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“The Commercial Union of the Three Americas:” Major Edward A. Burke and Transnational New South Visionaries, 1870-1928

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“The Commercial Union of the Three Americas:” Major Edward A. Burke and
Transnational New South Visionaries, 1870-1928

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History

by

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Abstract

Traditional images of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century American South are of an inward-looking region characterized by economic stagnation, xenophobia, cultural isolation, and reactionary politics. This dissertation contends that vibrant transnational links connected the South to the wider world through an analysis of the political and economic landscape of postbellum Louisiana, the 1884 New Orleans World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial, the Louisiana State Lottery Company, and Central America. An examination of Edward Austin Burke demonstrates that the era's New South creed comprised a seminal transnational component.

This dissertation will explore how Burke became a central cog in Louisiana's Democratic political machine and a leading American capitalist in Central America. As owner-editor of the New Orleans *Times-Democrat* and director general of the 1884 New Orleans world's fair, Burke enjoyed a marvelous platform from which to broadcast his vision of a transnational New South that promoted Latin America as a market for southern-made exports and an investment opportunity for southern businessmen. The New Orleans exposition displayed technologies and products that shaped and at times threatened gender roles, racial hierarchies, class norms, local political dynamics, and imperial visions. Burke was also a key partner in the alliance between Louisiana's Democratic government and the Louisiana lottery. The lottery, with its tentacles in Latin America and nearly every state of the Union, insured that no other Gilded Age political machine utilized national and transnational ties as successfully as Louisiana's.

In the late 1880s, Burke began a near forty-year residency in Honduras, where he held diversified interests in the country's railroads and real estate along with substantial mineral concessions. The major also actively supported numerous Honduran administrations, held five

different high-ranking positions in government-supported railroads, recruited other foreign capitalists, served as intermediary when disputes arose between capitalists and Honduran leaders, and informally advised several presidents on matters ranging from infrastructure projects to American politics. Using American and Latino perspectives, this study demonstrates how the interplay between the U.S. South and Latin America was a defining variable in their respective developments.

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Historical research and writing often gives the illusion of self-sufficiency. To the contrary, I could not have completed this dissertation without a host of individuals and institutions. The merits this project contains is due to their influence, any errors of commission and omission are my own. Paul Anderson shepherded what ultimately evolved into this dissertation during my time in the Master's program at Clemson University. Patrick Williams and Kathryn Sloan have provided innumerable knowledge and insights in seminars at the University of Arkansas even before their thoughtful contributions on my dissertation committee. As a mentor, advisor, and editor, Daniel Sutherland was in a league of his own for his detailed feedback and patient editing of my scholarship.

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My time as a Baird Society Resident Scholar at the Smithsonian Institution Libraries in Washington D.C. was a personal and scholarly highlight of my dissertation research. Even with

many of the best holdings in the country, the greatest asset of the National Museum of American History is its staff, who are genuinely kind, collaborative, and knowledgeable. Lilla Vekerdy made my tenure at the Dibner Library a pleasure and ensured an atmosphere exceptionally conducive to research and writing. Morgan Anderson also promptly facilitated any research requests and was immediately reliable for any inquires, large or small. Trina Brown and Jim Roan were exceptionally helpful in navigating online databases and locating information on research aspects that arose unexpectedly. I was particularly fortunate to have been aided by Pamela Henson, who as Historian of the Smithsonian shared her unsurpassed knowledge of the institution's importance and history.

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Dedication

To my mother and father, my source of love and kindness. To Ellie, my unfalteringly steady companion. And to Rebekah, whose unwavering patience, gracious support, and knowledge inspire me daily.

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Introduction

Defining New Orleans is akin to mooring a ship to a floating dock, it is a place of paradox and permeability. It is the main port in the stern of the Mississippi after its porous hull meanders through the heartland of North America, but its municipal boundaries do not border the Gulf of Mexico. Situated between Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi, as the river flows west to east amid wetlands before looping north, the exact contours of the Crescent City fluctuate with shifting sediments and waterways. It is one of the southernmost cities in North America and the northernmost city in the circum-Caribbean, a gateway to the hinterland and a Caribbean port. It has long been a city of migration, as people and goods inhabit the same space as migratory birds and crawfish. With striking racial stratification, vibrant cultural mixing, and a reputation for both licentiousness and cosmopolitanism, New Orleans has been decried as un-southern while also heralded as the progenitor of southern cuisine and music.¹

No southern city, therefore, is more suited to anchor an analysis of the reciprocal transnational links between the American South and Latin America. Viewing Louisiana and Latin America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through a transnational lens allows for a more complete picture of both regions. An inherently murky term, transnational history, at its essence, focuses on the interaction of people, goods, ideas, plants, animals, and pathogens that form myriad webs of exchange across borders. Transnational scholarship, therefore, must go beyond demonstrating that a region was influenced and connected to events in an international context. It necessitates examining reciprocal relationships in an integrated way.

¹ Rebecca Snedeker and Rebecca Solnit, "Sinking in and Reaching Out," in *Unfathomable City: A New Orleans Atlas*, editors Rebecca Solnit and Rebecca Snedeker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 1-4.

Following the lead of scholars of empire, the transatlantic slave trade, the colonial New World, and the Age of Revolution, historians are increasingly embracing transnational history's applicability as a tool to study the American South during the nineteenth century. Douglas R. Egerton, Don Doyle, and Moon-Ho Jung have demonstrated that the commercial, political, and social ties between the South and the wider world persisted and evolved during the Civil War era. Moreover, a transnational mode of analysis is a tonic to overcome the "mythical exceptionalism" that has been prevalent among U.S. historians, particularly southern historians. It also complicates the Eurocentric constraints of older international studies and reorients an outward-looking South towards Latin America and the Caribbean. Besides exploring tangible connections between the South and the wider world, transnational studies such as these decisively counter the notion that southerners became increasingly parochial and inward-looking as the nineteenth century progressed. Another primary benefit of transnational analysis is that it enables historians to transcend traditional national and regional narratives while allowing for a better understanding of both perspectives as a product of commercial, political, cultural, and demographic exchanges. As Matthew Pratt Guterl argues, the South during this era was "a messy, complicated borderland of sorts," caught between North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean.²

² Alison Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities," *American Historical Review* 111 (June 2006): 744; Douglas R. Egerton, "Rethinking Atlantic Historiography in a Postcolonial Era: The Civil War in a Global Perspective," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 1, (March 2011): 80; Edward Bartlett Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 12; Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 6-8; David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 297; Don H. Doyle, "Introduction: The Atlantic World and the Crisis of the 1860s," in *American Civil Wars: The United States, Latin America, Europe, and the Crisis of the 1860s*, ed. Don H. Doyle (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), ix; Brian Ward, "Carly Phillips, David Armitage, and the Place of the American South in Atlantic and Other Worlds," in *The American South and the Atlantic World*, editors Brian Ward, Martyn Bone, and William A. Link (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2013), 23; Matthew Pratt Guterl, *American Mediterranean: Southern Slaveholders in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 6-7, 17.

Yet practitioners of transnational history must also be cognizant of its limitations. One of its strengths, malleability, can result in “little coherence and no real unity.” An overriding tendency to explain all aspects of change and continuity as a result of transnational forces can cause scholars to miss other complexities. For example, how significant local issues, institutions, groups, and personalities shaped the past. When used by historians of the United States to study relations with Latin America, transnationalism can, in effect, become shorthand for domineering corporations, exploitive foreign capitalists, or the subjugation of Latino nationalism under the banner of globalization. By contrast, scholars of Latin America have employed transnationalism to explore Marxism, liberation theology, feminism, and resistance to neo-colonialism.³

On the whole, studies that incorporate a Central American country can only be fully comprehended when using a transnational lens. The borders and constructs of Central American nation-states were in constant flux during the nineteenth century. All five of the nations that make up the modern region constituted a United Provinces of Central America from 1823 until 1840, and there were also numerous attempts to restore the national federation through either diplomacy or conquest during the remainder of the century. Moreover, the ascent of the first Central American Liberal, Justo Rufino Barrios of Guatemala, played a direct role in establishing Honduran liberal leadership. The political rivalries within the liberal camp also had a transnational bent, as most revolutionaries had the backing of key groups in one or more neighboring countries.⁴

³ Philip D. Morgan and Jack P. Greene, “Introduction: The Present State of Atlantic History,” in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, editors Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5; Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 6; Laura Briggs, Gladys McCormick, and J.T. Way, “Transnationalism: A Category of Analysis,” *American Quarterly* 60 (September 2008): 625-628.

⁴ Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided*, Third Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 90, 148; Arturo Taracena Arriola, “Liberalismo y poder político en Centroamérica (1870-1929)” in

Despite seminal connections between the U.S. South and the wider world during the nineteenth century, the traditional historical images of the era are of an inward-looking region characterized by economic stagnation, xenophobia, cultural isolation, and reactionary politics. When scholars of the postbellum South have explored ties to Latin America, the most common arena of study has been that of Confederate exiles, who were primarily concentrated in Brazil, Mexico, and British Honduras.⁵ Yet most southern expatriate communities failed because they rejected significant exchanges within their new countries and stubbornly attempted to rebuild the Old South in Latin America. No wonder that an estimated eighty-percent of these former Confederates returned home to their native South by the early 1870s. One furtive emigrant described the experience as a “leap into the dark,” only to “reach the bottom of an unfathomable abyss.” Nonetheless, scholarship on these diehard rebels indicates that, whether planned or not, they “pushed transnational social and economic relations in new directions” and vigorously developed “circuits of economic development beyond and across borders.”⁶ This dissertation contends that vibrant transnational links connected the South and Latin America long after the majority of Confederate expatriates returned home. An analysis of the political and economic landscape of postbellum Louisiana, the 1884 New Orleans World’s Industrial and Cotton

Historia general de Centroamérica, Tomo IV (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal Quinto Centenario, 1993), 190-192; Games, “Atlantic History,” 744.

⁵ Sharon Hartman Strom and Frederick Stirton Weaver, *Confederates in the Tropics: Charles Swett’s Travelogue* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 54; Todd W. Wahlstrom, *The Southern Exodus to Mexico: Migration across the Borderlands after the American Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), xxi; Daniel E. Sutherland, *The Confederate Carpetbaggers* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 28; Donald C. Simmons, Jr., *Confederate Settlements in British Honduras* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001), 38, 51; Daniel E. Sutherland, “Looking for a Home: Louisiana Emigrants during the Civil War and Reconstruction,” *Louisiana History* 21 (Autumn 1980): 347; Andrew F. Rolle, *The Lost Cause: The Confederate Exodus to Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 3-5; William Clark Griggs, *The Elusive Eden: Frank McMullan’s Confederate Colony in Brazil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 97; Cyrus B. Dawsey and James M. Dawsey, eds, *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995), 3; Michael Shane Powers, “From Confederate Expatriates to New South Neo-Filibusters: Major Edward A. Burke and the Americas,” (M. A. thesis: Clemson University, 2012): 6-26.

