduras, most returned to the United States within a year. They were victims of poor planning, land speculators, tropical ailments, or homesickness, the most common illness of all. By 1870, fewer than one hundred (and mostly scattered) exiles were to be found in the colony.<sup>50</sup> Expatriates in Spanish Honduras, even those in Medina, largely shared the same fate. Reasons vary as to which among illness, misunderstandings with San Pedro officials, and crop failure was the primary motive for Malcolm’s return to the United States in 1870. Most likely all factors combined to overwhelm the headstrong exile as they had countless others.<sup>51</sup>

Overall, the Southern experiment of exile ended, as Charles Swett feared, at the bottom of an “unfathomable abyss of future want, misery and suffering.” The brief period of Confederate exile nonetheless furthered the relationship between the South and the Americas in unintended ways. Regular steamship service, currency exchanges, and a spike in trade were significant consequences of Southern expatriation. Yet in fundamental ways Confederate expatriates represented the negative foil of their New South and neo-filibuster successors like Burke. Exiles such as Reverend Dunn gave up on their native South and republican government; Burk’s international New South vision gave him the firm belief in the South’s limitless commercial future. Major Malcolm impetuously went to Honduras as a bitter partisan seeking to maintain the life of the Old

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 107, 108.

<sup>50</sup> Simmons Jr., *Confederate Settlements in British Honduras*, 119.

<sup>51</sup> Strom and Weaver, *Confederates in the Tropics*, 46.

South in isolation; Major Burke made the calculated decision to go to Honduras as a leading figure of the New South and the vanguard of a nation reconciled in the pursuit of commercial expansion in the Americas.

The isolationist and stubbornly agriculturally minded Southern exiles proved a failure in the Americas. The next Southern worldview to fix its gaze upon the Americas was a new creed of nascent commercial imperialism for an American, rather than a partisan, South.

## CHAPTER TWO

### MAJOR EDWARD A. BURKE: FROM DAY LABORER TO DEMOCRATIC PARTY BOSS AND NEW SOUTH BOOSTER

*Major Burke is impulsive and generous by nature – a man of rare conversational powers, a rapid thinker and pleasing speaker – frank, straightforward and manly – a man who combines the qualities of a popular leader, a good citizen and the pride and honor of the home circle.*

- J. Curtis Waldo, 1879.

*Major Burke is a predestined leader. Descended from a line of soldiers, he possess by heredity the combative instinct which insists upon conquering something, but which, falling happily upon peaceful times and pursuits, finds a nobler satisfaction in vanquishing impediments to civic progress...His capacity for work is simply enormous. He wears out everybody about him; but though a thousand fall by the way, he keeps steadily on...a man of fine presence, and of affable and winning manners.*

- William H. Coleman, 1885

The life of Edward Austin Burke is a case study for an analysis of neo-filibusters. Burke was the epitome of the bolder breed of Southerners who left home in search of opportunity in the Americas. Arriving in New Orleans from Texas in 1869 with no prospects, Burke left for Honduras in 1889 as head of Louisiana's Democratic machine, a nationally known politician, and New South zealot. Understanding the experience, motivation, and makeup of Southern neo-filibusters like him has the potential to alter the

historiography of the New South era while also broadening its scope. The neo-filibuster movement of the 1880s demonstrates that the idea of the New South was international as well as regional and national.

Burke was born of Irish descent in Louisville, Kentucky, on September 15, 1841. The bombardment of Fort Sumter and the beginning of the Civil War found the nineteen-year-old Burke working in what would become his first area of employment, logistics - in this case, on a Texas railroad. Working on a railroad in such proximity to Mexico no doubt meant that Burke possessed an antebellum familiarity with international business. Whatever his prospects in 1861, loyalty to the South came first, however, as Burke answered the call to arms and enlisted in the Confederate Army, rising to the rank of Major by 1864. His railroad background then landed him an assignment as Quartermaster and Chief Inspector of Field Transportation in the District of Texas.<sup>52</sup> Burke's assignment as Quartermaster and Chief Inspector increased his conceptualization of the South in an international context. The Confederacy's lack of war materiel led Burke's superior to order all logistics officers to purchase goods from Mexico while the Confederate Cotton Bureau routinely had Quartermasters like Burke use their equestrian teams to transport cotton into Mexico for sale.<sup>53</sup> Standing 5'11", with blue eyes and black hair, Burke was physically unassuming.<sup>54</sup> Yet a report written in the summer of 1864 cited him as a superior organizer.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Thomas D. Watson, "Staging the 'Crowning Achievement of the Age': Major Edward A. Burke, New Orleans and the Cotton Centennial Exposition," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 25, no. 3 (1984): 230

<sup>53</sup> A.H. Cole to C.D. Hill, August 10, 1864, in *O.R.*, ser. 1, XLI, pt. 2, 1052.

<sup>54</sup> Watson, "Staging the Crowning Achievement," 230.

<sup>55</sup> *O.R.*, ser. 1, XLI, pt. 2, 1053.

Once the Civil War concluded, Burke's was in the Gulf port of Galveston, Texas, where his work shifted from telegraph operator, to temporary customs house official, to manager of a cotton factorage. By 1868, Burke had established a business that again increased his interaction with the Americas. His firm, Stoddart & Burk, imported liquor and exported cotton. It was in the details of paying import taxes that the Major's firm became involved in a whiskey revenue scandal that resulted in bankruptcy in early 1869. From this point until his establishment in New Orleans, Burke's record becomes elusive. The Major definitively moved from Galveston to the Crescent City by May 17, 1869, because by that date Burke had applied for a passport to travel from New Orleans to Cuba. His motives for travel are unclear, and it is also unclear whether the passport was granted or even if he made the journey. The application gives his name as "Edward A. Burk;" in it he swears that he is a "native born and loyal citizen of the United States and about to travel abroad in Cuba." With the Major's previous proximity to the popular exile destination of Mexico, and the second, and lighter, phase of exile emigration all but over by the end of 1868, one can surmise that his intentions were not to become a Confederate expatriate. Moreover, Burke was back in New Orleans by 1870. A plausible explanation is that Burke anticipated a trip to Cuba on a business venture, either in an attempt to provide some restitution for his alleged involvement in the whiskey revenue scandal or simply to lay low for a while.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Watson, "Staging the Crowning Achievement," 230 & 231; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 70; National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C., *Passport Application, 1795-1905*, Collection Number: *ARC Identifier 566612/MLR Number A1 508*, NARA Series: *M1372*, Roll #: 161; Daniel E. Sutherland, *The Confederate Carpetbaggers* (Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 25.

Indeed, his previous proximity to Mexico and the nature and location of his Confederate service made exile there a viable option. In the wake of Federal occupation, to say nothing of Burke's own economic failures, "Mexico fever" was sweeping across the former Confederacy. Former Confederates who had been stationed in the Lone Star state were the most likely to cross the Rio Grande, eventually followed by thousands of dispirited civilians.<sup>57</sup> Burke, however, did not join his fellow patriots in exile. Instead, Burke chose as his destination the bustling city of New Orleans, one of the centers of the New South and a city long oriented to the Caribbean. The Major's decision not to abandon the South mirrored the sympathies of former Confederate leaders, including Robert E. Lee, Wade Hampton, and Jefferson Davis.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps he feared the loss of Southern identity or even civilization, the possible consequences many Southerners thought would be the result of mass Southern emigration. While still a proud Southerner, he did not share in the widespread belief that immutable Southern honor required exodus. Burke's choice of New Orleans meant that he rejected immediate emigration as a bitter, dispirited partisan and sought instead to rebuild the South as an American Southerner. In so doing he would help create what would become the shibboleths of the New South ideology.<sup>59</sup> From this point forward, Burke dedicated his energies to Democratic politics and to capitalistic corporate ventures, the twin pursuits central to the New South creed.

The Louisiana that Burke immigrated to in 1869 was a state in motion. The Union's early control of Louisiana during the war – both New Orleans and Baton Rouge were captured in 1862 - meant that a large portion of the state's residents were already

---

<sup>57</sup> Sutherland, *The Confederate Carpetbaggers*, 10,11.

<sup>58</sup> Alfred Jackson Hanna and Kathryn Abbey Hanna, *Confederate Exiles in Venezuela* (Tuscaloosa: Confederate Publishing Company, 1960), 16.

<sup>59</sup> Sutherland, *Confederate Carpetbaggers*, 11, 13.

refugees or vagabonds by the time of Lee's surrender. After the war, the pace of emigration picked up anew. Postwar emigration more frequently consisted of exiles targeting foreign shores, like Swett's companions aboard the *Trade Wind*, with New Orleans as their primary port of emigration. The arrival of Burke and his decision to stay in a city known for exile emigration is a clear representation of the dichotomy between exiles and neo-filibusters. The exiles who left their states and the South during Reconstruction were scared, disheartened and bitter; economic opportunity was a secondary motive.<sup>60</sup> Conversely, neo-filibusters – and Burke was their archetype - departed in a calculated search for economic opportunity and justified their pursuits as a kind imperial boosterism for a New South.

Whether Burke went to Cuba in May of 1869 is unknown, but if so, he returned by 1870 and started life in New Orleans inauspiciously and inconspicuously. His first job in 1870, as a laborer at a stone yard on Poydras Street, earned him \$1.00 per day. Either in a semantic flourish to symbolize a new life in a new city or just to help avoid past creditors – with Burke those distinctions are always hard to make – Burke also around this time added an “e” to his surname. By 1872, Burke had not only risen to become the head of the freight department of the Jackson and Great Northern railroad but became chairman of the local Democratic campaign committee. There he was closely aligned with the politically active banker, Louis A. Wiltz. A year later, Burke took the next step of an ambitious bachelor and married up to a widow and a fellow native Kentuckian of “independent fortune,” Susan E. Gaines.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Sutherland, “Looking for a Home,” 341, 342, 347.

<sup>61</sup> C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South: 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 70; J. Curtis Waldo, *Illustrated Visitors' Guide to New*

With Wiltz's backing, Burke made his first attempt at politics, running as Democratic candidate for Administrator of Improvements in 1872. Opponents accused the Major of seeking the office in order to cover up past frauds, but the decisive factor in the election was the emergence in the campaign of P.G.T. Beauregard as an independent candidate for the office. Despite Beauregard's notoriety, Burke's own natural charisma and the support of the Democratic machine brought him within thirteen hundred votes of the former Confederate General.<sup>62</sup> The beginnings of Burke's New South advocacy were clear. His position within the Democratic party and railroad job enabled him to play a crucial role in the process of the upcoming Bourbon "Redemption" in Louisiana.

The state elections of 1872 witnessed both the Republican Kellogg and the Fusionist-aligned Democrat, McEnery, claiming gubernatorial victory - with "no means short of necromancy" available to determine the legitimate winner.<sup>63</sup> The contest devolved into which faction could undercut the other with political maneuvering and threats of violence. Legality was not a concern. At one point, the Republicans accused the Fusionist supporters of planning to blow up the statehouse in Baton Rouge with nitroglycerine. On another occasion, Democrats nearly approved an audacious plan to kidnap Kellogg and take him hostage aboard a boat in the Gulf of Mexico until McEnery was recognized as governor. On January 13<sup>th</sup>, both Kellogg and McEnery held

---

*Orleans* (New Orleans: J. Curtis Waldo, 1879), 221; William Hosea Ballou, "Major Edward A. Burke," *The Journalist*, III (April 17, 1886), 1.