⁶ As quoted in Strom and Weaver, *Confederates in the Tropics*, 54; Sutherland, *The Confederate Carpetbaggers*, 28; Simmons, Jr., *Confederate Settlements in British Honduras*, 38, 51.

Centennial, and the Louisiana State Lottery Company will demonstrate that the New South creed contained a seminal transnational component.

A formative period of this transnational New South vision occurred after Reconstruction and before the Populist insurgency and Jim Crow era of the late 1890s. The period, which was distinct in southern history, is often divorced from the Gilded Age as a whole or seen as an exception to it.⁷ This New South political culture, as it became known, reflected and furthered Gilded Age concerns. It was among the many ambitious, but problematic, efforts at development and nation-building in late nineteenth-century America. It was indicative not only of the corruption and failures of the age, but also of the dislocating forces of technological change, large wealth gaps, urbanization, immigration, government failures, and what Richard White calls “the timeless human predicament of scaling even the most honorable hopes to the unforgiving metrics of recalcitrant reality.” The South, like the rest of the nation, was experiencing “a prolonged economic, political, and social crisis” marked by “dystopia and utopian fantasies.” To confront it, the New South idea offered a way for Gilded Age Americans to act collectively, rather than as individuals. The paradoxes of the New South and Gilded Age also comprised a forward looking age nonetheless tethered to “the great gravitational pull of the Civil War.” Perhaps most unfortunately, the New South vision was like the liberalism of Henry Adams and other vaunted worldviews that were idealized versions of society rather than accurate descriptions of the more complicated reality on the ground.⁸

With its urban cosmopolitanism, large immigrant communities, and powerful political machine, an analysis of the economy, politics, and society of New Orleans, therefore, reveals

⁷ Michael R. Hyman, *The Anti-Redeemers: Hill-Country Political Dissenters in the Lower South from Redemption to Populism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 8.

⁸ White, *The Republic for Which It Stands*, xviii-xix, 7, 77, 8, 58.

that it was both distinctly southern and characteristic of other American cities in the era. Indeed, postbellum New Orleans was a city in flux. Having annexed Jefferson City, Algiers, and Carrollton in the preceding decades, its population of roughly 250,000 occupied only one-tenth of the nearly two-hundred square miles within the municipal boundary. Lakeside areas of the Ninth Ward, for example, were a morass of wilderness and cypress swamps. Its three most distinctive features were the riverfront levees, French Market, and Canal Street. One visitor, Emil Deckert, remarked that portions of the city were “imposing and elegant,” complete with well-cared-for sidewalks and electric lighting that illuminated a city that was both “decidedly tropical” and reminiscent of Paris and Holland for its boulevards and gardens. However, noting characteristics of most urban spaces in the era, Deckert also found in other parts “an indescribable chaos” of filth and mud, where animals and vermin disturbed sleeping residents with the “nocturnal caterwauling” of battle.⁹

Despite a lasting legacy in culture and aesthetics, Creoles based in the Vieux Carré no longer vied for decisive political and economic power in late nineteenth-century New Orleans. Native-born Americans anchored above Canal Street, strong Irish and German communities established in the antebellum era, a small but significant group of Latino residents, and a growing wave of Italian immigrants, added to a sizeable black population, comprised a vibrant, polyglot city that resembled many northern cities of the era. These were the ethnic and racial contours of the New Orleans encountered by Major Edward Austin Burke in 1869.¹⁰

Burke was acknowledged in his own time as a leading New South zealot, but he has been

⁹ Joy J. Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age: Politics and Urban Progress, 1880-1896*, Second Edition (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 4-7; as quoted in Frederic Trautmann, "New Orleans, the Mississippi, and the Delta through a German's Eyes: The Travels of Emil Deckert, 1885-1886," *Louisiana History* 25 (Winter 1984): 80, 82-84.

¹⁰ Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 9, 11.

woefully understudied. A Confederate veteran who became a central cog in Louisiana's Democratic political machine and a leading American capitalist and politico in Central America, Burke was the embodiment of a transnational New South vision that shaped the Americas. As owner-editor of the New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, Burke enjoyed a marvelous platform from which to broadcast his vision of a transnational New South that promoted Latin America as a market for southern-made exports and an investment opportunity for southern businessmen.

Specifically, Burke conceptualized New Orleans as the metropole of the circum-Caribbean, with prosperity for the entire Mississippi River valley arising from the extensive trade of commercial, industrial, and manufactured goods with Latin America. This dissertation, therefore, frames Burke as a leading advocate for a coterie of southerners that privileged such expansion, rather than reliance on cotton, as the centerpiece of regional progress. The New South's emphasis on a diversified economy, based on industry and commerce, was presented as an alternative to the region-wide economic shift towards sharecropping. This was especially apparent in New Orleans, where the erosion of the antebellum plantation economy, the resulting sharecropping system, and the spread of railroads undercut the Crescent City's economic standing while strengthening such regional rivals as St. Louis and Atlanta.¹¹ As the leading scholar on New Orleans in the Gilded Age, Joy Jackson has argued that two main problems faced the city, and indeed the state as a whole, "the revival of commerce" and "the struggle for political ascendancy between . . . Ring and reformer elements in the Democratic-Conservative Party."¹²

This in-depth study of Major Edward A. Burke's political career seeks to carry out Brian

¹¹ Michael Ross, "Resisting the New South: Commercial Crisis and Decline in New Orleans, 1865-85," *American Nineteenth Century History* 4 (Spring 2003): 60.

¹² Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 16.

Ward's call for transnational approaches centered on a "granular" study of individuals, events, or institutions in appropriate case studies.¹³ In so doing, it will place the interconnected, transnational forces present in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in a grounded and discernable framework. A study of Burke is uniquely suited for the task. The major had personal and formidable experiences in the Gulf South, on the eastern seaboard of the United States, and in Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa. In addition, he oversaw the first nationally-sponsored international exposition in the former Confederacy. The 1884 New Orleans fair displayed technologies and products from scores of companies and nation-states around the world that shaped and at times threatened gender roles, racial hierarchies, class norms, local political dynamics, and imperial visions. Burke was also a key partner in the alliance between Louisiana's Democratic government and the Louisiana State Lottery Company. The Louisiana lottery, with its tentacles in Latin America and nearly every state of the Union, insured that no other Gilded Age political machine utilized national and transnational ties as successfully as Louisiana's Ring Democrats. Beginning in Louisiana in 1868 and ending in Honduras in 1907, the Louisiana lottery as an institution demonstrated the fluidity of Reconstruction, the Gilded Age, and the Progressive Era. As a state sponsored enterprise with an international reach, it also became a formidable transnational force.

In no small part due to his partnership with the lottery, Burke helped other New Orleans-based politicians fashion a political machine with ties to immigrant communities, laborers, and rank-and-file white southerners. While a key source of strength, the lottery was the focal point of a successful campaign of Reform Democrats who defeated Burke and a slew of other Ring candidates in the 1888 election. It is no surprise that Burke's quick rise to power and equally

¹³ Ward, "Carly Phillips, David Armitage, and the Place of the American South in Atlantic and Other Worlds," 32.

dramatic fall in Louisiana earned him embittered enemies and rivals. Some questioned 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 about leading Louisiana Democrats claimed that Burke was really "A.E. Burk," a fugitive who had "absconded" from Illinois. Another bit of gossip spun by the major's enemies had it that Burke had been a Union spy who delivered "a great deal of valuable information" to Admiral David Farragut in the capture of Mobile.¹⁴

A surprising number of historians have endorsed the notion that Burke was "an adventurer of obscure origin," "probably from Ohio or Illinois," but who "appeared to have been Northern." At least one scholar has even questioned whether Burke served in the Civil War, for either side. Numerous mentions of Burke as a Confederate in the *Official Records*, along with his sworn oath on three passport applications, verify Burke's background and settle the question beyond all doubt. Other scholars have emphasized Burke's skullduggery but discount his genuine transnational New South policy goals. Rather, he has been presented as a "cool-headed and daring gambler" with "splendid audacity," the "most brazen thief in Bourbon annals," a "dealmaker par excellence," and Louisiana's New South "mythmaker-in-chief." However, an in-depth analysis demonstrates that in Burke chicanery and policy goals were not mutually exclusive. Arranging jobs, manipulating the electoral process, and appealing to voters' worst instincts were assuredly in the toolbox of postbellum Democrats, but so were genuine economic and social platforms.¹⁵

¹⁴ "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.

¹⁵ Francis Butler Simkins, *A History of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 322-323; 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*, 128 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 2, 1052; C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South: 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 71; Nystrom, *New*

Following his defeat in 1888 and nineteen indictments after public revelations surfaced that he had misappropriated over one-and-a-half-million dollars in state funds as state treasurer, Burke exiled himself to Honduras, where he capitalized on a large government mineral concession. Before the more widely studied dominance of banana companies at the turn of the century, Honduran leaders courted foreign capitalists such as Burke to help modernize the country through the mining industry. The adherents of what historian Richard Weiner terms “developmental liberalism” extolled subsidies for industry, low business taxes, foreign capital, immigration, infrastructure development, and measures to curtail the Catholic Church and landed aristocracy within a republican form of government. They found eager allies in such transnational New South disciples as Burke and his ilk. Marco Aurelio Soto, the first liberal president of Honduras, moved the capital from Comayagua to a city more suitably located for access to the mineral rich zones of the central highlands, Tegucigalpa, which appropriately means “silver mountain” in Nahuatl. Luis Bográn, Policarpo Bonilla, and other liberal presidents maintained generous stipulations for mining corporations, which paved the way for similar concessions for later, and more exploitative, banana companies.¹⁶

During his near forty-year residency in Honduras, Burke held diversified interests in the country’s railroads and real estate while maintaining his own mineral concessions, which included “one of the largest tracts of mineral land ever conveyed to one individual.”¹⁷ Burke also maintained strong ties to his allies in Louisiana, none more so than with the co-owner of the Louisiana lottery and former Ring ally John A. Morris, who was a silent partner in Burke’s

Orleans after the Civil War, 182; Miki Pfeffer, *Southern Ladies and Suffragists: Julia Ward Howe and Women’s Rights at the 1884 New Orleans World’s Fair*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 3; Golway, *Machine Made*, xxiv.

¹⁶ “History of Major Burke’s Frauds,” *New York Times*, Mar. 22, 1894; Richard Weiner, *Race, Nation, and Market: Economic Culture in Porfirian Mexico* (Tucson, Ariz.: University of Arizona Press, 2004), 22.

¹⁷ W. A. Thacher, “Mining in Honduras,” in American Institute of Mining Engineers, *Transactions of the American Institute of Mining Engineers*, vol. 20 (Philadelphia: Sherman & Co. Printers, 1892), 405.

Central American operations and provided access to networks of British capital. The major also actively supported numerous Honduran administrations by defending the government in no less than three revolutionary uprisings. He held five different high-ranking positions in government-supported railroads, recruited other foreign capitalists, served as intermediary when disputes arose between capitalists and Honduran leaders, and informally advised several presidents on matters ranging from infrastructure projects to American politics.

In addition to mining, links between Honduras and Louisiana were particularly vibrant due to the relocation of the Louisiana lottery to Honduras, where it became *La Compañía Nacional de Lotería de Honduras* (The Honduras National Lottery Company). Burke used his ongoing partnership with Morris to facilitate an agreement between the gambling enterprise and President Policarpo Bonilla. Burke had “fought and fell” with Bonilla’s rival during a grueling civil war in 1894. Thus the deal between the lottery and Bonilla’s new government was a crucial moment in allowing for Burke’s return into the country. The lottery, which maintained a vigorous illicit business in the United States, and Burke’s various dealings were at the forefront of transnational ties between Central America and the United States. Yet they were also among the rising tide of dealings, especially in Latin America, that “blurred the line between legal and illegal capital flows.”¹⁸

As historian William Schell Jr. demonstrates in his work on Mexico, American capitalists at the dawn of U.S. imperialism did not possess unquestionable dominance over the politics and economies of Latin American nations. Burke’s operation in Honduras was part of a “give-and-

¹⁸ E.A. Burke to George Hoadley [sic], April 8, 1897, Fondo Policarpo Bonilla, Marzo-Mayo, 1897, Archivo Nacional de Honduras, Antigua Casa Presidencial de Honduras, Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Katherine Unterman, *Uncle Sam’s Policemen: The Pursuit of Fugitives Across Borders* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 105.

take relationship” in a multi-national “trade diaspora of expatriate cross-cultural brokers.”¹⁹ While not operating on the same scale as the regime of Porfirio Díaz, Burke was part of a group of foreigners and exiles living in Honduras that engaged in trade via personal connections or, more aptly, concessions. Moreover, Hondurans acknowledged Burke’s New South vision as distinctly regional. Burke’s associations with other Americans in Honduras also demonstrate that, while eagerly partnering with northerners and Europeans for capital, southerners in Latin America formed a tight-knit group and maintained their regional identity along with a broader American patriotism. This was no doubt strengthened by their experience in the Civil War and Reconstruction, but it was also akin to the ways in which immigrants to the United States retained their ethnic identity while acting, and being received as, American citizens.²⁰

Burke also typified most Americans in Latin America during the era by displaying mixed motivations and goals stemming from his prolonged residency in Honduras as, what historian Katherine Unterman terms, a “fugitive philanthropist.” He often expressed a devotion to the interest and people of the country that Hondurans, or at least the Honduran press, perceived as genuine. A Honduran publication in 1914, for example, described Burke as “an enterprising businessman” and “cultivated gentleman,” one whom “public opinion consider[ed] . . . a helpful foreigner and a loyal friend of the country.”²¹ Whenever Burke expressed an opinion concerning relations with the United States that he knew was unpopular with Hondurans, he emphasized that, with his business interests and life so inextricably bound to Honduras, his proposals were always made in the country’s best interest. Burke was proud of his cosmopolitanism, his

¹⁹ William Schell Jr., *Integral Outsiders: The American Colony in Mexico City, 1876-1911* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), x.

²⁰ Schell Jr., *Integral Outsiders*, xvi.

²¹ Unterman, *Uncle Sam’s Policemen*, 102, 110; *Boletín de la Secretaria de Fomento, Obras Publicas, y Agricultura*, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, May 31, 1914. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author’s.

command of the Spanish language, and the array of social and political festivities that made him part of the elite.²²

As the first extensive analysis of Major Edward A. Burke, from his Confederate service and Louisiana political career to Central American capitalist and politico, this study seeks to expand our understanding of the American South and Latin America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By exploring social and political exchanges on the ground, it utilizes American and Latino perspectives to demonstrate how the interplay between both regions was the defining variable in their respective developments during a shared, if conflictual, history.

²² Burke to Bonilla, December 10, 1897, E.A. Burke Papers, Mss. 547, 620, 641, 893, 1226, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge, hereafter cited as, "Burke Papers: LSU."

Chapter One: Major Edward A. Burke and the Struggle for “Home Rule” in Louisiana

Burke’s ascending power within Louisiana during the last decades of the nineteenth century was exceptionally rapid, even in the remarkably fluid milieu of postbellum New Orleans. His grandfather reportedly immigrated to South Carolina in the first decades of the nineteenth century as an Irish insurgent fleeing British authorities. Born Edward Austin Burk in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1841, his father was a relatively prosperous architect and provided his son with a stimulating life of education and travel. The exact details of Burke’s antebellum life are difficult to determine. Once he achieved prominence, multiple people at various points, be they allies or antagonists, or Burke himself, contributed to the confusion. Upon his death, the *New York Times* ran an Associated Press story that stated that Burke worked at a railroad telegraph office at thirteen years of age and was a division superintendent in charge of several hundred men by the time he was seventeen.¹ Nonetheless, the beginning of the Civil War found the nineteen-year-old working on the Texas Central Railroad, where he enlisted in the Confederate army. He ultimately rose to the rank of major. The Civil War and its immediate aftermath were formative experiences in shaping a fluid and transnational outlook for many of Burke’s generation.² His actions at this stage of life foreshadowed the defining characteristics of his transnational outlook: an unbridled pursuit of power, gregarious personality, and keen wit that flourished in the ever shifting world of permeable borders the Civil War and postbellum eras bequeathed the Gulf South.

¹ Alcee Fortier, ed., *Louisiana: Comprising Sketches of Parishes, Towns, Events, Institutions, and Persons, Arranged in Cyclopedic Form* (Madison, Wis.: Century Historical Association, 1914), 1:135; Napier Bartlett, *Military Record of Louisiana: Including Biographical and Historical Papers Relating to the Military Organizations of the State* (New Orleans: L. Graham & Co., 1875), 18; “Major E.A. Burke Dies in Honduras,” *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 1928.

² Justin A. Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War: Race, Politics, and a New Birth of Freedom* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 25.

By 1864, Burke was among those officers who oversaw the sale of Confederate cotton in Mexico as a quartermaster and the chief inspector of field transportation in Texas.³ After the fall of Vicksburg cut off areas west of the Mississippi from the Confederacy, Trans-Mississippi Department commander Edmund Kirby Smith exercised authority as the leading regional official for the Confederacy. In so doing, he established a Cotton Bureau to appropriate the region's cotton for military use. Smith appointed a prominent New Orleans cotton factor, William A. Broadwell, to organize a two-pronged process of exchanging southern cotton for much needed cash and supplies. First, Broadwell created a Confederate system of western wagon trails. As a quartermaster and transportation officer, Burke was among those officers whose duties included hauling cotton in wagon trains that stretched from the Ouachita River, into San Antonio, and finally to Laredo or Matamoros on the Rio Grande. Confederate agents then negotiated with assertive Mexican merchants. Merchants in areas along the Rio Grande capitalized on the Confederacy's dire straits and the increase of Mexico's domestic cotton production to negotiate deals favorable to Mexico. Such hard bargains resulted more often in bartering for weapons and supplies rather than a cash exchange.⁴

The area between the Ouachita and Mississippi rivers fell into Broadwell's second scheme. Confederate agents in the Gulf South sold cotton to foreign merchants, predominantly English companies, involving on at least one occasion the Baring Brothers, who guaranteed it

³ 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*, 128 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 2, 1052. Cited hereinafter as *O.R.*

⁴ Judith F. Gentry, "Confederates and Cotton in East Texas," *East Texas Historical Journal* 49 (Spring, 2011): 30; Judith F. Gentry, "White Gold: The Confederate Government and Cotton in Louisiana," *Louisiana History* 33 (Summer 1992): 233-234; Thomas Schoonover, "Mexican Cotton and the American Civil War," *The Americas* 30 (April 1974): 446-447; James W. Daddysman, *The Matamoros Trade: Confederate Commerce, Diplomacy, and Intrigue* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 127; Joseph Howard Parks, *General Edmund Kirby Smith, C.S.A.* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1954), 287, 292-296; For a more detailed account of New Orleans cotton merchants' ties to Mexico during the Civil War, see *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, 38 Cong., 2 Sess., 3 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1865), III, 17-19.

would not go the United States. Buyers paid in specie, British sterling, U.S. currency, or New York exchange notes. In turn, Confederates used the cash and notes to buy supplies across the Rio Grande or in Mexican port cities like Tampico. Thus, Burke took active part in transnational commercial links that provided the Gulf South with an essential, viable path to maintaining the Confederacy in the trans-Mississippi during the last two years of the Civil War.⁵ Cited as an exemplary organizer by his Confederate superiors, Burke would build on this formative experience in dealing with the fluidity of borders, goods, and people to conceptualize a transnational New South vision that, he hoped, would outpace the Old South.⁶

Once the Civil War concluded, Burke's proximity to Mexico and the nature of his Confederate service made exile there a viable option. According to his recollections a decade later, Burke was initially fearful of hostile federal policies directed toward recent rebels and strongly considered joining Kirby Smith and others as a Confederate expatriate in Mexico. Smith's emissary, General Simon B. Buckner, ventured to New Orleans, where he signed an agreement with U.S. delegates headed by General Edward R.S. Canby on May 26 to arrange for the surrender of the trans-Mississippi Department. Smith formally surrendered his command on June 2, 1865, in Galveston, Texas. 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, as "Mexico fever" swept across the defeated Confederacy.⁷ Yet southern exiles were often disheartened and bitter, primarily motivated by resignation and fear. The

⁵ Gentry, "White Gold," 239-240; see also Fredericka Meiners, "The Texas Border Cotton Trade, 1862-1863," *Civil War History* 23 (December 1977): 293-295.

⁶ *O.R.*, ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 2, 1053.