<sup>62</sup> Joe Gray Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed: 1863-1877* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 200; Waldo, *Illustrated Visitors' Guide to New Orleans*, 221.

<sup>63</sup> George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 123.



inauguration ceremonies as Governor, and each appointed separate sets of state officials. Both sides resorted to gunplay in the crisis of legitimacy.

The para-military White League was the strong-armed force of the Democrats. Locally controlled, the White Leagues were a broad, grassroots movement aimed at ousting carpetbagger and scalawag apostates from Louisiana. Only with the backing of Washington and the support of federal troops had Kellogg “won” the 1872 election. By 1874, the effective guerilla tactics of the White League had eroded Kellogg’s control in the countryside where federal troops were too dispersed to be combat effective. Kellogg was barely holding New Orleans like the Bastille by the fall of 1874, but the days of his hold on the old French city were numbered. Burke would be crucial in bringing about its fall.<sup>64</sup>

On September 14, the day after breaking into the Republican-aligned Metropolitan police armory under the cover of moonlight, and taking advantage of the absence of a number of Federal soldiers who had withdrawn to Mississippi to escape the yellow fever season, the anti-Kellogg forces coordinated for the armed overthrow of the Republican government. Yet potentially ruinous intelligence soon arrived: Federal troops were soon to be sent to the city to follow-up on the armory theft. Bloodshed with Kellogg’s partisan mercenaries was one thing, but open conflict with United States troops was a matter to be avoided at all costs. As director of freight for the Jackson Railroad, Burke devised an ingenious plan – instructing his foremen at various points along the southbound line to rapidly remove track in order to create gaps as long as five hundred yards. Burke’s agents masterfully feigned confusion and naivety, causing multiple hours

---

<sup>64</sup> Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 123, 132, 137.

of delay at each stop. Finally realizing the scheme in the sweltering New Orleans heat, the commander of the Federal forces drew his pistol on a foreman and demanded an end to the ruse.<sup>65</sup>

In the meantime, Burke helped supply arms and provisions to the conservative forces that took part in a chaotic mix of partisan warfare. Part raucous brawl and part battle, near anarchy raged in the streets as armed White Leaguers clashed with Metropolitan police forces and the black state militia commanded by one of the most reviled scalawags, former Confederate general James Longstreet. By sunset, the White League had captured most state buildings, winning the day and control of New Orleans. The large anti-Kellogg coalition was initially overjoyed with their sweeping success, confident that the Federal government would not back Kellogg again. To the outrage of the conservative forces, President Grant promised the weight of Federal authority to help uphold Kellogg's administration and the brief period of White League control ended. The Democrats selected Burke to make the official surrender and turn the city back over to their rivals after a few short days of power. The writing was on the wall for Republicans in Louisiana, however, and the Kellogg government had only a veneer of legitimacy leading into the November state elections.<sup>66</sup>

The tension in New Orleans was palpable and this time Burke would be taking more than figurative shots at the opposition. One cool fall day, as Burke was walking down a New Orleans thoroughfare, Governor Kellogg rode by in a buggy. Recognizing the Major as one of the main cogs of the Democratic machine, Kellogg leaned out of his

---

<sup>65</sup> Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 137 & 138; Waldo, *Illustrated Visitors' Guide to New Orleans*, 221.

<sup>66</sup> Ballou, "Major Edward A. Burke," 2; Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 137, 138, 139.

window to make a “gesture of derision” with his finger. Burke lunged at the Governor, grabbing him by the same arm that had borne the insult, and attempted to pull Kellogg from his cab. In the course of the melee, Burke thrashed his Yankee adversary with several stinging licks from a cowhide while the Governor’s driver desperately whipped the horses, sending the Major tumbling to the dusty street. Kellogg then produced a pistol and fired from his retreating buggy. The enraged Burke returned fire at the Vermont carpetbagger, although neither was hit.<sup>67</sup> This was but the first of the Major’s bold, popularity bolstering, physical altercations.

Burke’s gamesmanship would be employed once again in the state elections of 1876, this time as Democratic gubernatorial candidate Francis T. Nicholls’s campaign manager. A Northern Republican would later concede that Burke orchestrated “one of the most extraordinary political campaigns ever witnessed” in the state, yet the election results were what had come to be the unfortunate norm in Louisiana - muddled returns for president and governor, and crippling stalemate as both sides cried foul play.<sup>68</sup> Louisiana had been the most hotly contested political arena in the Union and by 1875 it had become the “Republican party’s albatross.”<sup>69</sup> As chairman of the Democratic State Registration and Election Committee, Burke wrote an official report that detailed Republican fraud, lamented that state government “machinery [is] all in hands of Republicans” and decried the elections as a series of “gross violations of law; arbitrary and unjust rulings, refusal to register citizens entitled thereto; discrimination against

---

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 140; Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 28.

<sup>68</sup> Ballou, “Major Edward A. Burke,” 2.

<sup>69</sup> Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 143.

whites in favor of colored.”<sup>70</sup> Republicans thundered their own complaints against White League intimidation and Democratic voter fraud.

Burke played a role in of the contested election’s resolution, again in favor of the Redeemers. But this time the resolution was to have national implications as the Major was the seminal agent in the so-called Wormely House Bargain. Nicholls chose Burke, by now Chairman of the Democratic State Committee of Louisiana, as his official representative to work in concert with Louisiana Congressmen Randall L. Gibson, William M. Levy, and E. John Ellis. From the moment of his arrival at Washington, however, Burke was clearly the puppet master, whom Ellis later recalled as “the factotum of that whole series of conferences from beginning to end.”<sup>71</sup> In smoked filled rooms with high level Republicans, including President Grant, Burke threatened to help organize a Southern filibuster to prevent Hayes’s election in the House of Representatives unless written promises were given to remove the remaining Federal troops in the South and support Nicholls’s installation as Louisiana’s governor.<sup>72</sup>

Later, during three days of interrogation and testimony before a Congressional committee, Burke would be pressed by another bombastic and controversial figure in Louisiana, former Union general Benjamin Butler. Although Butler was described as an interrogator of “considerable dramatic skill,” Burke remained the same levelheaded

---

<sup>70</sup> E. A. Burke, “Statement of Facts Relating to the Election in Louisiana, November 7, 1876,” <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=moa;cc=moa;idno=abe9142.0001.001;view=toc> (accessed May 4, 2011), 3 & 5.

<sup>71</sup> “Presidential Election Investigation,” *House Miscellaneous Documents*, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., Doc. No. 31, vol. III, 598, as quoted in Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction*, 192.

<sup>72</sup> Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 44 & 45,

politician, unflustered by Butler's prodding.<sup>73</sup> Butler attempted to back Burke into a corner early in the first day of testimony by wondering aloud whether African-Americans in the state endeavored "to do the best they could to elect Mr. Hayes, who would take care of them and not leave them in this sorry plight?" The *New York Times* reporter recorded that Burke's "reply was a smile, which he maintained until Butler saw he could not mold the witness' answers for him, nor flavor his testimony by his own argumentative style of putting the questions."<sup>74</sup> The Major candidly admitted that his maneuvers in the contentious election were "a bluff game," that Southern Congressmen would not have joined the filibuster, and that Hayes had already planned to recall Federal troops "before these negotiations were entered into or these guarantees were given."<sup>75</sup>

While Burke's politicking in the Wormley House Bargain might not have had as a decisive role in the ending of Reconstruction as some historians have claimed, it is significant on several accounts. Burke justifiably feared radical, old-guard Republicans would impede Hayes's attempts to remove Federal troops. At the least, then, Burke's political acumen assured their immediate removal. The Washington backroom dealings likewise displayed Burke's skills at political puppetry on a national scale; for a man drawn to intrigue and conniving, that alone was no doubt worth his trip to Washington. One Northern correspondent later exclaimed that the Major's "fertility of resources and indomitable perseverance exerted a powerful influence upon...the master minds of the Union." Finally, in the aftermath of the Wormley House Bargain, Burke played an active role in shaping his public image by giving the Associated Press the story. The Bargain,

---

<sup>73</sup> "Spoiling Butler's Game," *New York Times*, August 23, 1878.

<sup>74</sup> "Negotiations of Burke," *New York Times*, August 21, 1878.

<sup>75</sup> "Presidential Election Investigation," *House Miscellaneous Documents*, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., Doc. No. 31, I, 990 & 1015, in Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction*, 204-205.

as C. Vann Woodward points out, allowed Burke to rhetorically transform the complex political web of compromise and Southern support of Hayes into a “knightly deed” that rescued the South from “the tyrannical heel of the Carpetbagger.”<sup>76</sup>

The end of Reconstruction had far-reaching consequences. As Paul M. Gaston asserts, the demise of Congressional Reconstruction was a prerequisite for the significant proliferation and development of the New South doctrine. The first instance of the term “New South” came in the spring of 1862, when Union Captain Adam Badeau edited the first issue of *The New South*, a soldier’s newspaper circulated among Federals stationed on the South Carolina sea islands. As a military sheet with a small readership among enemy Union soldiers, *The New South* newspaper exercised no influence on the direction of the movement that would ultimately co-opt its name.<sup>77</sup>

The first time the term was used to suggest an intention of promoting a progressive economic future came in 1870. The South Carolinian Edwin DeLeon in an article in *Putnam’s Magazine* titled “The New South: What It is Doing, and What it Wants” seems to have coined it. In 1874, DeLeon publish a widely read article in *Harper’s Magazine*, simply entitled “The New South,” in which he further courted Northern capital by advancing the cause of increased industrialization and commerce and less reliance upon staple crop agriculture. From that point forward, the “New South” would be a mainstay in Southern history.<sup>78</sup>

As a leading Southern city and active port, New Orleans had a strong tradition of journalists advocating industrialization and commerce; its advocates suggest a continuity

---

<sup>76</sup> “Spoiling Butler’s Game,” *New York Times*, August 23, 1878; Ballou, “Major Edward A. Burke,” 2; Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction*, 207.

<sup>77</sup> Gaston, *The New South Creed*, 37, 18, 19.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 32-34.

between Old and New South in the pursuit of progress and industrialization. *DeBow's Review*, for instance, was a strident antebellum voice not only for Southern nationalism, but industrialization and international commerce. DeBow began the journal anew the year after Appomattox and picked up his rhetoric of regional boosterism and industrialization precisely where he left off, having seemingly no hitch in dropping slavery. The veteran editor, in remarking that "the South now faced her moment of greatest opportunity" extolled two themes that would become ubiquitous in the New South lexicon – abundant natural resources and infinite manufacturing possibilities – combined.<sup>79</sup> With DeBow's death in 1867 and the *Review's* cancellation in 1870, New Orleans would have to wait a decade until a newspaper of repute adopted his mantle and advocated again the shibboleths of the New South. That newspaper would be Burke's *Times-Democrat*.