⁷ Bartlett, *Military Record of Louisiana*, 23; Daniel E. Sutherland, *The Confederate Carpetbaggers* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 10 & 11; Stephen Franklin Shannon, "Galvestonians and Military Reconstruction," (M. A. thesis, Rice University, 1975), 231, 34; Daniel E. Sutherland, "Looking for a Home: Louisiana Emigrants during the Civil War and Reconstruction," *Louisiana History* 21 (Autumn 1980): 341, 342, 347.

young, ambitious, and pragmatic Burke, however, took the amnesty oath and chose a route that held opportunities for prosperity and power.⁸

Ultimately, Burke landed in the port city of Galveston. He was among those who increased the Island City's population from 3,500 at the time of Smith's surrender to over ten thousand by 1867. Burke's varied employments, including a stint as a telegraph operator, reflected the vacillating nature of the early years of Reconstruction. His most notable occupation was as a cotton factor for one of Galveston's largest commercial firms, T.H. McMahan & Gilbert, which grew after the war by fighting stay laws and actively pursuing foreclosures. With his early ties to Thomas H. McMahan, the ambitious Burke displayed his penchant for grafting himself to powerful figures. A leading socialite and businessman, McMahan headed the city's push for an opera house and was the cofounder, in September 1865, of the first nationwide banking institution in Texas, the First National Bank of Galveston. Within a few years, Burke had formed his own partnership, Stoddart & Burk, amid a steady revival of Galveston trade. His firm no doubt utilized Burke's association with McMahan, who likewise held ownership in one of Galveston's new cotton press companies. Stoddart & Burk were wholesalers in imports, mostly liquor and cigars, and exported cotton, a business that again rested on the South's commercial trade with the wider world.⁹ Galveston's value of exports were ten times greater

⁸ Undated handwritten postscript in letter from Thomas Garland, Treasury Department, to E. A. Burk, September 3, 1867, E.A. Burke Papers, 1837-1919, Louisiana Research Collection, Manuscripts Collection 680, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, hereafter cited as "Burke Papers: Tulane."

⁹ Shannon, "Galvestonians and Military Reconstruction," 93, 75-80, 83, 98; *Cases Argued and Decided in the Supreme Court of the State of Texas* (Houston: E.W. Cushing, 1878), vol. XLVIII, 337-338; Bartlett, *Military Record of Louisiana*, 23; According to the city director, Burke lived in the same building at 64 East Strand Street as his firm, see C. W. Marston, *Galveston City Directory, For 1868-1869, Including a Complete Business Directory and Street Guide* (Galveston: Shaw & Blaylock, 1868), 23, 74; also *Galveston Directory, for 1866-1867* (Galveston: W. Richardson & Co, 1867), 141; Thomas D. Watson, "Staging the 'Crowning Achievement of the Age': Major Edward A. Burke, New Orleans and the Cotton Centennial Exposition," *Louisiana History* 25 (Summer 1984): 230, 231.

than that of imports while the amount of tonnage entering the harbor within a year of the end of hostilities, 375,000, doubled antebellum annual norms.

Burke also joined a Galveston fire brigade, the Washington Steam Fire Engine Company No. 1, and was elected the city's chief engineer, thus showing early signs of social and political ambition while trying to find the prosperity that eluded so many southerners in the years following Appomattox. Galveston was characteristic of cities in the era, with volunteer fire companies that functioned more as social clubs than as groups of professional civil servants.¹⁰ His post as chief engineer included a role in Galveston's municipal government, which was Burke's first taste of political office.

As the center of Texas commerce and a dynamic Gulf South hub, Galveston was likewise a flashpoint for racial and political violence. The Island City was a base for both the Freedmen's Bureau and black army troops, both of which led to ubiquitous altercations that took place in streets, saloons, and local courts. Conflicts between local white authorities hostile to Republican control and the federally-supported armed forces from the Fifth Military District served as a primer for Burke's later experiences in New Orleans.

Burke's time in Galveston also overlapped with a significant early moment of Lost Cause ceremony. In the summer and fall of 1866 Galvestonians sent money collected from a benefit concert to aid state appropriations to transport Albert Sidney Johnston's remains from New Orleans to a newly revived Texas State Cemetery in Austin. Whether as a fireman with the city's civic organizations that participated in the cortege from Galveston's wharf to a train depot bound for Austin or among the businesses that lined their shops with crepe, Burke likely took

¹⁰ "Fireman's Meeting," *Galveston Daily News*, Jan. 20, 1869; Shannon, "Galvestonians and Military Reconstruction," 93; David G. McComb, *Galveston: A History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 100-101, 47-48; Marston, *Galveston City Directory, For 1868-1869*, 97; Thomas O'Connor, ed., *History of the Fire Department of New Orleans* (New Orleans: np, 1895), 194.

part in the city's display of mourning when Johnston's body passed through Galveston in January 1867.¹¹

When one of the worst yellow fever epidemics ever to hit Texas struck in late July 1867, Burke decided to remain in Galveston. His decision to risk contracting the deadly disease was a calculated gamble to further his business prospects. It also provided unexpected political opportunities. The Galveston customs house collector was among the scores who either "died on the island like sheep" or fled the city by mid-August. Finding the post empty, Burke took temporary charge of the office. Despite describing himself as a "Johnny Reb" who was only "twenty-five percent reconstructed," Burke administered the post well enough to convince Treasury Department officials in Washington to abandon plans to remove the Texas branch beyond the reach of the epidemic. Burke's willingness to gain knowledge of, and possibly favor with, the Office of Internal Revenue likely also had a personal motivation, as Stoddart & Burk was soon implicated in a tax scandal.¹²

In the spring of 1869, Burke's business ambitions led him to New Orleans for a visit that would shape the rest of his life. He specifically came to attend the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce's widely publicized Mississippi Valley Convention, held in late May 1869. Burke arrived in New Orleans a week before the convention's opening and applied for a passport to travel from New Orleans to Cuba. The application gave his name as "Edward A. Burk"; in it, he swore that he was a "native born and loyal citizen of the United States and about to travel abroad

¹¹ Shannon, "Galvestonians and Military Reconstruction," 149, 157-61, 161-66, 169-170; Andrew Forest Muir, "State Cemetery," *Handbook of Texas Online* (June 2010), <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/les02> (accessed Jan. 09, 2018).

¹² Thomas Garland, Treasury Department, to E. A. Burk, September 3, 1867, in E.A. Burke Papers, 1837-1919, Louisiana Research Collection, Manuscripts Collection 680, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, hereafter cited as "Burke Papers: Tulane;" as quoted in Jacy Teston and Mason Meek, "Yellow Fever in Galveston, Texas," *East Texas History*, accessed March 28, 2018, <http://easttexashistory.org/items/show/251>; "The Epidemic at Galveston," *New York Times*, Sept. 12, 1867.

in Cuba.”¹³ Records do not indicate whether Burke made the journey or for how long he may have been gone, but it is possible that he planned a trip to Cuba as a business venture to aid his import-export firm. Nonetheless, Burke was assuredly back in New Orleans for the commercial convention on May 24 and was among the scores of businessmen and politicians interested in advancing the South’s economic interests.

The South during these years experienced a host of commercial meetings held in river towns, port cities, and inland areas where delegates espoused southern progress with a remarkable dearth of partisan quibbles, race-baiting, bickering over Reconstruction, or maligning certain members as carpetbaggers. While public devotion to the South was a ubiquitous theme, delegates tied their regional pride to assertions of national unity. Such occasions were also the place for local boosters to emphasize a collective mentality and downplay municipal rivalries more commonly expressed in city newspapers. Delegates centered on more efficient water transportation and took the saying “a rising tide lifts all boats” to heart as their rhetoric argued that advancements in one area of the South would increase prosperity throughout the region and country as a whole. That such conventions were often held, perhaps intentionally, in non-election years no doubt improved the inclusive atmosphere.¹⁴

The goal of the New Orleans convention Burke attended was to convene all those who had a commercial interest in the Gulf South and Mississippi valley in order to devise strategies to overcome competition from Chicago and the eastern seaboard that was increasingly diverting the Mississippi trade. Proponents of the meeting sought commercial partnerships with states and territories in the West. The convention’s motto, “The South extends a cordial greeting to the

¹³ (National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.), *Passport Application, 1795-1905*, Collection Number: *ARC Identifier 566612/MLR Number A1 508: M1372*, Roll #: 161.

¹⁴ *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Commercial Convention Held in the City of Memphis, Tennessee, May, 1869* (Memphis: Southwestern Publishing Company, 1869), 58.

Northwest,” indicates that leaders from cities of the Mississippi valley and Gulf South hoped to benefit from the western trade of grain and livestock. Convention organizers pledged to “confer fully on all the matters touching the common interests of the South, West, and Northwest.” To strengthen the postbellum bonds between the South and West, newspapers in New Orleans stressed that any lingering animosity between the regions stemming from the Civil War was all but gone. Organizers of the commercial convention, likewise, included Union veterans from western states, such as Iowa’s General William Vandever, as speakers, while a Missourian served as president of the convention.¹⁵

Burke was among convention attendees that deliberated on a wide array of practical proposals supported through government initiatives. Members overwhelmingly approved government aid to improve navigation of southern and western rivers as well as to remove silt at the Mississippi’s mouth that impeded ocean-going steamers seeking to dock at New Orleans. Since blockages in the Mississippi and common shoals in other rivers were the fault of no one state, delegates sought national government aid. Burke also approved of convention proposals to boost foreign immigration, specifically in New Orleans, and to provide federal postal subsidies between cities connected to the Mississippi and principal ports in Latin America and Europe. Moreover, convention delegates supported federal subsidies for a southern transcontinental railroad, with New Orleans as a major nexus, and for construction of an isthmus canal in Central America. Delegates also hoped to tap the nation’s growing agrarian discontent with the monopolistic tendencies of railroads and the exploitative methods of grain elevators to argue that river commerce was inherently more equitable. Southern boosters often viewed various

¹⁵“An Abstract of the Most Important Documents Published by the New Orleans Commercial Convention, May, 1869,” *Debow’s Review* (August 1869) 688, 692, 696; *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Commercial Convention*, 58.

proposals as mutually supportive. Increasing the export of western grains to Europe through the Mississippi and New Orleans, for instance, was meant to foster reciprocal links that would, in turn, boost European immigration to the South.¹⁶

Burke wasted no time after the convention in making himself a talking point in the local New Orleans scene. An 1895 *History of the Fire Department of New Orleans* recounts Burke's early days in New Orleans and demonstrates how his combination – however ostentatious - of boldness, self-sacrifice, and flair for the dramatic produced a potent mixture for gaining respect in the late nineteenth-century public sphere that prized masculinity. Two days after the Mississippi Valley Convention closed, Burke was in the business district of Canal Street when residents were alerted to a nearby fire. Burke hurried to the scene to find members of the Firemen's Charitable Association of New Orleans working the Mississippi No. 2 fire engine. Drawing upon his experience as chief engineer of Galveston, the brave Burke grabbed a hose and ran into the burning building with the rest of the local firemen. Following the engagement, members of the local company called Burke a "bully fireman" and immediately invited him to join the unit.

Around this same time, economic turmoil derailed Burke's prospects in Texas. The bubble of rapid revival and speculation that drew Burke to Galveston burst in the last years of the decade, spurred by poor cotton crops in 1866 and 1867. In the details of paying import taxes, the major's firm became involved in a whiskey revenue scandal and resorted to bankruptcy. Judge John Charles Watrous dismissed the government's case against Burke's company in federal

¹⁶ "An Abstract of the Most Important Documents," *Debow's Review*, 691-692; *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Commercial Convention*, 58, 82; Scott P. Marler, *The Merchants' Capital: New Orleans and the Political Economy of the Nineteenth-Century South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 217; Burke remained an advocate for these measures for the decades to come, see *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Third Congress, 1874-1875* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1875), vol. 5, 655-656.

district court in January 1869, but the affair undercut the company's success. Before going under, Burke's firm paid the federal government more than twenty-five-hundred dollars. By the end of 1869, a nearly impoverished Burke had resigned as Galveston's fire chief and relocated to New Orleans in search of a fresh start. 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 – he also added an “e” to his surname around this time.¹⁷

Despite the impression given from such ordered and non-partisan commercial conventions as the one held in 1869, the city Burke migrated to was in the midst of momentous political and economic upheaval. Cynicism and pragmatism were pitted against ideological and idealistic concerns in the postbellum era in ways that were particularly suited to opportunistic ambition and tough-mindedness but also allowed for masculine authority and respect for Civil War veterans in the pursuit of their postwar goals. New Orleans's precipitous collapse from prominence was a shattering event that stained communal honor and respectability.¹⁸ Amongst the Civil War's dislocations was the all but total loss of New Orleans's tobacco trade. New Orleans financial institutions, which had made the city the leading banking center for the South, likewise suffered rapid decline with uncompensated abolition and widespread land destruction.

Even without the Civil War's devastating effect on the New Orleans financial sector and trade, railroad growth in the Upper South, West, and North had begun in the antebellum era to divert the flow of trade away from Mississippi steamboat traffic and towards iron tracks that ran

¹⁷ O'Connor, *History of the Fire Department of New Orleans*, 193-4; C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South: 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 70; *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Third Congress*, 656; Shannon, “Galvestonians and Military Reconstruction,” 94-95; “U.S. Court,” *Galveston Daily News*, Jan. 7, 1869; \$2,516.45 check from Stoddart & Burke to Internal Revenue, September 4, 1867, in Burke Papers: Tulane. Burke joined a string of Kentucky-born men, whom Creoles in the early days of American influence pejoratively called Kaintocks, that sought opportunity in New Orleans; see John Churchill Chase, *Frenchmen, Desire, Good Children, and Other Streets of New Orleans*, Third edition (New York: Collier Books, 1979), 68; “Local Matters,” *Galveston Daily News*, Dec. 8, 1869.

¹⁸ Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 30.

east and west through such growing metropolises as Chicago. While New Orleans remained the cotton metropole in 1860, leading the nation with annual exports of four and a half million bales, the share of the cotton crop lost to east coast railroad traffic already topped over one hundred thousand bales in 1870. The city's drop-off in cotton profits was a driving factor for strategies like those displayed in the 1869 commercial convention, which sought to offset the loss by courting foodstuffs from the Midwest and Great Plains. Railroads and merchants with ties to Chicago and the east coast likewise provided new means of credit, merchandise, and transportation that capitalized on the postbellum entrenchment of sharecropping and small country stores. New Orleans businesses increasingly found themselves marginalized by northern wholesalers and merchant creditors that offered what used to be New Orleans's economic hinterland more efficient options. The completion in 1874 of James Buchanan Eads' bridge over the Mississippi at St. Louis, an engineering marvel funded by Andrew Carnegie, provided an efficient means of shipping cotton through St. Louis and established the city as a burgeoning commercial hub.¹⁹

Such factors as structural problems and a changing global economy were not the sole reason for the Crescent City's economic woes. Many residents in New Orleans allowed partisan battle lines and racial antagonisms to hinder a search for common ground with northerners over economic development. The New South's reconciliation message collided with steadfast resistance to Yankees. Republican newspapers routinely reprinted the narrow-minded remarks of recalcitrant southerners, as when the *Picayune* opined in 1869 that New Orleans was "not yet

¹⁹ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 295; Michael Ross, "Resisting the New South: Commercial Crisis and Decline in New Orleans, 1865-85," *American Nineteenth Century History* 4 (Spring, 2003): 60-61; Marler, *The Merchants Capital*, 217, 221; Edwin de Leon, "The New South," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 49 (September 1874): 555; Theresa A. Case, *The Great Southwest Railroad Strike and Free Labor* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 20.

prepared for the footsteps . . . of the Northman . . . the impress of his as a soldier is yet too fresh upon the Southern heart . . . so, although the Northerners' money and energy are welcome aids to southern recuperation . . . the man himself, or the man's wife, or his daughter, are . . . reminded that there is no welcome for them."²⁰

Local political clashes in Louisiana were long remembered and caused decisions at the municipal and state level to play a significant role in the course of national and international business. While Benjamin Butler's infamous General Order No. 28 resulted in lingering hostility toward all Yankees, his economic agenda also had a lasting legacy in Louisiana. Butler's heavy-handed attempts to push New Orleans infrastructure and sanitation into the modern age made a significant number of New Orleanians perceive subsequent modernization efforts as the schemes of nefarious northerners. Such opinions had roots in the postbellum political landscape of New Orleans, whose "Republican leaders knew that if the 'gospel of prosperity' was going to succeed anywhere, its best hope was in the Crescent City."²¹ Henry Clay Warmoth's youthful zeal for economic development as governor is the best example. He aimed to expand the Crescent City's railroad trunks to east Texas, the Great Lakes, and Northeast, repair the levees, construct modern sewers, relocate slaughterhouses away from municipal water supply, and build a nineteenth-century equivalent to the industrial canal that would make New Orleans a more efficient Gulf port. Some opponents of Republican rule viewed such ambitious schemes for economic development as a ruse to promote racial equality. When the Republican legislature in 1870 authorized the city of New Orleans and the state to sell their stock in the New Orleans, Jackson, and Great Northern Railroad to the Southern Railroad Association, headed by the Northern capitalist Colonel Henry McComb, opponents of the measure won a court injunction to block the

²⁰ New Orleans *Daily Picayune* as quoted in the *New Orleans Republican*, June 3, 1869.

²¹ Ross, "Resisting the New South," 63.

sale and even arrested McComb in New Orleans. Former U.S. Supreme Court justice and ex-Confederate John A. Campbell won the case by smearing the Republican-backed decision as a product of racial inferiority and corruption.²²

If new economic competition in the form of Chicago and the mid-Atlantic were not enough to darken the horizon of the New Orleans economy, former trading partners also became fierce competitors. St. Louis, Memphis, and Atlanta were in the vanguard of adapting to the economic dislocations wrought by the Civil War as well as to changes in market forces and technologies. In addition, these cities refused to let their regional affinities and southern pride blind them to the fact that northern capital was fundamental to local growth. The fifteen years after Appomattox proved crucial in establishing the geopolitical and economic terrain of an increasingly competitive industrial capitalist country. Atlanta became an early example of how to separate anti-Yankee politics from pro-northern business recruitments. Atlanta procured seven million dollars in northern investments in the 1870s. As a result, Georgia added nearly a thousand miles of railroad track in the decade after Appomattox, bringing the state's total to 2,264 miles. During the same period, obstructionists in Louisiana allowed a mere two hundred miles of track to be constructed in that state, a woefully backward total of 539 miles in operation.²³ Southern cities on the Atlantic seaboard also competed for trade that had once gone to New Orleans. Norfolk made efforts for direct trade with Europe and considered the Crescent City a rival. As one sagacious New South advocate observed in 1869, "Every man who lives on the sea coast naturally thinks his harbor destined to be a great seaport town."²⁴

Plans in the late 1860s for direct trade of western foodstuffs and southern cotton between

²² Ibid, 63 & 65.

²³ Ibid, 59.

²⁴ *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Commercial Convention*, 91

St. Louis and Liverpool particularly rattled New Orleans businessmen. William M. Burwell, a member of the local chamber of commerce, represented New Orleans leaders in a concerted effort to thwart the plan. In a public letter to St. Louis capitalists, Burwell presented a statistical argument meant to demonstrate that pure logistics made such a direct route economically disadvantageous for St. Louis. Aspiring St. Louis merchants would be far wiser to ship goods through the mouth of the Mississippi, which offered “the cheapest rates between production and consumption.”²⁵ Essentially, New Orleans businessmen were telling their counterparts in St. Louis that it was in their best interest to remain partners, not competitors. If hard economic theory could not persuade, New Orleans businessmen also emphasized that both cities should be on the same side of regional rivalries that formed the north-south trade of the Mississippi valley competing with new east-west lines from Chicago to New York. “Instead of separating the interest of the river cities from those of New Orleans,” Burwell contended, “it is alone by cooperation with her that the river trade can be preserved at all.”²⁶ Appealing to sentimentality was not an unfounded rationale. Like New Orleans, St. Louis had a vibrant pro-Confederate community and a strong presence of Catholics and French Creoles.²⁷

Attempting to mitigate the potential advantages of new competitors and strengthen their connections to international trade, New Orleans created a cotton exchange in 1871 modeled after those in New York and Liverpool. Yet the exchange proved to have unintended consequences that added to the economic woes of New Orleans. By permitting futures trading in cotton, which allowed merchants in the hinterland to buy cotton in advance and ship it through New Orleans on

²⁵“Plan of Through Trade Between St. Louis and Liverpool by Way of New Orleans,” *Debow's Review*, vol. 6, issue 8, (Aug 1869): 633.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 639.

²⁷ Marler, *The Merchants' Capital*, 218

bills of lading, interior country merchants were able to bypass New Orleans merchants' commission fees and a significant amount of port surcharges.²⁸

Shortly after moving to New Orleans, Burke seized upon his personal bond with New Orleans firemen to make inroads into the city's political and social scene. He "became a well-known member" and "achieved eminence in more ways than one" by serving as his fire company's elected representative on the Firemen's Charitable Association's (F.C.A.) twenty-four member board of delegates and finance committee.²⁹ The Louisiana legislature chartered the Firemen's Charitable Association in 1837, and since 1855, the independent volunteer organization had functioned as New Orleans's official fire department by renewing five-year contractual agreements with the city. All told, the F.C.A. included around a thousand volunteer firemen who were representative of a wide swath of the city's social strata, from leading businessmen to day laborers. Except for a handful of paid administrators, none received a salary, not even members of the finance committee and board of delegates like Burke.

Burke's involvement in the fire brigade provided him with a strong resume of public service, charity work, and political experience that resonated with all socio-economic sectors of postbellum New Orleans. During his tenure on the finance committee, for instance, he helped oversee F.C.A. aid to firemen injured while on duty as well as to one-hundred-ninety widows, three-hundred children, and fifty orphans of New Orleans firemen. Along with the better known exploits of Carnival krewes, the fire department was a frequent contributor to the vibrant civic culture of New Orleans and often partnered with the city's fraternal organizations and clubs. The department put on a combination of festivities, games, and parades while also hosting benefit performances and events at various theatres and opera houses to aid the association's charity

²⁸Ross, "Resisting the New South," 66; Marler, *The Merchants' Capital*, 223.