The continuity of ideas between *DeBow's Review* and the *Time-Democrat* raises the question of just how "new" the ideas of the New South creed actually were. More than seventy years ago W.J. Cash cautioned that the perceived dichotomy between Old and New South is "vastly exaggerated." In the realm of social history, historians have looked beyond the dominant class of Southern elites to focus on the fundamental way of life for Southerners of all stripes, including white women and blacks, to question to what extent the New South truly changed dynamics. Moreover, what seems evident in recent scholarship is a continuous desire in the white South, from the colonial era forward, to be seen as "modern." Antebellum Southern modernizers, for instance, sought to combat economic dependence and promote their prosperity by opposing various economic

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 23; "The Future of the South," *Debow's Review*, I (January 1866), 8-14.

legislation like the tariff. By the late antebellum era, Southern intellectuals devised a paradigm to combat the idea of the South and the institution of slavery as backwards. As John Majewski has argued, even the most ardent secessionists and Confederates looked forward to an independent South that would change what they perceived as the Northern drain on Southern capital that impeded commerce and manufacturing below the Mason-Dixon line.<sup>80</sup>

Four years of war devastated the former Confederacy brought the economic system of the Old South to its knees. The lessons taught by the sword struck not only at the heart of Southerners, but their minds. Coinciding with a prostrate South was a North further advancing its development and a West seemingly experiencing unprecedented growth. The future of the South mandated a new rhetoric of economic and social development tied to a longer-standing vision of industrialization and progress.

Before Burke picked up the editor's pen as a New South booster, however, he first increased his political stature by winning the election for State Treasurer in 1878. In addition to the power afforded by the office, Democratic control of the treasury was no doubt a major symbolic achievement – Burke's Republican predecessor, Antoine Dubuclet, was an African American native of Louisiana who held the post throughout Reconstruction. Democrats had previously attempted to tie the Republican treasurer to carpetbagger corruption. With Dubuclet not up for reelection in the conservative sweep of the state house in 1876, the Democrats soon used their newly attained power to launch

---

<sup>80</sup> W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Random House, 1941), 1; Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), vii; Gaston, *The New South Creed*, 46 & 47; John Majewski, *Modernizing a Slave Economy: The Economic Vision of the Confederate Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 113.



an investigation of the treasurer. Despite their best efforts, the committee found no significant inaccuracies or mismanagement – an investigation in 1888 into Burke’s activities after his ten years in office would yield different results.<sup>81</sup>

The Major won the election for State Treasurer in a landslide and was routinely lauded as the shrewdest politician in the state - testimony to his rising fame in Louisiana and his refined skill at courting and counting votes. Even such phenomenal advancement in the course of eight years was not enough for the Kentuckian of humble origins. He soon attached himself to the most nefarious of political entities within the state, the Louisiana Lottery Company, becoming the Lottery’s inside man for state affairs. Just three years after maneuvering Nicholls into office, Burke, with his old ally Louis A. Wiltz and his newly acquired partner Charles T. Howard, spokesman for the Lottery, found that Governor Nicholls had grown too independent. Burke and his “Ring” cronies began to set in motion a strategy for ousting Nicholls in favor of Wiltz, the lieutenant-governor, and further increasing the Ring’s grip on Louisiana politics.<sup>82</sup>

Presented as benign, their orchestration of a new state constitutional convention in 1879 to replace the Reconstruction era constitution of 1868 proved to be another episode

---

<sup>81</sup> Dubuclet is himself an interesting character and one indicative of Louisiana’s unique racial past. Born into a slaveholding family of *gens de couleur libre*, Dubuclet was the richest free black sugar planter in Louisiana before the war, acquiring over one hundred slaves before emancipation. As Treasurer, he was the only African American in Reconstruction to hold the office for more than one term. See Charles Vincent, “Aspects of the Family and Public Life of Antoine Dubuclet: Louisiana’s Black State Treasurer, 1868-1878” in *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History Volume XI, The African American Experience in Louisiana, Part B: From the Civil War to Jim Crow* (Lafayette, Louisiana: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 2000), 185-196.

<sup>82</sup> Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 28; Burke beat his Republican opponent, John Gardner, by 43,128 votes. Vincent, “Aspects of the Family and Public Life of Antoine Dubuclet: Louisiana’s Black State Treasurer, 1868-1878” in *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History Volume XI, Part B*, 192.

of the Major's audacious skullduggery. Burke's majority wing of the Democratic party anticipated Wiltz succeeding Nicholls as Governor and added an article that consolidated executive power at the expense of the state legislature and local authorities. In a thinly veiled maneuver to allow for the election of more officials in line with the Democratic machine, and to solidify the Major's influence, Burke and his cohorts likewise steered a provision through the convention that mandated a new election of state officials and legislators along with public ratification of the new state constitution - the only exception was the office of State Treasurer. As testament to Burke's influence, the convention extended the Major's term two years, under the auspice of correlating the election of Treasurer with other state elections, giving Burke six consecutive years in the office before standing for reelection in 1884.<sup>83</sup>

Writing a new constitution also gave Burke the opportunity to promote a major component of New South ideology. Burke and his allies amended the tax code to grant exemption from state tax to nearly all manufacturers until 1889 in an effort to promote increased industry. Last on the Ring's agenda was pushing through a twenty-five year charter for the Louisiana Lottery, ensuring that the contentious corporation would be a long-term factor in state politics. A combination of voter fatigue, an uninspiring Republican gubernatorial candidate, and the new constitution's all but guaranteed ratification meant that Louisianans unenthusiastically trudged to the polls on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1879. With neither public fanfare nor formidable opposition, Wiltz was elected

---

<sup>83</sup> Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 64, 101-104; Coleman, *Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans*, 316.

Governor, the constitution ratified that cemented Ring dominance throughout the 1880s and Burke's political puppetry had proved successful yet again.<sup>84</sup>

If Burke and the Ring's power had previously spurred criticism, consolidation in 1879 increased the rank of dissenters. One especially troubling antagonist was Major Henry J. Hearsey, editor of the New Orleans *Democrat* and bitter critic of the Lottery. Through unscrupulous manipulation of a federal court, Burke and the Lottery forced the *Democrat* into bankruptcy and then promptly bought the paper in 1879, turning it into a voice of the New South. From the paper's office on 109 Gravier Street, Burke proclaimed the *Democrat* was "the youngest, most popular, and influential paper in New Orleans...it is the organ of the Louisiana Democracy [and] therefore the organ of the people, and is more widely quoted than any other Journal in New Orleans."<sup>85</sup>

The incensed Major Hearsey formed another paper, the *Daily States*. From its columns he continued his attacks on Burke, the Lottery and the Democratic "Ring." Hearsey was in several respects the antithesis of Burke and his New South creed. He possessed a seething hatred of Northerners and any Southerners who cooperated with them, an unrelenting Negrophobia, and an overriding distrust of reforms and industrialization. For all their differences, Burke and Hearsey shared a swashbuckling audacity that soon reached the boiling point. In January 1880<sup>86</sup>, Hearsey's temper could

---

<sup>84</sup> Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 64, 101-104; *Times-Democrat*, "A Manufacturing City," December 5, 1881.

<sup>85</sup> Watson, "Staging the Crowning Achievement," 231, 232; Hair *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 29; Waldo, *Illustrated Vistor's Guide to New Orleans*, 1.

<sup>86</sup> The 1880 census listed Burke's home in the Third Ward at 235 Camp Street, five blocks west of the river and two blocks south of Canal Street, the main thoroughfare of the city. Burke lived in the heart of the financial and commercial sector. The Major's household included his wife Susan, sister-in-law Laura, eighteen-year-old stepson W.M. Montgomery, seven-year-old son Lindsey, two young female servants

be abated by nothing less than a duel with Burke. When negotiations by seconds failed, the editors met on the field of honor on the afternoon of January 27<sup>th</sup> at Metairie Ridge. Both missed from ten paces with smoothbore dueling pistols. Hearsey demanded another shot, Burke agreed. These volleys missed as well. A parley of seconds ensued in which Burke voiced through his representatives that Hearsey was “a gentlemen of honor and courage.” The injured parties now having satisfaction, the hostilities ceased.<sup>87</sup>

By 1882, Major Burke had purchased the New Orleans *Times* and merged his papers to form the *Times-Democrat*. He was sole proprietor and managing editor. His consolidation and editorship of the *Times-Democrat* gave him such a powerful voice in the state that, according to one historian, “few men dared cross him.”<sup>88</sup> Yet Burke’s main rival for readership, the *Daily Picayune*, was also not shy about questioning state management. After the *Picayune* in 1882 claimed the listed income from the year’s revenue taxes did not match the correct amount, Treasurer Burke countered with a curt salvo in the *Times-Democrat* that the numbers were indeed correct. The *Picayune*’s editor, C.H. Taylor, responded that he did not appreciate Burke’s “off-hand manner” and his “unfair” statements. The irreparable insult came when Taylor claimed that Burke corrected the books only after the *Picayune*’s article. Burke was too secretive and

---

of Irish descent, Katie Farril, age twenty-four, and her sixteen-year-old sister, Louise, and a sixty-eight year old mulatto servant, Charlotte Page. For an account of New Orleans’ seven districts and seventeen wards in the 1880s see Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 7-9 and William H. Coleman (comp. and pub.), *Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans and Environs with Map, Illustrated with Many Original Engravings and Containing Exhaustive Accounts of the Traditions, Historical Legends, and Remarkable Locations of the Creole City* (New York, 1885), 3-5; 1880 Census, New Orleans, Orleans, Louisiana, Roll 459, Family History Film: 1254459, Page: 203B, Enumeration District: 009, Image: 0064.

<sup>87</sup> Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 24, 25; “Editors on the Field of Honor,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1880.

<sup>88</sup> Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 29.

sensitive in his affairs as Treasurer, Taylor's columns blasted, and should not get "excited over public questions, put to him publicly." Burke would brook no such personal insults. He challenged Parker to a duel the very next morning.<sup>89</sup>

Parker chose Mississippi rifles. Knowing that Parker was a renowned rifleman, Burke, the consummate gambler, bluffed and requested a distance of two and a half paces, thereby negating his adversary's advantage. The two settled upon standard dueling pistols at twenty paces on a field behind a slaughterhouse in St. Bernard Parish. The principals and seconds assembled in the early morning dew of June 7<sup>th</sup>. When the first shots missed, Burke demanded Parker disavow all his comments in the *Picayune* and confess a "belief in his courage and integrity." Parker admitted the Major's courage, but would not rescind his right to criticize Burke as a state official. Burke would continue until Parker acquiesced or either man was hit. Parker's third shot ripped through Burke's coat, the pistols had to be reloaded after the fourth shot, and his fifth hit the stubbornly courageous Burke in the right thigh, dangerously close to an artery. Surgeons were able to retrieve the bullet and the indomitable Burke was back in good health within a couple of months, but occasional pain in the wound would serve as a reminder of the duel for the rest of his life. While the Major recuperated from his injury, his popularity soared.<sup>90</sup>

Editorship of the *Times-Democrat* gave Burke more than an excuse to duel; it made him one of the loudest apostles of the New South. Through his guidance the paper became one of the leading booster sheets in the region. He effectively used the daily newspaper as a New South oracle, promoting the economic advancement of the Crescent

---

<sup>89</sup> "Chivalrous Southrons," *New York Times*, June 8, 1882.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 71; Coleman, *Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans*, 317.

City as a commercial and manufacturing hub at the epicenter of trade from the Mississippi Valley, as well as from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America.<sup>91</sup> Burke's hopes were more than just empty New South bravado and boosterism rhetoric; New Orleans at the end of 1881 had taken significant steps to recover its antebellum prosperity that simultaneously offered tangible hope for future gains. Hopes that the Mississippi River might again become commercially mighty were bolstered in 1879 when the State Engineer of Louisiana, James B. Eads, constructed jetties at the mouth of the river, allowing access to oceangoing commercial steamers. One editorialist outside New Orleans believed that Eads's work would in time transform the city into "the most eligible port in the world."<sup>92</sup> Financial growth was further evident as real estate value in some New Orleans business districts began to double in value during the first two years of the new decade.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, an air of optimism pervaded New Orleans when, in the first edition of the consolidated *Times-Democrat*, Burke exclaimed that "we this day inaugurate the effort to make the *Times-Democrat* the organ and exponent of Southern progress, industry, commerce, and civilization. We claim as our peculiar territory the great cotton states of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas and Texas, Western Florida, Southern

---

<sup>91</sup> Watson, "Staging the Crowning Achievement," 233; James F. Vivian, "Major E. A. Burke: The Honduras Exile, 1889-1928," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 15, no. 2 (1974): 176.