²⁹O'Connor, *History of the Fire Department of New Orleans*, 193, 298.

initiatives. Recognized as an official social event along with Mardi Gras, All Saints Day, and July 4th, the city's firemen put on an annual parade on the fourth of March to celebrate the day of its charter. Even before gaining public office, Burke's role in the F.C.A. allowed him to dole out services in return for reciprocal networks of favors. Operating in such political and social circles even strengthened Burke's conviction that Latin American trade was a necessity for New Orleans prosperity, in as much as board of delegates members worked closely with the organization's president, Isaac Newton Marks, who was president of the New Orleans, Florida, and Havana Steamship Company.³⁰

Firefighting companies also gave Burke significant political capital with immigrant and working-class families. Wood frame houses and shanties were those most likely to burn in a fire, not the relatively fireproof brick buildings of businesses and elites. Drives to enact municipal legislation to regulate more fireproof construction threatened working-class home ownership and property. By protecting working class homes from flames, firemen like Burke were also helping to protect working-class independence.³¹

In 1871, Burke was instrumental in defeating Republican efforts not to renew the F.C.A.'s five-year contract with the city. Never before had the organization "been subjected to so severe a trial," declared Marks, as their opponents sought to centralize fire services under a municipal department. In a public letter to Governor Warmoth, Burke spoke for the F.C.A. and argued that the city's contract with the association was at least twice as cost effective as an alternative plan to expand government services. A larger municipal budget would then require a

³⁰ O'Connor, *History of the Fire Department of New Orleans*, 59-60, 298, 151, 209, 205; J. Curtis Waldo, *Illustrated Visitors' Guide to New Orleans* (New Orleans: J. Curtis Waldo, 1879), 84; Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 120.

³¹ Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 491.

rise in taxes. Moreover, Burke asserted that a streamlined government-run fire department would induce fire insurance companies to increase their rates, bringing the aggregate economic pinch felt by citizens and businesses to over a million dollars annually. Warmoth, seeking to build a broad business-friendly Republican coalition, was convinced by Burke's logic and recommended to New Orleans officials that the city would be "best served by a renewal of the contract with the Firemen's Charitable Association." With such a bipartisan campaign to maintain the arrangement between the city and the F.C.A., the organization received another five-year contract of \$140,000 per year to handle municipal fires.³²

By 1872, Burke had not only risen to become the head of the freight department of the New Orleans, Jackson and Great Northern Railroad, but also chairman of the local Democratic campaign committee. There he was closely aligned with the politically active banker, Louis A. Wiltz.³³ In 1873, Burke's roots in New Orleans grew deeper when he married Susan Elizabeth Gaines. Born to a family of Kentucky slave owners, Gaines was said to be a "brave, clear-headed woman" of "independent fortune" whose first husband, William Meade Montgomery, died in the Civil War.³⁴ Burke's position on the railroad and as a Democratic operative intersected on at least one occasion. H.S. Kimball of Philadelphia was an agent for the New Orleans, Jackson, and Great Northern Railroad, charged with lobbying members of the Louisiana legislature in 1871 to support the passage of House Bill No. 282, commonly known as the Jackson Railroad Bill, which would allow Henry S. McComb to purchase the state's shares of

³² O'Connor, *History of the Fire Department of New Orleans*, 207-210.

³³ Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 70; Waldo, *Illustrated Visitors' Guide to New Orleans, 1879*, 221; William Hosea Ballou, "Major Edward A. Burke," *The Journalist*, 3 (April 17, 1886): 1. In sworn testimony, Burke asserted that his position as freight agent began in 1870, see *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Third Congress*, 659.

³⁴ Ballou, "Major Edward A. Burke," 1; Will of Susan E. Gaines, April 30, 1913, Puerto Cortes, Honduras, in Burke Papers: Tulane; "Slave Bill of Sale, July 1859, in E.A. Burke Papers, Mss. 547, 620, 641, 893, 1226, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge, hereafter cited as, "Burke Papers: LSU."

the railroad. Following his aforementioned unsuccessful 1870 attempt to purchase the state and city's interest in the railroad, McComb used his deep pockets to dispatch Kimball in an effort that would ultimately achieve success.³⁵ Kimball approached S. W. Scott, a Union veteran from New York and member of the Orleans parish Democratic party executive committee, to serve as a clandestine witness in the exchange of money for support since "some members would object to giving [Kimball] a receipt."³⁶ After successfully distributing up to a thousand dollars each for the support of roughly fifty members of the state house, the railroad lobbyist agreed in the parlor of the Saint Charles Hotel to pay up to twice as much for the support of key state senators. In addition to Senator Hugh J. Campbell, railroad agents allegedly exchanged money with Lieutenant-Governor Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback, a wealthy mulatto from Mississippi who was both "daring" and "morally ambiguous" as well as one of the leading black politicians in postbellum Louisiana.³⁷

After a falling out between Kimball over his own payment, Scott revealed details of the intrigue in sworn Congressional testimony in February 1872. Scott claimed that roughly forty thousand dollars had been spent to secure the support of state legislators. As a Democratic partisan, Scott singled out leading Republicans and claimed not to remember bribing any specific Democrats. Nonetheless, another forty thousand was distributed for other purposes. Along with city government officials, local police officers and railroad officials had been paid "quite an amount" of the latter sum for successfully inducing an opposing lawyer to withdraw an injunction against the bill.³⁸ Machinations like those used to secure the Jackson Bill's passage

³⁵ *Miscellaneous Documents, The House of Representatives, Second Session of the Forty-Second Congress, 1871-2*, 480

³⁶ *Ibid*, 474.

³⁷ Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 102.

³⁸ *Miscellaneous Documents, The House of Representatives, Second Session of the Forty-Second Congress, 1871-2*, 475.

occurred with such frequency that politicians and lobbyists who greased the skids of postbellum Louisiana politics were known as “the third house” of the legislature. However, Scott’s testimony demonstrates the ambiguity characteristic of postbellum politics. When asked whether he explicitly bribed anyone, Scott replied in the negative by claiming that he had merely “carried messages to men, and told them that if they were all right on certain questions they could find a certain amount of money.”³⁹

Burke’s role in the attempts to oust radical Reconstruction in 1872 demonstrate his growing political stature. Three tickets competed for the votes of Louisianans who were dismayed with the current direction of the Republican party in the 1872 election. The Liberal Republicans were aligned with the morally flexible and pragmatic incumbent Governor Henry Clay Warmoth, who led a strong group of mostly white Republicans out of Louisiana’s state party convention in July 1872. The rival faction of Republicans that controlled the “bastion of Republicanism in Louisiana,” the New Orleans Custom House. Known as the Custom House ring, its members used ties to the national party and federal patronage to overtake the party apparatus and nominate William Pitt Kellogg, Louisiana’s Republican senator, for governor. Stephen B. Packard was the U.S. marshal for the state, chair of Louisiana’s Republican party, and staunch nemesis of Warmoth. Meanwhile, President Ulysses S. Grant, who likewise harbored animosity towards Warmoth, installed his brother-in-law, James S. Casey, as New Orleans’ custom house collector. Overlapping with a larger national movement among disillusioned Republican operatives to nominate Horace Greeley for president, Louisiana’s Liberal Republicans were motivated by more than mere patronage. While speaking to centrists who accepted a constitutional amendment to extend civil rights to African Americans, they

³⁹ Ibid, 480.

sought to replace the emphasis on racial egalitarianism and partner with southern whites behind a vigorous platform for government-aided economic growth.⁴⁰

The Reform Party constituted another of the anti-radical factions. They were a Democratic splinter group centered in New Orleans and led by wealthy merchants who sought a middle road that accepted the reality of black political and social reforms in the interest of political stability. The leader of New Orleans Reformers, as they called themselves, was none other than Isaac Newton Marks, the wealthy president of the Firemen's Charitable Association. A member of the elite Boston Club, an antebellum Whig, and president of the New Orleans, Florida, and Havana Steamship Company, Marks embodied the background and goals of most Reformers. Marks and the Reform Party also represented Louisiana's position on the New Departure movement within the Democratic party, which repudiated race baiting and sought to achieve "home rule" through a paternalistic wooing of black votes.⁴¹

Burke acted as political realist and pragmatist by siding with Democratic moderates who sought to unite all anti-Grant factions in an effort to defeat the Republican establishment they viewed as radicals. More than a few Democrats had previously broken bread with the custom house faction in shifting Republican power away from Warmoth, and many of them continued to oppose any union with Warmoth's allies. In the Democratic state convention of April 1872, one delegate spoke for "last-ditch" Democrats stridently opposed to fusion when he thundered, "I want to save Louisiana, I am willing to cohabit with the devil . . . I am willing to cohabit with the naygur [sic], but I am damned if I will cohabit with Governor Warmoth!"⁴²

Ultimately, the moderate faction of Democrats that included Burke overrode naysayers in

⁴⁰ Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 103-104, 122, 188.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 119-121.

⁴² *Ibid*, 124; for a full roster see Appendix J and K of Henry Clay Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1930).

their ranks who maintained a diabolical hatred for Republicans of any ilk. How this feat was accomplished reveals the fluid political situation and rapidly shifting coalitions that were characteristic of postbellum New Orleans politics. In August 1872, Burke was among a significant number of Democrats who attended the Liberal Republican convention as a voting delegate. Indeed, the roster of delegates represents a who's who of rising postbellum Democrats. Burke and John Fitzpatrick, destined to become intrepid Ring Democratic rivals, represented New Orleans's Second Ward and commanded its six votes. Thomas O'Connor, the longtime chief of the F.C.A., and James D. Houston, future Burke ally within the Ring, represented the Third Ward. Robert Nash Ogden, a sitting Democratic state senator, represented the Eleventh Ward and was the cousin of Crescent City Democratic Club president and subsequent commander of the White League, Frederick Nash Ogden. All eighteen delegates from East Baton Rouge, meanwhile, had been active at the Louisiana Democratic convention earlier in April. Burke and others clearly seized on the opportunity of a divided Republican party and attempted to influence the convention to accept fusion under terms favorable to Democrats. Previously, staunch supporters of the Democracy, including Ogden and Robert Hardin Marr, had exhibited a similar strategy when they took part in the meeting that established the Reform Party.⁴³

Even as an acknowledged Democratic organizer in the 1872 campaign, Burke took an active part when the Liberal Republicans met on August 5 at the Academy of Music in New Orleans.⁴⁴ Indeed, Burke's nomination of W.W. Pugh, a leading sugar planter from Assumption Parish, as the president of the convention was unanimously approved. Burke's choice reflected

⁴³ Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 119.

⁴⁴ Garnie William McGinty, *Louisiana Redeemed: The Overthrow of Carpet-Bag Rule, 1876-1880* (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Company, 1941), 148.

his goals as a moderate Democrat. Pugh's acceptance speech expressed the hope that the several hundred assembled delegates would be "influenced by a spirit of harmony and good feeling" in order to "unite all the parties opposed to the Custom House ticket and Grant."⁴⁵ The task fell to a central committee, dubbed the Committee of Conference, which included Burke among its fifteen members. They were elected for the express purpose of conferring with Democratic and Reform leadership in order to hammer out a fusion ticket. The Liberal Republicans' association with Warmoth was a particularly large impediment. The *Picayune*, a leading voice of "last-ditch" Democrats, pilloried Warmoth as "false . . . deceitful . . . [and] devoid of honor and principle" while crying that "the Czar of Russia would not dare to exercise the same despotic sway over his people that this detested young man does over the people of Louisiana."⁴⁶ To make the pill of fusion less bitter for those who opposed Warmoth, Burke and convention leaders successfully induced the incumbent governor to withdraw his name from any consideration for a spot on the ticket. Nonetheless, Burke spent the next several days in talks that lasted well past midnight to build a fusion ticket acceptable for all three factions. In a speech of good faith to those who lamented Warmoth's removal from consideration, the governor included Burke when singling out a dozen-odd political leaders who were "gentlemen of the highest standing."⁴⁷

Liberal Republicans, along with Reform Democrats, shared a common cause with Regular Democrats in opposing the Republican establishment of Grant and Kellogg. Yet partisan wrangling hampered any easy solution. Burke and Democratic leaders acted from a position of strength and demanded that they control the top of the ticket. When the committee of

⁴⁵ Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction*, 185; John C. Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields: From Slavery to Free Labor in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes, 1862-1880* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 167.

⁴⁶ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, Aug. 7, 1872, as quoted in Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction*, 194.

⁴⁷ Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction*, 190.

conference presented the Democratic offer, the Liberal Republican convention voted it down. The convention adjourned shortly thereafter, and the ensuing weeks of informal backroom dealings proved more successful for Democrats. By early September, Liberal Republicans and Reformers accepted a fusion ticket headed by Democratic stalwart John McEnery for governor. For the vast majority of other state and national officers, from lieutenant governor to secretary of state, Democrats accepted candidates chosen by Liberal Republican and Reformers. Democratic operatives also astutely realized that control of New Orleans was a seminal stepping stone to overtaking the whole state. Consequently, Burke, as candidate for administrator of improvements, and Louis A. Wiltz, as mayoral candidate, were among the Democrats on the municipal fusion ticket.⁴⁸ As in their agreement to support the contract renewal of the F.C.A., the seemingly strange bedfellows of Burke and Warmoth united again in the interest of pragmatism, moderation, and similar economic agendas.

In July 1872, Burke resigned from his post on the F.C.A.'s board of delegates to focus on his campaign and lessen apparent conflicts of interest. Ultimately, the decisive factor in Burke's attempt to become administrator of improvements was the emergence in the campaign of Pierre G. T. Beauregard. The well-known former Confederate general was a conservative sympathetic to the Reform party who rejected the fusion arrangements and ran as an independent candidate for the office. Despite Beauregard's renown, Burke's own natural charisma and the support of the Democratic machine brought him within thirteen hundred votes of the former general.⁴⁹ Burke placed third, garnering a total of 8,834 votes to Beauregard's winning tally of 9,972 and

⁴⁸ Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 126-127; Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction*, 198; Bartlett, *Military Record of Louisiana*, 25; Liberal Party of Louisiana correspondence to Burke, October 4, 1872, in Burke Papers: LSU.

⁴⁹ O'Connor, *History of the Fire Department of New Orleans*, 220; Burke remained a volunteer firefighter but resigned his administrative duties; T. Harry Williams, *P. G. T. Beauregard: Napoleon in Gray* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955), 268; Joe Gray Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed: 1863-1877* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 200; Waldo, *Illustrated Visitors' Guide to New Orleans*, 221.

the Republican candidate's total of 9,187. While Beauregard split the anti-Republican vote, Burke outpolled the general in the Democratic machine strongholds of the Third Ward, the largest in the city, and the Fourth Ward.⁵⁰

At the state level, the election of 1872 witnessed both the Republican Kellogg and the fusionist-aligned Democrat, McEnery, claiming gubernatorial victory with “no means short of necromancy” used to determine the legitimate winner.⁵¹ The contest devolved into an issue of which faction could undercut the other with political maneuvering and threats of violence. Legality was not a concern. At one point, Republicans accused fusionist supporters of planning to blow up the statehouse with nitroglycerin. 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, both Kellogg and McEnery held inauguration ceremonies as governor, and each appointed separate sets of state officials. Both sides resorted to gunplay in the crisis of legitimacy. Only with the backing of Washington and the support of federal troops did Kellogg finally “win” the election.⁵²

Even in defeat, Burke's purported activities improved his stock with the New Orleans citizenry. A popular story around the Crescent City was that Burke pulled off an ambitious and comical heist that thwarted Kellogg's attempts at voter fraud. The custom house faction allied with Kellogg deposited several wagon loads of election returns intending to cull fusion tickets. Before they could complete the task, Burke and two of his long-term political partners, Marshall Stoddard and Jim Houston, snuck into Mechanics Hall and “bootlegged” the returns by hiding them in their clothing and secreting them to Democratic operatives. According to the tale,

⁵⁰ *New Orleans Republican*, Nov. 15, 1872.

⁵¹ George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 123.

⁵² *Ibid*, 123, 132, 137.

Stoddard was assigned to stuff tickets from large Democratic parishes and the Third Ward because “the seat of [his] pantaloons” was the “size of a bake-oven.” It is highly likely that Stoddard was Burke’s old business partner in Galveston. Listed as “M. Stoddart” in Galveston records, it appears that both men made a minor change to their surname and maintained their friendship in New Orleans. Six years later, when Burke was a New Orleans tax collector, he employed Stoddard as a clerk.⁵³

While McEnery’s defeat was a significant setback for Burke, Wiltz’s election as New Orleans mayor ensured that Burke’s political trajectory was rooted at the local level. The defeat of the fusion ticket in 1872 incurred a major, if unforeseen, benefit for Democrats in that Republicans subsequently inherited the fallout from the ensuing Panic of 1873. The panic proved how industrialization, corporate capitalism, and increased globalization could create a tangle of problems that produced a seemingly bottomless economic abyss. Beginning with a financial crash in Vienna, Austria, the bankruptcy of Jay Cooke and Company on September 18, 1873, caused a ripple of economic collapse from Wall Street to main streets across the United States. Republicans from Capitol Hill to New Orleans were then faced with economic divisions that only compounded already divisive racial policies. Facing the worst economic downturn the country had known, the Panic of 1873 was a crucial factor in Reconstruction’s demise and the resurrection of Democratic power. An analysis of how the panic shaped Louisiana’s political terrain provides an illustration at the state level.⁵⁴

The Panic of 1873 crippled industrial production, foreign trade, and agricultural prices especially hard in the South. In New Orleans, it sank the economy. The *Picayune* highlighted

⁵³ Bartlett, *Military Record of Louisiana*, 26-27; Marston, *Galveston City Directory, For 1868-1869*, 57; Soards’ *New Orleans City Directory, 1878* (New Orleans: L. Soards & Co. Publishers, 1878), 640, 202.

⁵⁴ Nicolas Barreyre, "The Politics of Economic Crises: The Panic of 1873, the End of Reconstruction, and the Realignment of American Politics." *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 10 (October 2011): 403-4.

how the Crescent City's unique economic circumstances engendered "peculiar difficulties" that made New Orleanians suffer "greater in proportion and more in general than in other sections."⁵⁵ Faced with severe unemployment, the panic's dislocations fragmented workers along lines of race and skill instead of serving as a vehicle for class-based cooperation. The Kellogg administration's passage of a new civil rights bill in 1873 that mandated equal public access to accommodations and transportation heightened poor-white angst.

Despite a setback for labor unions, laborers organized a rowdy popular movement that demanded state and municipal authorities alleviate the plight of their constituents through public works projects and an expansion of positions in the city's administrative departments. Similar movements in other cities, from New York and Philadelphia to Chicago and Cincinnati, had already arose by the spring of 1874. The dire situation emboldened volatile workers to shift their tactics in pressuring for change by pursuing direct political action, such as petitioning the government for employment relief. Meanwhile, Kellogg and the Republican controlled state house's attempts to alleviate the economic situation were not what most laborers had in mind. One such example was a joint resolution calling on Congress to establish a national observatory in New Orleans to cement its relation to Greenwich, England, and aid the city's participation in the "world of navigation and commerce."⁵⁶ When a key Republican constituency, black sugar workers, struck in Terrebonne Parish in 1874, Kellogg hesitated to use force but ultimately called in the state militia. In July 1874, hundreds of white laborers and mechanics gathered in Lafayette Square to rally for government-sponsored employment relief. Instead, Kellogg zigged

⁵⁵ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, July 18, 1877.

⁵⁶ Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 45-6; "No. 100 Joint Resolution," *Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana at the Second Session of the Third Legislature, Begun and Held in New Orleans, January 5, 1874* (New Orleans: Republican Printing Office, 1874), 150-151.

when Republican opponents zagged. The governor sought to meet standard Democratic allegations of corruption and bloated government with a reduction in government spending. Rather than alleviate railroad corporations that collapsed in the panic, Kellogg liquidated them. Neither initiative would likely have met strident opposition in normal times, but the charged political atmosphere induced by the panic was anything but normal.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, Burke continued to present a public stance that favored pragmatism over partisanship. The New Orleans press published an open letter from Burke in which he repudiated shifts towards “making a straight out fight under the Democratic, White League banner.” Burke continued to espouse his message of a broad consensus coalition of conservatives united against what he termed “Radical demagogues” and in favor of Louisiana’s much-needed economic rehabilitation. “The organization of a political party based upon race distinctions is a political blunder,” he asserted, and would prove “destructive to the development of our material interests,” such as government aid in river improvements. Burke was among those, including many sugar planters, who saw excessive political terror as bad for business and agricultural harvests. Despite having worked for Democratic interests in previous campaigns, Burke epitomized a common postbellum political strategy of appearing to rise above partisanship:

Thirty per cent of the voting population of the South have become voters since 1861. They have trained under Democratic leadership since the war through nine years of disaster and defeat. To many of these young men the glories of the Democratic party are

⁵⁷ Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, 45-6; Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*, 160-165; James Hogue, *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 117.

only traditional. We now seek for peace, through the burial of dead issues, and yearn for the restoration of the era of material prosperity in the South.⁵⁸

Thousands of unemployed in a city that was roughly seventy percent white and in a state where a fusion ticket of anti-radicals failed to oust the Republican establishment just two years earlier proved an explosive mixture in September 1874. White League ranks swelled with people who were stung by perceived economic injustices that only added to their long-held opposition to racial equality. The fusion of Liberal Republicans and Democrats had dampened political violence in 1872, but economic despair made many whites embrace more desperate measures after the panic.⁵⁹ A full year after the 1872 elections, remnants of the fusion campaign held even tighter to their view that the Kellogg administration was stillborn and illegitimate.⁶⁰

In these circumstances, Kellogg's hold on New Orleans was tenuous by the fall of 1874, and the days of his control of the old French city were numbered. On August 5, the state Republican convention nominated Antoine Dubuclet for the only state office elected on off-cycle years, that of treasurer. Democrats convened a few weeks later to nominate John C. Moncure for treasurer along with congressional candidates. In the following days, six Republican politicians were shot in Red River Parish.⁶¹ Racial tensions were as thick as the humidity. Disillusionment with the Republican establishment, particularly its failure to provide tangible economic benefits, the state's increasingly dire economic prospects, and the threat of racial violence, induced some African Americans to vote Democratic. William Alexander, president of a local black fraternal society in the First and Second Wards, lamented, "[Republicans] used us for their benefit on

⁵⁸ *New Orleans Republican*, July 17, 1874; Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*, 166-167.