<sup>92</sup> Samuel C. Shepherd Jr, "A Glimmer of Hope: The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, New Orleans, 1884-1885," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 26, no. 3 (1985): 273; Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1883), 508.

<sup>93</sup> Joy J. Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age: Politics and Urban Progress, 1880-1896* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 5.

Tennessee, Mexico and Central America.”<sup>94</sup> With grander bravado, Major Burke declared a new manifesto: it was time for the South, and New Orleans specifically, to become the wellspring for capitalistic ventures throughout the Americas:

The fierce conflict attendant upon the tremendous revolution of 1861-5 had spent their fury, and a great people, impoverished by war...were gathering together the scattered remnants of their manhood and their courage...The stagnation of despair has, by some magic transformation, given place to the buoyancy of new hope, of courage, of resolve...We are a new people. Our land has had a new birth.<sup>95</sup>

Burke’s entrenchment in “The Ring” of the ruling elite in Louisiana suggests a deviation from Henry Grady’s version of appropriate New South pursuits. New South zealots like Grady, who tend to receive the lion’s share of scholarship, emphasized business above politics after 1880. They believed that in order for the South to overcome its current stagnant state and achieve its rightful prosperity, the region’s brightest minds must be devoted to entrepreneurial enterprises rather than crafting legislature. According to Grady, the New South required “fewer stump-speakers and more stump-pullers.”<sup>96</sup> Burke, on the other hand, used his political influence to proliferate the ideas of internal improvements and international commerce.

One such internal improvement was the construction of a canal using Congressional funding. Its benefits, Burke exclaimed, would be twofold. With the horrific yellow fever epidemic of 1878, fresh in the mind of New Orleanians – it claimed

---

<sup>94</sup> *Times-Democrat*, December 5, 1881.

<sup>95</sup> Donald Clive Hardy, “The World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition” (M.A. thesis, Tulane University, 1964), 3; *Times-Democrat*, December 5, 1881.

<sup>96</sup> Gaston, *The New South Creed*, 41.

more than 4,000 lives, including the famous Confederate General John Bell Hood - the new canal would drain the “noxious swamps” surrounding the Crescent City while simultaneously promising “in time,” according to Burke’s newspaper, to develop “the finest location in the world for a great commercial city.” Burke likewise used the columns of the *Times-Democrat* to urge the construction of the Bonnet Carre levee with broad, bi-partisan support from railroad corporations, private citizens and the state legislature. Antebellum and New South Southerners alike, however, did not favor a twenty-first century definition of state activism. The role of government was to encourage, not control, the growth of a strong, modernized economy through the private sector, akin to Alexander Hamilton’s programs in the Early Republic era. Thus, at least in Burke’s case, advocacy of internal improvements and state activism was another continuity between the antebellum and New South period.<sup>97</sup>

Likewise, the state activism favored by modernizers of the Old South was fundamentally perceived as a means to facilitate greater international commerce. John Majewski has found that antebellum state governments in Virginia and South Carolina invested more heavily in railroads per capita than did the North.<sup>98</sup> Naval expert and Virginian Matthew F. Maury extolled to John C. Calhoun that a railroad from Charleston to Memphis to Monterrey, Mexico supplemented by steamships would bring Chinese and Atlantic world trade to the South and “place us before the commercial marts of six

---

<sup>97</sup> *Times-Democrat*, December 10 and December 8, 1881. Burke’s support of a canal built with Federal funds is similar to an antebellum request by Edmund Ruffin. The Virginia fire-eater called for state sponsored drainage of tidewater swamps to increase arable land and improve health. See Majewski, *Modernizing the Slave Economy*, 18, 9, 69; Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 4; Ballou, “Major Edward A. Burke,” 1.

<sup>98</sup> According to John Majewski. 70% of Virginia’s total railroad capital was from state and local government initiative. Majewski, *Modernizing the Slave Economy*, 82, 86.



hundred millions of people and enable us geographically, to command them”.<sup>99</sup> Maury’s belief points to a common theme among antebellum Southerners and their New South successors – the notion that the South possessed a geographical right to international markets.

Boosters both before and after Appomattox went beyond a general belief in Southern prosperity, however, claiming that it was their respective city and state that would benefit from increased trade. Secessionists often employed the lexicon of civic boosterism to their particular local audiences as an economic reason for support for state independence, arguing that only through political separation could Charleston or Richmond reach its true commercial potential. The Charleston *Mercury* boasted in the winter of 1861 that the Charleston and Liverpool Steamship Company, through its direct trade with Europe, would enable Charleston to be the “natural emporium” of the South.<sup>100</sup>

State activism to aid the development of railroads, industry, and commerce was more than the sum of its parts or cents making up a dollar - it was a fundamental aspect of antebellum Southern boosterism that had the promise of coming up to par, and eventually surpassing, the Northern economy. While the goal of increased industrialization and commerce was similar to the later New South, its *raison d’être* was inseparable from bolstering and preserving the foundations of slavery. With the help of state support, industry, and commerce would provide a diversified economy and strengthen slavery’s short-term security and long-term potential.<sup>101</sup> Yet once slavery was abolished Southerners like Burke proved nimble enough to shred its constraints while

---

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 96.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 114, 6.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 8.

retaining the fundamental goal of industrial and commercial expansion. Burke and his fellow New South zealots retained the local boosterism of the antebellum rhetoric of progress, but proclaimed its merits to advance an American rather than a partisan or independent South.

The *Times-Democrat's* focus on international business was a fundamental aspect of the paper; it demonstrated the nascent commercial imperialism of Burke's New South vision. Along with covering the leading developments in Europe, Burke's paper was the Southern vanguard for Latin American coverage and opinion. Professing a "deep interest in the welfare of Mexico," the *Times-Democrat*, Burke wrote, has "spared neither labor nor expense in endeavoring to lay before the people of this section the importance of drawing closer the commercial ties that now unite the two countries." The Major felt increased commercial ties with the Americas was of such importance that he established a Latin American department, headed by E.L. Lever, who was fluent in Spanish, a Colonel in the Mexican army against Maximilian's forces, and served under Benito Juárez and Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada. Within a year of founding the *Times-Democrat*, Burke dispatched Lever to Mexico as an international correspondent.<sup>102</sup>

Unlike the ersatz invasions of his antebellum predecessors that sought political control: Burke's New South paradigm held to the late nineteenth century Western notion of commercial imperialism veiled under the rhetoric of progress. Assurances were given in the *Times-Democrat* that American interests in Mexico were not akin to the territorial desires of the Mexican-American War more than three decades prior; commercial ties would not only spread progress and profits alike to Mexico, but also

---

<sup>102</sup> "The *Times-Democrat* In Mexico," *Times-Democrat*, December 7, 1881

“leave no place for distrust or for the spirit of aggression and conquest on either hand.”

The Major likewise sent correspondents to the tropics of Central America, endeavoring to stimulate Southern industry and foster international commerce with the Americas. Burke even backed an expedition that explored the resources of the South’s own untamed tropical landscape – south Florida. Coupled with bureaus in Washington and New York City, Burke’s bureaus in the Americas made the *Times-Democrat* the South’s leading international newspaper and placed the paper amongst the nation’s elite press.<sup>103</sup>

Burke’s coverage of the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce also displayed the internationalism of his New South vision. The *Times-Democrat* gave full coverage to the chamber’s meeting in December 1881, which focused on the prospect of New Orleans as the Southern vanguard of United States commerce in the Americas. Firmly conceptualizing the South and New Orleans in the midst of the western world’s increased commercial imperialism, Burke alerts his readers to the meetings significance, occurring in the midst of the world’s “great commercial and financial questions.” The headlining speaker was the president of the Chamber of Commerce, Cyrus Bussey. Bussey was an Ohioan who rose to the rank of Brigadier-General in the Union Army and now a prominent Republican. Nonetheless, Burke’s paper, the organ of the Louisiana Democratic party, spoke glowingly of Bussey as “thoroughly regardful of the welfare of New Orleans.” While on the surface a textbook carpetbagger, Bussey’s commitment to

---

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, “Extracts from our Exchanges: Our Commerce with Mexico,” December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1881; Eugene V. Smalley, “The New Orleans Exposition,” *Century Magazine*, XXX, (1885), 4; Watson, “Staging the Crowning Achievement,” 245; Ballou, “Major Edward A. Burke,” 1.

New South values and New Orleans boosterism was paramount to Burke, who referred to the Chamber of Commerce President in nothing but glowing terms.<sup>104</sup>

Burke's support of Bussey demonstrates that the New South creed, unlike its antebellum counterpart in Southern modernization, was not regionally polemical. It was a paradigm that served to unite North and South behind the banner of commercial progress. Bussey was perhaps the best New Orleans example of prominent and vocal New South Northerners. Periodicals and books such as Charles Nordhoff's *The Cotton States in the Spring and Summer of 1875* recounted a sympathetic and optimistic view of political and economic affairs below the Potomac while expressing faith that Southern home rule and Northern capital would yield the end of sectional hostilities and the beginning of financial profits. Such Yankee entrepreneurs responded to New South invitations with arms wide open in the hopeful anticipation of even wider profit margins.<sup>105</sup>

Under what Burke headlined as "A Reciprocal Intercourse Between the United States and All States and Colonies of the Continent," Bussey's published remarks to the Chamber of Commerce related his recent four-month tour of the "principal manufacturing and commercial cities of the Old World." He lamented that Great Britain dominated Latin American commerce. Those markets, he argued, were more naturally suited with their American neighbors. Bussey turned to New Orleans as the hub of a great effort to control those markets. The General, in typical New South hyperbole, bragged "everywhere in Europe the eyes of the people, particularly the capitalists, have

---

<sup>104</sup> "Meeting of the Chamber of Commerce," *Times-Democrat*, Dec 5, 1881; "Senator Cyrus Bussey," *The Iowa Legislature*, <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/Legislators/legislator.aspx?GA=8&PID=5602>.

<sup>105</sup> Gaston, *The New South Creed*, 39-41.

been attracted to New Orleans.” An influx of capital coupled with increased government aid in fostering manufacturing and shipbuilding meant the Northern-born Bussey saw a bright future for the South, with New Orleans at the lead, in the anticipated commercial greatness of the United States. Indeed, Bussey professed that he had “ever been a believer” in the Crescent City and foresaw for New Orleans “a degree of prosperity equal to that of any city in the Union.”<sup>106</sup>

Bussey’s remarks inspired the Chamber of Commerce to approve resolutions that spoke to the international focus of the New South era. Veiled in the rhetoric of progress, the resolutions were ethnocentric and clearly placed the South within the nascent imperialism of the age. The Chamber called upon Congress to provide the framework for “free and reciprocal intercourse” between all states and colonies of the Americas. In a foreshadowing of the Platt Amendment, New Orleans businessmen recommended that when “international policy affecting the interests of these separate and sovereign republics” arose, the United States would function as “exclusive authority and ultimate arbiter of all questions.” The Chamber of Commerce insisted that the “American republics” had the right and ability to handle their own affairs “without foreign assistance” – but proclaimed the right of the United States to influence policies of her “sister republics” under the guise of progressive paternalism. Any similar foreign influence from the Old World was “incompatible with the comity of nations.”<sup>107</sup>

Louisiana’s commercial elite unsurprisingly promoted New Orleans as the “proper point and port of intercourse” of the Southern and Western portion of America’s international commerce, but “especially [with] the ports and countries of the continent

---

<sup>106</sup> “Meeting of the Chamber of Commerce,” *Times-Democrat*, Dec 5, 1881.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

south of the United States.” The Chamber ensured that leading American capitalists, the Department of State, and Louisiana’s Senators and Congressmen received copies of their grandiose resolutions.<sup>108</sup> The vision of New Orleans’s prominent businessmen was indicative of a grassroots imperialism that actively prodded national, foreign, and commercial policy towards concerted action.

The Crescent City’s advances along with the Major’s political achievements and management of the *Times-Democrat* garnered significant nationwide praise, including from the Mississippi Valley’s most famous native son, Mark Twain. The prolific writer offered valuable social commentary on New Orleans in the 1880s, praising the city for its “progressive men” who were “thinking, sagacious, [and] long-headed.” After detailing the city’s sanitary improvements, ubiquitous electric lights, and increased commerce, Twain noted that “one of the most notable advances is in journalism.” Writing in 1883, with the *Times-Democrat* in print just over a year, Twain remarked that the press of New Orleans was previously “not a striking feature, now they are.” The reasons for such a revolution in the merit of the city’s newspapers, according to Twain, was their financial budget and quality of management: “money is spent upon them with a free hand...the editorial work is not hack-grinding, but literature.” If the famous author did not mention Burke specifically, he highlighted the *Times-Democrat* as “an example of New Orleans journalistic achievement” and as a leading New South oracle. Twain was impressed by the amount of news in each issue - “forty pages” with “an aggregate of four hundred and twenty thousand words - and its extensive coverage of the “business of the towns of the

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

Mississippi valley” that encompassed “two thousand miles” from the mouth of the river to Minnesota.<sup>109</sup>

Burke’s management of the *Times-Democrat* to national prominence had been recognized in 1886 by William Hosea Ballou of *The Journalist*, the country’s leading trade journal for members of the press. The Major was the subject of a three-page cover story detailing his path to becoming one of the nation’s premiere newspapermen. *The Journalist* recognized that the inseparable relationship between Burke’s politics and his editorship of the *Times-Democrat* went beyond the paper’s official status as the organ of the Louisiana Democracy - his international New South vision was the sine qua non for each. Ballou spoke of Burke’s New South boosterism by crediting the Major’s unsurpassed efforts to facilitate the “growth, development and progress of New Orleans as a great commercial and manufacturing city” while also extolling the “advancement of the interests of the Southern states” as a whole. In highlighting the *Times-Democrat*’s Latin American Department, Ballou recognized that Burke’s creed was not confined to regional or even national boundaries, but possessed a fundamental focus on commercial ties with the Americas. Burke’s vocal advocacy of industrialism no doubt fueled national notoriety as an “enthusiastic and devoted champion of the South’s progress,” yet it was the Major’s international worldview that garnered the highest of praise. Ballou proclaimed that Burke’s “breadth of mind has only been equaled by that of Horace Greeley, and the enterprise of his paper by that of the New York Herald.”<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>109</sup> Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, 341, 342.

<sup>110</sup> Ballou, “Major Edward A. Burke,” 1, 3.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE WORLD'S INDUSTRIAL AND COTTON CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION AND BURKE AS NEW SOUTH NEO-FILIBUSTER IN HONDURAS

*New Orleans is the great metropolis of the South, and the gateway of commerce to and from the tropics – a section of country with which it is desirable to open friendly and commercial relations, and to develop a trade too long neglected.*

- Governor Samuel D. McEnery, 1884

*A man with violent religious prejudices, with fantastic notions of his own superiority, and without the temper and ability to adapt himself to circumstances had better keep away from Central America. And above all, let the man who expects to live without toil, and the exercise of temperance and economy, remain at home.*

- Ephraim George Squier, 1870

December 16<sup>th</sup> 1884, dawned with bright skies and fervor. Fifty thousand people of all ages and color thronged street and shop windows alike from Canal Street to the exposition grounds at Upper City Park, waving and cheering the procession as church bells and cannon fire added to the cacophony. In a city known for its revelry, New Orleans was living up to the billing. Walking near the front of the parade of nearly a thousand politicians from various states, Congressional representatives, foreign dignitaries, military officers, and noted intellectuals was Major Edward A. Burke - Director General for the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition. Flanked on each side by a thick wall of enthusiastic onlookers, the entourage boarded the ornately



decorated *Fred A. Banks* for a brief steamboat ride to the exposition grounds, where officials and dignitaries strode to Music Hall inside the exposition's Main Building. The vast array of national flags, banners and shields waving from archways and flying buttresses was the visual manifestation of the hope of international progress – “a court, mid-way between the two great Americas of the new world, in which the silken ensigns of all the nations of the earth waved a cordial salutation to each other.” As Music Hall was overflowing its capacity of 11,000, the exposition delegates ascended to the center platform stage and the American band begun the opening ceremonies with the “Grand Exposition March,” dedicating it to the seminal force behind the creation and direction of the exposition – Director General Edward A. Burke.<sup>111</sup> The bombastic Major was at the height of his career as New South zealot.

Despite the pomp and circumstance of the opening ceremonies, the New Orleans exposition took all of Burke's moxie and politicking to bring it to fruition. Modest regional cotton fairs in 1881 and 1883 in Atlanta and Louisville, respectively, first spurred the idea for the New Orleans exposition when the president of the National Cotton Planters Association, Franklin C. Morehead of Vicksburg, popularized the idea of a fair to celebrate the centennial of America's first cotton exports in 1784. Morehead urged that it be held at New Orleans, the leading Southern city and the cotton metropole of the Mississippi. In 1883, Congress gave its support to the idea of a cotton centennial. With New Orleans implicitly in mind, Congress pushed a bill into law within eighteen

---

<sup>111</sup> Herbert Fairall, *The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, New Orleans, 1884-1885* (Iowa City: Republican Publishing Company, 1885), 13, 14; Shepherd, Jr., “A Glimmer of Hope,” 271; James S. Zacharie, *New Orleans Guide: With Descriptions of the Routes to New Orleans, Sights of the City Arranged Alphabetically, and Other Information Useful to Travellers* (New Orleans: The New Orleans News Co., 1885), 3.

days that partnered the federal government with the National Cotton Planters Association and established a Board of Directors that would go forward with the exposition once the city subscribed \$500,000.<sup>112</sup> Burke threw the weight of the *Times-Democrat* behind the endeavor before the bill was even passed, publishing the comments of the renowned engineer James Eads, who confidentially thought the centennial would be a “grand idea” that would connect the Crescent City “to the trade of the civilized world.”<sup>113</sup> Shortly thereafter the Major shifted his pen from the editor’s desk to his pocketbook and became the first to subscribe to the exposition by investing a sum of \$5,000.<sup>114</sup>

The Board of Directors chose the largest cotton planter in the United States, Mississippian Edmund Richardson<sup>115</sup>, to fulfill the largely ceremonial role of President of the exposition, and appointed Morehead as Commissioner General. Burke’s influence in state and national affairs along with his well-known New South views made the Major’s appointment to the Board a foregone conclusion. Yet in the first months of existence the Board lacked strong leadership both in logistical planning and fundraising. Despite the formation of a Committee of Forty charged with the task of soliciting subscriptions, the members had woefully underachieved from the start. Morehead bemoaned their timidity and decided a small group of well-connected men with both experience in lobbying and

---

<sup>112</sup> The Board of Directors was the governing body of the exposition, consisting of thirteen members; six appointed by President Arthur at the recommendation of Morehead and the National Cotton Planters Association and the remaining seven appointed upon the recommendation of New Orleans subscribers. See Eugene V. Smalley, “The New Orleans Exposition,” *Century Magazine*, XXX (1885), 5. The bill’s sponsor, Senator Garland of Arkansas, assured the Senate that the New Orleans exposition asked for “no financial aid of the government...but merely recognition.” See Watson, “Staging the ‘Crowning Achievement of the Age’”, Part I: 236.

<sup>113</sup> Watson, “Staging the Crowning Achievement,” 236, 237.

<sup>114</sup> Smalley, “The New Orleans Exposition,” 5.

<sup>115</sup> *Century* described “Richardson as the largest cotton planter in the world “with the exception of the Khedive of Egypt.” See *Century Magazine*, May 1885, 5.

the necessary boldness to secure substantial capital was needed. And Morehead knew just such a man. Burke, acting as the *de facto* chairman of the delegation, took Morehead and exposition Vice President William B. Schmidt, a prominent New Orleans merchant, on a two-week tour of the North, visiting New York, Chicago and St. Louis while meeting with the likes of Jay Gould and George Pullman. This was not the first time that Burke, New South booster that he was, demonstrated his close ties with Northern industrial capital. In a special meeting on July 26, Burke informed the Board of Directors that the persuasiveness of his delegation had secured \$203,000 towards the exposition from the pockets of the robber barons.<sup>116</sup>

Aside from these efforts, however, disappointing fundraising drives and uncoordinated leadership led the board of management to conclude that a director-general was necessary. A search committee was formed with the goal of hiring “an able, active and influential man” to shoulder the responsibility for management, execution, construction and fundraising. Burke’s qualifications for the position were unparalleled. His newspaper had few equals and no superiors in the South for its national and international influence, an invaluable tool to promote the exposition, and he comfortably ran in the circles of leading men in state and national affairs. Burke initially expressed concerns over his already extensive duties as newspaper editor, State Treasurer, and Democratic party boss. But the Major’s ambition would not allow him to miss an opportunity to mold the exposition into the manifestation of his international New South vision. Perhaps his reluctance was a ploy of calculated false humility. In any event,

---

<sup>116</sup> Smalley, “The New Orleans Exposition, 5; Watson, “Staging the Crowning Achievement of the Age,” 243, 244.

Burke's acquiescence was finally secured when the committee stated that the leading alternative was a "Northern man."<sup>117</sup>

Major Burke did indeed have many irons in the fire by the summer of 1883 – two years prior Burke had ascended as the undisputed puppet master of Louisiana. In 1881, within two years of his inauguration following the manufactured constitutional convention and subsequent election of 1879, Governor Wiltz had succumbed to tuberculosis. Next to ascend to the Governor's Mansion was Wiltz's Lieutenant Governor, Samuel D. McEnery, whose brother John McEnery had been the Democratic gubernatorial claimant during the highly contentious Kellogg administration of Reconstruction. Governor McEnery proved to be a willing pawn in Burke's designs, and due to increased executive power granted by the state constitution of 1879, the Major and his Ring held nearly untouchable power. McEnery's enemies highlighted his obsequiousness by dubbing him "McLottery," while a Louisiana Congressman wrote from Washington that McEnery had "sold himself body and breeches to Burke." Some years later, Burke himself captured the extent of the Ring's control of the State House when he coyly rebuffed allegations that "this poor weakling of a governor...is under the control and domination of Burke and some others."<sup>118</sup>

Naturally, then, Burke's foes raised their objections to the exposition coming under the Major's dominance. The prime antagonist was Burke's stalwart opponent, the *Daily Picayune*. Warning that the exposition would become a channel for Burke's

---

<sup>117</sup> As quoted in Watson, "Staging the Crowning Achievement," 244, 245. Burke was offered \$25,000 a year as Director-General, but did the work pro bono. He stipulated that in lieu of a salary, \$10,000 be invested in exposition stock to be donated to the Agricultural and Mechanical College of the State of Louisiana. See Smalley, "The New Orleans Exposition," 5.

<sup>118</sup> As quoted in Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 101, 108, 109.

ambition and Ring patronage, the *Picayune* seethingly denounced Burke as a “machine politician of the most profound type” and the boss of “one...of the worst rings...ever fastened on our city and State.” However controversial his political *modus operandi*, more than a few saw merit in the Majors indefatigable nature. The New Orleans *Bee* praised the “indomitable and inventive energy” Burke would bring to the exposition, while the *German Gazette* proclaimed that the Major’s involvement had resurrected “an undertaking whose vitality [was] still in doubt by many.” Even the usually vituperative Hearsey begrudgingly admitted that the enemies of his former dueling partner must “concede [Burke] has high qualifications.”<sup>119</sup>

Both Major Burke’s logistical strategy and fundraising efforts as Director-General leading up to the opening of the World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial in December, 1884 have received a fair amount of scholarly attention.<sup>120</sup> In characteristic manner, Burke combined embellishments, back-room dealings and consummate politicking on a national stage with his sheer audacity and willpower to bring the enormous task of staging a world’s fair to fruition. Yet many historians have been critical of the exposition. Its financial shortcomings and poor attendance<sup>121</sup> have led scholars such as exposition historian D. Clive Hardy to find numerous faults in Burke’s management and all but devolve the fair of any substantial historical significance.<sup>122</sup> The New Orleans

---

<sup>119</sup> Watson, “Staging the Crowning Achievement,” 245.

<sup>120</sup> For a detailed account of Burke’s actions in the planning stages of the World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, see Watson, “Staging the ‘Crowning Achievement of the Age’: Major Edward A. Burke, New Orleans and the Cotton Centennial Exposition,” Part I and Part II.

<sup>121</sup> For a detailed account of the numerous factors behind the exposition’s poor attendance, see Shepherd, Jr., “A Glimmer of Hope,” 274-278.

<sup>122</sup> Hardy sees the exposition as nothing more than a colossal failure, calling an exhibit consisting of the city’s historic memorabilia as “the most important legacy of

fair's eventual overshadowing by later and arguably grander fairs like Chicago have no doubt influenced historical scholarship of the New Orleans exposition, as has its association with Burke himself, largely understood as one of the most notorious political bosses of the Gilded Age.

Yet other historians have seen significant merit in the exposition. Joy Jackson sees the New Orleans fair as an outgrowth of the Crescent City's revived economy and credits it for simultaneously spurring commerce; it acted as "a morale booster to a reawakening economy imbued with the philosophy of the New South."<sup>123</sup> Samuel C. Shepherd, Jr. and Robert W. Rydell have convincingly stressed the importance of the exposition as a demonstration of an optimistic South that longingly anticipated economic parity with the rest of the nation.<sup>124</sup>

Yet there remains the need to fully assess the international significance of the South's first world's fair. The New Orleans exposition's New South nationalistic tone and its effort to place the South in the vanguard of the nation's broadened commercial horizon set the precedent for the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition of 1895, the Tennessee Centennial Exposition of 1897 and the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition at the turn of the century. Moreover, it is impossible to separate the New Orleans exposition from its Director General. No other New South zealot would ever possess the extent of Burke's control in directing an international exposition. Burke molded the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition into the embodiment of his international New South vision and that vision's relationship with both the rest of

---

the exposition" because it raised cultural awareness of the city. D. Clive Hardy, *The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition* (New Orleans, n.d.), 7.

<sup>123</sup> Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 208;

<sup>124</sup> Shepherd Jr., "A Glimmer of Hope," 272, 290; Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 73.

America and the Americas as a whole. The New Orleans world's fair is the clearest expression of the fundamental connection between nascent commercial imperialism and sectional reconciliation. Finally, it was no coincidence that Burke's strident advocacy that the South, and New Orleans specifically, be in the vanguard of commercial imperialism used the fair as a means to transition the Major from New South spokesman to neo-filibuster.

The original vision of the New Orleans exposition was to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of America's first cotton exports with a largely regional fair in the South's leading city for its exportation. Like the previous International Cotton Exposition of 1881 in Atlanta, the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial in New Orleans was anticipated to be largely international in name only. When the Board of Directors chose Burke to lead the exposition as director general, the Major seized upon the opportunity to endow the New Orleans fair with the express purpose of promoting the South to lead an international economic campaign to increase American foreign trade with the rest of the Western hemisphere. Just as quickly did Burke shed the exposition's focus on cotton. Shifting prominence to more progressive aspects of foreign commerce - industry, manufacturing, and natural resources - Burke relegated King Cotton to a symbolic and nearly inconspicuous role.<sup>125</sup> Writing for the premier Northern journal in Southern affairs, *Century Magazine*, Eugene V. Smalley captured Burke's designs to make the exposition a vehicle of his New South focus on the Americas:

In [Burke's] active mind the plan of a show of cotton and its manufactures soon

broadened into the conception of a universal exhibition in which the Southern States and

---

<sup>125</sup> Watson, "Staging the Crowning Achievement," 236, 246; Shepherd, Jr., "A Glimmer of Hope," 277; Smalley, "The New Orleans Exposition," 4, 5, 14; Gaston, *The New South Creed*, 91; Coleman, *Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans*, 319.

their foreign neighbors should play the most prominent part...an exhibition which would spread the fame of New Orleans around the globe and emphasize its advantages as the commercial emporium of all the lands and islands surrounding the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>126</sup>

Burke's ambitious goal for the exposition was more than just the inevitable faith in Southern progress characteristic of New South boosters; New Orleans of the early 1880s was in the midst of an economic renaissance. The long anticipated rail connection to fertile fields of the West was finally accomplished in 1883 when the Southern Pacific lines met those of the Eastern seaboard in New Orleans. Controlling a substantial share of Western grain exports was a favorite topic of Burke and New Orleans businessmen, and with the new rail juncture theoretically favoring the Crescent City over far away New York, their dream had a chance for reality. The rail connection to the West did prove to yield a significant increase in grain exports as New Orleans climbed from the fifth largest exporter of grain in 1880 to third among American ports in 1896. That same year also saw New Orleans cotton exports finally reach the receipts of the antebellum bumper crop of 1859. With an extensive rail network to aid the traditional commercial waterway of the Mississippi, New Orleans exported more cotton than any other American port and was second in the world only to Liverpool in 1880s. While Burke directed the exposition, the depots of the Crescent City were in the midst of a substantial increase of traffic as the combination of grain, cotton, and other goods spurred a 692.9 percent increase in railroad tonnage and a 119.8 percent increase in the value of products between 1880 and 1896.<sup>127</sup>

---

<sup>126</sup> Smalley, "The New Orleans Exposition," 5.

<sup>127</sup> Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 5, 208, 209, 211, 214, 215.



Significant economic gains in commercial exports no doubt inspired Burke to promote similar advances in other sectors of the New Orleans economy. Imports had steadily declined since the Civil War and the city's new railroad connections were found wanting in comparison to Chicago and St. Louis. Municipal infrastructure lagged behind the Northern norm as did a relatively slow population growth, which saw the Crescent City fall from the third largest city in the nation in 1840 to the ninth in 1880. Perhaps the most woeful circumstance for a New South man like Burke was New Orleans's modest industrial sector. The city boasted only 915 manufacturing industries at the 1880 census and would need 15,000 new factory jobs in 1883 to bring employment in industry up to the national average of American cities.<sup>128</sup>

Compounding these issues, the exposition opened amidst a short, but significant, nationwide panic that occurred from 1883 until mid-1885. Tens of thousands joined the list of the unemployed from St. Louis to Chicago. The economic hardship of the early 1880s, no matter how brief, no doubt further turned the eyes of Americans both North and South to the markets of the Americas as avenues for commercial expansion. This mindset found a ready medium at the New Orleans exposition and man in Burke who was already one of its loudest and earliest proponents. In the exposition's opening prayer by Reverend T. Dewitt Talmage, the New York minister prayed that the exposition would breath life into "the folded sails of our paralyzed shipping," ignite "the silent factory wheels," drive plows in "deeper and richer furrows" and illuminate "hidden treasures of

---

<sup>128</sup> Of a total population of 216,090, 30,000 worked in manufacturing establishments; a total of 45,000 would be needed to meet the national average. Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 6; *Ibid*, 213, 5, 6.

coal and iron and precious metal.” The Reverend beseeched the Almighty that the exposition be blessed to inaugurate “a process of Edenization.”<sup>129</sup>

Historians have demonstrated the correlation between the industrial aims of the New South and its nationalist creed, yet the New Orleans exposition showed that the connection went beyond regional and national boundaries. Talmage’s remarks were indicative of the international New South vision as a fundamental tool for national reconciliation that was a fundamental component of the fair from its inception. Burke was no doubt nodding in agreement as the Reverend prayed that the exposition would not only wash away “the last feeling of sectional discord” between North and South, but bring about the “unification of North and South America” and “solve for us the agonizing question of supply and demand.”<sup>130</sup>

President Arthur’s telegraph message also emphasized the unifying component in a nationwide pursuit of reciprocal trade with the Americas. The President acknowledged that an international exposition in New Orleans, “situated as it is at the gateway of the trade between the United States and Central and South America,” would promote “a profitable intercourse” between the nation and all her southern neighbors. The pursuit of increased commercial ties with the Americas by like-minded businessmen from all regions of the country assembled at the exposition would prove the “motives for strengthening the bonds of brotherhood.” Linked like never before by railroads and telegraph lines, President Arthur looked to the exposition to engender “good will and peace” between all nations “while it advances the material welfare of all.” The official

---

<sup>129</sup> Shepherd Jr., “A Glimmer of Hope,” 274; Fairall, *The World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition*, 14.

<sup>130</sup> Gaston, *The New South Creed*, 95; Fairall, *The World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition*, 14, 15.

commencement of the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition was stunningly grand. While the President pressed an electric button in the White House that activated the engines in the 5,500 horsepower in the exposition's Main Hall, Burke's eleven-year-old son, Lindsay, hoisted a large portrait of Arthur to the immense applause of the crowd of 20,000.<sup>131</sup>

Perhaps none spoke to Burke's molding of the New Orleans exposition into an affair of both New South progress and national and international goodwill better than Century Magazine writer Eugene V. Smalley. Smalley visited the exposition in the spring of 1885, when its buildings had been completed and all exhibits installed, and was struck by Burke's logistical feat. The Major's "very intelligent and energetic direction" brought an international exposition to a relatively small city isolated from the chief centers of population, all in less than a year. Yet Smalley insightfully credited two motivating ideas behind Burke and the exposition as a whole. First, the New Orleans exposition was, according to Smalley, the manifestation of "the rise of a new national idea, - namely, that there are vast and inviting fields to the south of us waiting to be conquered for our industries and our commerce." Such an idea only "occasionally appears in our politics and governmental resources" yet it had taken "strong hold of the manufactures of the North" by 1884. The New South tenant of courting Northern capital combined with Burke's New Orleans boosterism convinced a large contingent of businessmen to send "their fabrics and machinery to New Orleans because it is the natural mart of all the regions bordering upon the Gulf of Mexico." Smalley demonstrated how the nascent imperialism of the age was inextricably bound to the New

---

<sup>131</sup> Fairall, *The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition*, 17, 18; Smalley, "The New Orleans Exposition," 8.

South's nationalist creed with what he considered the second grand idea behind the exposition – that the South was at “the portal of a great industrial development” as part of a reconciled American republic.<sup>132</sup>

Despite reflecting nascent American imperialism and its fundamental role in Burke's international New South vision, the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition was not a financial success. The Congressional stipulation that the fair open in 1884 meant initial visitors saw exposition buildings still under construction and exhibit items still in boxes. The national economic downturn, reluctance by railroads to offer discounted rates, the city's relative isolation and uncharacteristically bad weather were handicaps that even an indomitable man of means like Burke could not control. Burke opportunistically resigning as director-general a month before the Exposition was forced to close, and thus the Major's was able to retain his popularity and influence. At a ceremony honoring his stewardship, the exposition's federal commissioners proclaimed:

When the future historian comes to write of...Burke's great works he will place his name by the side of the greatest industrial leaders and educators of the nineteenth century. In bringing to its present success this great Exposition he has reared a monument to his memory that will make his name...a household word in every family of our glorious and free republic.<sup>133</sup>

The most important episode for Burke during his time as director-general was the visit of Honduran President Luis Bogran. Their acquaintance sparked the transition of

---

<sup>132</sup> Smalley had a favorable view of the New Orleans exposition in comparison to Philadelphia in 1876 and Paris in 1878. Smalley, “The New Orleans Exposition,” 3, 6-8.

<sup>133</sup> Shepherd Jr., “A Glimmer of Hope,” 274-277; *Times-Democrat*, May 14, 1885.

Major Edward Austin Burke, editor, Democratic party boss and New South booster, into Major Edward Austin Burke, neo-filibuster. Burke's New South paradigm of capitalist investment ventures in Latin America matched the Honduran President's ardent desire to court investors for his country's mining, agricultural and commercial opportunities. The New South ideology cannot be divorced from its contemporary international context of industrialized nations pouring capital into undeveloped countries. The mid-1880s saw a peak of foreign investment across the world, and Honduras, indeed, was no exception. Upon his inauguration in 1883, Bogran substantially increased the number of government concessions to foreign investors.<sup>134</sup>

A year after their meeting in 1885, Bogran granted Burke two substantial mining concessions on the banks of the Jalan and Guayape rivers. It was and still is unclear how Burke came to receive the concessions. Contemporary American newspapers claimed that the Honduran President became personally indebted to the Major through nefarious means. A larger view of the contemporary international setting suggests the more pedestrian conclusion that Bogran simply extended concessions to obtaining American and European investment. Burke's oath to build an industrial school in the capital of Tegucigalpa supports this view.<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, due to Burke's previous unscrupulous and secretive behavior, a shadier connection is not wholly improbable.

However he had received the concessions, the Major seized upon the opportunity to become a Central American kingpin and neo-filibuster. After visiting Honduras twice

---

<sup>134</sup> Vivian, "Major E.A. Burke," 177; James Mahoney, *The Legacies of Liberalism: Path Dependence and Political Regimes in Central America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 172, 173.

<sup>135</sup> Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 71; Mahoney, *The Legacies of Liberalism*, 173; Vivian, "Major E.A. Burke," 177.

between 1886 and 1888, Burke left Louisiana in 1889 for London to organize international capital for his mining corporations. Back home, the *Daily Picayune* broke the story that state bond revenue did not match the amount received. The end of a grand jury investigation revealed the shocking truth: Burke had swindled the state out of approximately \$1,777,000 during his ten years as state treasurer. To avoid extradition, Burke hurriedly floated his London syndicates with a capital of £750,000.<sup>136</sup> As a stalling maneuver, the ever-daring Burke telegraphed New Orleans:

I sailed on the *Teutonic* but telegrams received at Queenstown recalled me to London under penalty of utter failure and ruin of large negotiations. To proceed was to arrive penniless and therefore powerless. A few days will finish my business here and then I will meet issues at home.<sup>137</sup>

A “procedural error” during the extradition process gave Burke enough time to slip to Honduras, where the Major put action behind his New South ideology and became a neo-filibuster in the Americas. As had been the case throughout his career, Burke was one step ahead of his opponents.

Bogran personally welcomed Burke in Honduras’s capital of Tegucigalpa in December of 1889. The Major no doubt knew that the United States had extradition agreements only with El Salvador and Nicaragua in Central America; he was safe from facing the nineteen formal indictments against him. Burke set up the Olancho Exploration Company, Ltd., along the Jalan and Guayape rivers, covering a total of six mineral zones and seven hundred fifteen square miles with a total capitalization of

---

<sup>136</sup> Vivian, “Major E.A. Burke,” 178; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 72; Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 41; Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 141.

<sup>137</sup> *New York Times*, October 13, 1889.

£150,000. Burke's concession was one of 145 offered to mining companies from 1883 to 1890. The Major had high hopes. In 1888 minerals made up over half the value Honduras's exports, nearly twice the worth in that year of bananas, the crop that eventually came to dominate the region.<sup>138</sup>

Despite his perseverance, Burke's mining corporation never matched expectations. Natural disasters, personal illnesses, European economic crises, and a Honduran civil war threatened to undermine Burke's neo-filibustering dream. The Rosario Mining Company was in fact the only truly profitable venture, accounting for more than 75% of the country's mining exports. The calculative Burke was more misguided than naïve. The historical, geographical and visual topographical evidence pointed to a treasure chest in the landscape. In 1870, the well-known diplomat and former chargé d'affaires of the United States to the Central American republics, E.G. Squier, published *Honduras: Descriptive, Historical, and Statistical*. Squier wrote that "in respect of mineral resources, Honduras ranks first among all the states of Central America," possessing silver, gold, copper, iron and coal.<sup>139</sup>

Yet mining was one enterprise in which Burke could not deploy personal cunning and persuasiveness alone; he possessed neither special knowledge nor proper equipment to increase his chances of success. The unwavering optimism in the eventual economic success of Honduras the Major exhibited as a neo-filibuster was a continuity of his New South outlook. Through his editorship of the *Times-Democrat* to his direction of the New Orleans world's fair, Burke exuded a New South belief that the region's abundance of

---

<sup>138</sup> Mahoney, *The Legacies of Liberalism*, 173.

<sup>139</sup> E.G. Squier, *Honduras: Descriptive, Historical, and Statistical* (London: Trubner & Co., 1870), 115.

labor and natural resources, coupled with a perceived geographical advantage for commerce, would inevitably result in industrial greatness. The untamed wilderness and reports of Honduras's inexhaustible mineral wealth enabled Burke to retain his unbridled optimism from New Orleans to Central America. While the Major's optimism did not come to complete fruition, he was nonetheless later able to boast to President William McKinley in 1897 that no American owned more land in Honduras, a testament to his status as a neo-filibuster.<sup>140</sup>

Along with capitalistic ventures, Burke also demonstrated the neo-filibustering trait of exploitative influence in politics. While New South men like Henry Grady did not see the virtue in focusing on a political career, Burke's vulpine career as Democratic party boss proved invaluable as a neo-filibuster. With less than anticipated mining returns the Major was able to devote more time to what he did best – politics. Burke increasingly entrenched himself in the Honduran bureaucracy and was actively involved with the Bogran administration and its successor, the regime of Domingo Vasquez, who was inaugurated in 1893. Americans traveling through the Central American republic reported to the *New York Times* that Burke was “one of the most highly-respected men in the country.” The presidential transfer of power from Bogran to Vasquez was tumultuous, however, and a revolt led by Policarpo Bonilla soon broke out. As a result, Burke became embroiled in another civil war, siding with the pro-American President Vasquez. Unfortunately for Burke, he also found himself on the losing side of another civil war. Bonilla seized the Major's mining operations and Burke was forced to flee to neighboring El Salvador in 1894. The Major's wealth more than likely was the reason

---

<sup>140</sup> Vivian, “Major E.A. Burke,” 188, 189, 193, 190; Mahoney, *The Legacies of Liberalism*, 173; Gaston, *The New South Creed*, 69.



for his eventual peace with the Bonilla administration in 1896. By special decree, Burke regained his concessions, on the condition that he refrain from attempting to influence Honduran politics.<sup>141</sup>

In 1897, Burke transferred his residency from Tegucigalpa to Puerto Cortés, where he lived only two doors from the United States consulate. Undoubtedly the affable Major made friends with the U.S. Consul W.M. Little, or bribed him, because Little, without permission from American minister to Central America in Guatemala City, granted a passport application for Burke and his wife to travel to Europe and Africa in 1898. The journey was not for business or pleasure, however, but to learn the whereabouts of their only son, Lindsay. Audacity and cosmopolitanism ran in the Burke family - the twenty-two-year old Lindsay had left his father's Honduran business ventures in 1895 to join Belgian King Leopold II's colonial militia in the Congo. The Major would learn the unfortunate truth on his trip. Two thousand Africans had ambushed his son, Lieutenant Burke, and fifty men. The elder Burke later recalled that his son and three other officers "put their backs together" after their men deserted and "fought until they were cut down and hacked to pieces."<sup>142</sup>

Upon returning to Honduras, and characteristically in all matters Burke, Bonilla's decree restricting the Major from matters of government proved toothless against Burke's ambition. The tumultuous nature of Central American politics saw Burke float in and out

---

<sup>141</sup> Gaston, *The New South Creed*, 42; Vivian, "Major E.A. Burke," 189, 190; *New York Times*, January 19, 1893 and March 22, 1894.

<sup>142</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.: *Emergency Passport Applications (Issued Abroad), 1877-1907*, Collection Number: ARC Identifier 1187503/MLR Number A1 515, NARA Series: M1834, Roll #: 15, Volume #: 24; His wife, Susan E. Burke, died in Puerto Cortés in July of 1916. Vivian, "Major E.A. Burke: The Honduran Exile," 181, 183; as quoted in Vivian, "Major E.A. Burke: The Honduran Exile," 184.

of service to the Honduran government. By 1912, Burke was serving as assistant superintendent and auditor of the El Ferrocarril Nacional de Honduras. He remained a bureaucratic fixture until 1926. The year 1926 also witnessed Burke's long-awaited exoneration from the charges of fraud and embezzlement in Louisiana. For years, Burke had steadfastly maintained his innocence, claiming that the missing funds went to support what Burke most likely considered his crowning achievement – the New Orleans exposition of 1884-5. Like so many things associated with him, history does not know with certainty whether Burke was innocent or guilty. But it may be suggestive that although he was immediately informed of the dismissal of charges, Burke decided to remain in Honduras.<sup>143</sup>

Edward A. Burke died in Honduras, two years later, on September 24, 1928. He was 89. Honduran President Baraona decreed that, as a result of his service to the country, Burke was to be laid to rest in the capital, and his funeral attended with full military honors at government expense.

Civilian protests forced the President to renege. Burke was buried according to his wishes: beside his mining operations. To the end, the indomitable Burke remained a neo-filibuster for the New South.<sup>144</sup>

---

<sup>143</sup> Vivian, "Major E. A. Burke," 181.

<sup>144</sup> Vivian, "Major E. A. Burke," 181.

## CONCLUSION

The study of the American South is historical terrain much trodden. Social, cultural, gender, and racial histories have proven the versatility of the field. The study of Confederate expatriates and New South neo-filibuster Edward A. Burke has the potential to broaden the scope of Southern historiography by expanding it into an international context, most directly by analyzing the postbellum South's relationship with the Americas. Yet the study of exiles and neo-filibusters raises an intriguing number of questions for future research.

Perhaps none are larger than the implications for the historiography of race. Burke was the puppet master of the ruling Louisiana Democratic party in a city with a tradition of relative racial fluidity. The Major also was Louisiana's leading political figure during the 1880s, a critical era of racial uncertainty throughout the region. As several scholars have noted, the early New South period was a period of adjustment and experimentation and did not necessarily prefigure or even set the groundwork for the entrenchment of Jim Crow. A noted New Orleanian and contemporary of Burke, George Washington Cable, was perhaps the South's loudest liberal voice in the 1880s; he argued that social equality between the races was the surest path to the prosperity of the New South. The iconic symbol for the New South, Henry Grady, was a member of the dominant wing of New South zealotry that supported African American enfranchisement and racial cooperation based on the common goal of material advancement. Grady saw no contradiction between that position and a bedrock belief in the permanent inferiority of blacks. Future research of the racial attitudes of Burke and New South boosters like

him may shed more light on what perhaps is small but significant middle ground between the Cable and Grady wings. Men such as Walter Hines Page and Atticus Greene Haygood were also among this group; their emphasis on the education of African Americans theoretically allowed for a meritocracy that stressed character over race.<sup>145</sup>

Similarly, the New Orleans Exposition serves as a means to analyze the extent Burke deviated, either as a liberal or a conservative, from contemporaries over issues of race. Burke's establishment of a Colored Department set a precedent that was followed by later Southern expositions in Atlanta, Nashville, and Charleston. In his account of the New Orleans exposition, Herbert S. Fairall wrote that "it was the favorite idea with Director General Burke especially, to give the colored people an opportunity to show what progress they are making in the arts and sciences." Burke not only broke with the example set by the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876, which excluded black exhibitors, but did so after the 1883 Civil Rights Cases in which the Supreme Court upheld the right of individuals to discriminate against blacks. African American Bishop Henry A. Turner, in expressing his disbelief at the establishment of a Colored Department, remarked that it "was so unexpected, so marvelous, so Utopian, that we could scarcely believe it was true... All honor, I say, to Director General Burke."<sup>146</sup>

Future research can also explore the relationship between Burke's New South racial views and his goal of increasing Southern commerce with the Americas. For Burke, the connections were inherent. He sought to use the Colored Department to highlight the important, yet largely subservient, role of African Americans in his

---

<sup>145</sup> Gaston, *The New South Creed*, 141, 134, 144.

<sup>146</sup> Fairall, *The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition*, 379; as quoted in Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 80.

international New South vision of capturing the foreign trade of the Western hemisphere. Like other New South spokesmen, Burke realized that the prosperity of the South depended upon both white and black Southerners. Burke displayed a belief in the capacity of African Americans – under the watchful, paternalistic eye of the white elite - and saw blacks as a potentially large pool of skilled workers whose labor would aid in the industrial flourishing of the New South economy. Burke and other New South zealots voiced unwavering faith that the omnipotent powers of progress would make racial tensions a thing of the past.<sup>147</sup>

The rhetoric of uplifting “inferior” African-Americans was easily transferable to Latin Americans of color. It appears that Burke’s racial attitudes towards African Americans cannot be divorced from his experience as a neo-filibuster interacting with Hispanics of color in Central America. In both cases, uplifting the “inferior” colored race had a selfish, economic benefit for the seemingly benevolent white Southerner. James William Park’s study of U.S. perspectives towards Latin America highlights how Americans used Hispanics as an “other” to sharpen their own notions of national exceptionalism. The divine blessings of Manifest Destiny meant Americans in both the North and South shared a belief in unfaltering and inevitable progress. Looking to what they vaguely perceived as chaotic and underdeveloped Latin America, where a “slothful, priest-ridden population of inferior, mixed breeds [were] perpetuating the nonproductive ways of the colonial era and stagnating in tropical languor and undeveloped abundance,”

---

<sup>147</sup> Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 74, 76, 82; Gaston, *The New South Creed*, 126.

the American imperialists believed even more devotedly in their country's special sense of historical mission and national destiny.<sup>148</sup>

Yet Park is not concerned with how those forces might have played out for white men who believed as fervently in the New South creed. Further research may reveal how New South spokesmen such as Burke – many of whom were former Confederates as well - viewed the Americas. An underdeveloped Latin America of the late nineteenth century possibly represented two distinct opportunities to Southerners. First, the rhetoric of imperial paternalism and the need to guide the Americas along the path of progress allowed New South neo-filibusters like Burke to present a South that was not the lowliest region of the Western hemisphere. Second, the South as the vanguard of American commercial imperialism was a means to increase Southern prosperity and to regain its part in the mission of American exceptionalism that Confederate defeat had swept away. Park also contends that the 1880s was a decade of “increasing contact, diplomatic assertion, and commercial and financial penetration” into Latin America by the United States even as American perceptions of indolent Hispanics remained static. Further study will attempt to determine to what extent Burke (who remained in Central America almost forty years) and other Southern neo-filibusters altered their views during sustained contact with the Hispanic population. Indeed sustained contact was one of the great differences between post-Civil War exiles and their neo-filibuster successors.<sup>149</sup>

Burke himself can be a fruitful subject for future research – especially the extent of his influence in Honduran politics. Studying the Major's papers in New Orleans and

---

<sup>148</sup> Evidence also indicates that Burke had a “faithful black man-servant” in Honduras. See Vivian, “Major E.A. Burke: The Honduras Exile,” 181; Park, *Latin American Underdevelopment*, 23, 33.

<sup>149</sup> Park, *Latin American Underdevelopment*, 34.

Baton Rouge may possibly shed light on the degree of power Burke exerted over Honduran public policy. And that possibility seems more promising given the likelihood, if not the certainty, of finding of a cache of his papers in Honduras. Evidence exists to contend that Burke had significant influence in the capital of Tegucigalpa. An extradition treaty between the United States and Honduras in 1909, for example, was stalled due to Honduran insistence that the retroactive force of the treaty be limited to ten years. No doubt this provision was insisted upon in order to protect Burke, then a resident of Honduras for twenty years.<sup>150</sup>

But Burke was not alone. Isaac W. Avery, for instance, appears to have been a worthy disciple of Burke's New South vision. Avery was the foreign commissioner of the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition of 1895, the next fair hosted in the South after New Orleans. He visited seven Latin American countries leading up to the Atlanta Exposition, using the slogan "America for Americans" to promote the mutual benefits of increased commerce between the United States and her Latin American neighbors through Southern ports.<sup>151</sup>

The study of New South neo-filibusters like Burke and their relationship with the Americas has multiple possibilities to add international complexity to the historiography of the American South. Indeed, as emerging and exciting scholarship already shows, the future of Southern history will not be bound by regional or even national borders.

---

<sup>150</sup> Vivian, "Major E.A. Burke: The Honduran Exile," 184-186.

<sup>151</sup> Rydell, *All The World's a Fair*, 90-1. It is unknown at this time whether Avery visited Honduras or had any communication with Burke.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

Ballou, William Hosea. "Major Edward A. Burke." *The Journalist* III (April 17, 1886): 1-3.

Burke, E. A. "Statement of Facts Relating to the Election in Louisiana, November 7, 1876," <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/textidx?c=moa;cc=moa;idno=abe9142.0001.001;view=toc>

Coleman, William H. *Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans and Environs with Map, Illustrated with Many Original Engravings and Containing Exhaustive Accounts of the Traditions, Historical Legends, and Remarkable Locations of the Creole City*. New York: William H. Coleman, 1885.

*Debow's Review*. January 1866.

Fairall, Herbert. *The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, New Orleans, 1884-1885*. Iowa City, Iowa: Republican Publishing Company, 1885.

*New Orleans Times-Democrat*. December, 1881 – May, 1885.

*New York Times*. October 1889 - March, 1894.

Smalley, Eugene V. "The New Orleans Exposition." *Century Magazine*, XXX, 1885.

----- "In and Out of the New Orleans Exposition." *Century Magazine*, XXX, 1885.

Squier, E.G. *Honduras: Descriptive, Historical, and Statistical*. London: Trubner & Co., 1870.

Twain, Mark. *Life on the Mississippi*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1883.

*War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*.

Waldo, J. Curtis. *Illustrated Visitors' Guide to New Orleans*. New Orleans: J. Curtis Waldo, 1879.



Zacharie, James S. *New Orleans Guide: With Descriptions of the Routes to New Orleans, Sights of the City Arranged Alphabetically, and Other Information Useful To Travellers*. New Orleans: The New Orleans News Co., 1885.

### Secondary Source Bibliography

Ayers, Edward L., Patricia Nelson Limerick, Stephen Nissenbaum, and Peter S. Onuf. *All Over The Map: Rethinking American Regions*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Ayers, Edward L. *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Cash, W.J. *The Mind of the South*. New York: Random House, 1941.

Davis, Edwin Adams. *Louisiana: A Narrative History*. Baton Rouge, LA: Claitor's Publishing Division, 1971.

Gaston, Paul M. *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking*. New York: Knopf, 1970.

Hair, William Ivy. *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics, 1877-1900*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1969.

Hanna, Alfred Jackson and Kathryn Abbey Hanna. *Confederate Exile in Venezuela*. Tuscaloosa, Alabama: Confederate Publishing Company, 1960.

Harvey, Donald Clive. "The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition." M.A. thesis, Tulane University, 1964.

Jackson, Joy J. *New Orleans in the Gilded Age: Politics and Urban Progress, 1880-1896*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1969.

Mahoney, James. *The Legacies of Liberalism: Path Dependence and Political Regimes in Central America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2001.

Majewski, John. *Modernizing the Slave Economy: The Economic Vision of the Confederate Nation*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

May, Robert. *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire: 1854-1861*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1973.

- O'Brien, Michael. "On Observing the Quicksand." *American Historical Review* 104, no. 4 (1999): 1202-1207.
- Rable, George C. *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984.
- "Senator Cyrus Bussey." *The Iowa Legislature*.  
<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/Legislators/legislator.aspx?GA=8&PID=5602>
- Shepherd, Samuel C. Jr. "A Glimmer of Hope: The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, New Orleans, 1884-1885." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, 15, no. 3 (1985): 271-290.
- Simkins, Francis Butler. *A History of the South*. New York: Knopf, 1967.
- Sutherland, Daniel E. *The Confederate Carpetbaggers*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1988.
- . "Looking for a Home: Louisiana Emigrants during the Civil War and Reconstruction." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 21, no. 4 (1980): 341-359.
- Taylor, Joe Gray. *Louisiana Reconstructed: 1863-1877*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1974.
- Vincent, Charles, ed. *The African American Experience in Louisiana, Part B: From the Civil War to Jim Crow*. The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History. Lafayette, Louisiana: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 2000.
- Vivian, James F. "Major E. A. Burke: The Honduras Exile, 1889-1928." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 15, no. 2 (1974): 175-194.
- Watson, Thomas D. "Staging the 'Crowning Achievement of the Age': Major Edward A. Burke, New Orleans and the Cotton Centennial Exposition." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 25, no. 3 (1984): 229-257.
- Woodward, C. Vann. *Origins of the New South: 1877-1913*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1951.
- . *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966.