⁵⁹ Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 131.

⁶⁰ *People's Convention Held in the City of New Orleans, Louisiana: Extracts from the Proceedings* (New Orleans: np, 1873), 5. The Colfax Massacre is the most notorious example of political violence arising over disputes in the returns of the 1872 election. There, Democrats believed that Kellogg was making appointments in Grant Parish before the returning board's results were known. See Fortier, *Louisiana: Comprising Sketches of Parishes*, 606.

⁶¹ Fortier, *Louisiana: Comprising Sketches of Parishes*, 606.

election-day, and then afterward . . . had no use for us, never give [sic] us any work.”⁶² In addition, White League terrorism against blacks who were politically active Republicans was wearing on New Orleans’s black community.

Sometime in August, the seven-hundred-and-twelve members of Alexander’s working class-black organization voted to support the Democratic ticket in the upcoming election. Their rationale was both economic and racial. With the Panic of 1873 hitting non-white laborers worst of all, some blacks bargained that Louisiana’s economy under Democrats “could not be any worse than it was.” “We thought we would have a change,” Alexander later recounted to a congressional committee, “simply to get a better living; to get work for the laboring man.”⁶³ Valid fears of an impending White League murder spree likewise induced the group’s members to exchange their vote for assurances of safety, which the White League on occasion guaranteed to Democratic-voting blacks through a certification of protection.

While Alexander swore that his organization did not switch its party preference due to direct intimidation or overt promises of employment, he knew Burke from working six years for the major on the Jackson Railroad. In the small world of New Orleans politics, it is a distinct possibility that one of them approached the other in search of a tit-for-tat arrangement. Intimidation and paying Republican leaning voters to stay home was a common tactic among Democrats. Yet, as prevalent as black voter intimidation and suppression was, Democratic activities in New Orleans also included token gestures toward blacks, public statements of support, and compensation to black leaders for their assistance. Burke himself asserted that he did not extend specific guarantees of employment, but promised to treat people of color who supported the Democratic ticket “fairly and give them a fair division of patronage.” African

⁶² *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Third Congress*, 678.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 678.

Americans, however, encountered physical violence either way they chose in the lead-up to the election. Other blacks retaliated for what they regarded as Alexander's group's treachery by injuring several of them and killing one in an ambush.⁶⁴

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 to overthrow of Republican government in what would become known as the Battle of Liberty Place. The city's elites played a prominent role. The Boston Club had previously supported the defendants in the Colfax Massacre of 1873; this time, members of the Pickwick Club led the resistance against Reconstruction. As freight agent for the Jackson Railroad, Burke, a few days earlier, had helped ensure the delivery of several cases of weapons to White Leaguers. Then, potentially ruinous intelligence arrived: federal troops were to be sent to the city to investigate the armory theft. Bloodshed with Kellogg's partisan mercenaries was one thing, but open conflict with U.S. troops was a matter to be avoided at all costs, so Burke devised an ingenious plan. Instructing his foremen at various points along the southbound line to remove staggered sections of track, he created gaps in the line as long as five hundred yards. His agents masterfully feigned confusion and naivety to cause multiple hours of delay at each station. 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 disruption.⁶⁵

In the meantime, Burke helped supply arms and provisions to the conservative forces in New Orleans who initiated a chaotic type of partisan warfare. While not formally a part of the

⁶⁴ Ibid, 681, 677, 680-681, 662; Mark Wahlgren Summers, *Party Games: Getting, Keeping, and Using Power in Gilded Age Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 102.

⁶⁵ Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 137, 138; Waldo, *Illustrated Visitors' Guide to New Orleans*, 221; *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Third Congress*, 659. Burke denied

White League, Burke acknowledged “an intimate association” with its leaders and was singled out for merit by the White League’s commanding general, Frederick Nash Ogden, whom Burke served as a staff officer during the fight.⁶⁶ 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, the latter commanded by one of the South’s most reviled scalawags, former Confederate general James Longstreet. New Orleans women even took an active part in the conflict by distributing ammunition to White Leaguers. By sunset, the White League had captured most state buildings and controlled the city. The large anti-Kellogg coalition was initially overjoyed with its 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 so the brief period of White League control ended. As one of the last Louisiana militia officers among the insurgents, Burke turned over control of the state house and stockpiles of arms the insurrectionists had captured to General John R. Brooke of the U.S. Army. However, the writing was on the wall for Republicans in Louisiana, and the Kellogg government had only a veneer of legitimacy heading into the November state elections.⁶⁷

In October, tensions between Burke and Kellogg escalated from partisan to personal when Burke took a leading role on the state central committee of registration. Indicative of

that he “used some efforts to detain the troops” before a Congressional committee; see *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Third Congress*, 660; G. Howard Hunter, “Late to the Dance: New Orleans and the Emergence of a Confederate City,” *Louisiana History* 57 (Summer 2016): 307-308. While the exact details cannot be known, Burke would not discourage later beliefs that he had intentionally delayed federal troops; see Bartlett, *Military Record of Louisiana*, 27.

⁶⁶ *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Third Congress*, 654, 659. Ogden had family that participated in William Walker’s filibustering expedition in Nicaragua; see Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 40.

⁶⁷ Ballou, “Major Edward A. Burke,” 2; Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 137, 138, 139; *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Third Congress*, 673, 660, 662.

political maneuverings amid the turbulence of Reconstruction, both Burke and Republicans attempted to rectify what they argued were fraudulent voter rolls. When the committee dissolved around October 20, Burke took it upon himself to carry out “a plan to secure fair revision of the registration.” His rationale was that “prominent Republicans,” most likely former allies under the fusion banner, had disclosed that no more than twelve thousand black voters resided in Orleans parish. Yet, registration rolls in 1874 contained 18,394 African Americans. Burke then gathered affidavits and claimed to have discovered 5,200 examples of fraudulent registration of black voters. It was a case common in postbellum politics and one of the few policies that enjoyed bipartisanship. “Some were registered in . . . six different wards, declared Burke, “some were registered five times in the same ward . . . many names were found to be non-residents, and many were found to be registered under different name in different wards.” Still, Kellogg and his Republicans did not budge an inch.

Kellogg and Burke corresponded in the days before the election, but came no closer to resolving their dispute. Acting as agents for their respective camps, both men became embroiled in a battle over the legality of naturalization in New Orleans’ Second District Court.⁶⁸ Animosity on paper and through committees spilled into the streets just a week from election day. Burke was walking down a New Orleans thoroughfare when Governor Kellogg rode by in a buggy. Recognizing the major, Kellogg leaned out of his window to make a “gesture of derision” with his finger. “While perhaps lacking the patience of Job,” as the Democratic *New Orleans Bulletin* reported, Burke’s response proved that he was “not destitute of the attributes of true manhood.” Burke lunged at the governor, grabbed him by the same arm that had borne the insult, and attempted to pull Kellogg from his buggy. In the course of the melee, Burke thrashed

⁶⁸ Kellogg to Burke, October 26, 1874, Burke Papers: LSU.

his Republican adversary with several stinging licks from a cowhide while the governor's driver desperately whipped the horses and sent 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 man was hit.⁶⁹ This was but the first of Burke's bold, popularity bolstering, physical altercations. The future Democratic newspaperman knew how to cause a public display that would mobilize votes in a campaign.

Nonetheless, Democratic fears were realized when the polls opened. Some Republican-aligned registration clerks had intentionally filled in erroneous addresses on Democratic voter registration certificates. In addition, Burke claimed that "not less than 2,080 white voters were stricken from the polling-lists and refused the right to vote in the parish of Orleans" on election day. He insisted that the drastic increase in white registration was due to massive mobilization efforts that had induced two thousand immigrants, "who had heretofore declined to perform the duties of citizenship," to receive naturalization and cast a ticket. Burke alleged that Republicans countered by spending \$100,000 to bribe a hundred white men to pose as Democratic toughs and instigate racial violence.⁷⁰

Accusations of fraud, misuse of funds, and other forms of corruption were standard tactics employed and decried on both sides of the political aisle. "Vote-buying was not one of the dirty secrets of the Gilded Age," historian Mark Summers asserts, "it was done out in the open, and, like most other vices, came in different moral shadings." At times, the outrage was not over citizens having received cash or services for their votes. People instead complained that

⁶⁹ Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 140; Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 28; *New Orleans Bulletin*, Oct. 30, 1874; *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Third Congress*, 786.

⁷⁰ "A Registration Trick," *New Orleans Bulletin*, Oct. 29, 1874; *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Third Congress, 1874-1875*, 654; Bartlett, *Military Record of Louisiana*, 27, 28.

a certain party had violated the normal protocols or that the price of votes had climbed too high. Burke's accusations against the Kellogg regime did the same.⁷¹

Yet one must take into account how elections were conducted to understand the crux of the issue, which revolved around the finite differences between outright vote-buying and legitimate reimbursements for time and inconvenience. First, numerous election services had a significant impact on voter mobilization. Party coffers legally and commonly were used to provide transportation to the ballot box as a public service. Second, the line between someone put on the machine payroll to work for the party with a standard job, such as sweeping the floor, and someone paid to vote a certain way was all but indistinguishable under the spoils system. Third, more than a few citizens eagerly accepted campaign favors-in-kind in the form of barbeques and beer or joined partisan election night festivities in saloons and clubs. Party organizers would often "treat" the electorate with a service rendered or "set 'em up" with game and grog. If voting Democratic meant an invitation to one of the year's best feasts, such as those held at public Carnival balls, was that seen as an effort to buy votes? The resounding answer for New Orleanians was no. Moreover, Gilded Age political culture taught that "paying for votes was not the same as buying them." In an era in which corporate capitalism became entrenched, it made sense to many people that commodification would spread to electioneering. Many voters expected compensation for their time. Indeed, voters could routinely count on both parties to recoup wages lost while leaving the job site to vote. The significant fact about the use of money in Gilded Age politics is that it functioned as a form of voter mobilization more than as a type of voter manipulation or fraud. Therefore, postbellum politicians no doubt took Burke's

⁷¹ Summers, *Party Games*, 93

claim that Republicans had engaged in bribery, not compensation or mobilization, with serious disdain.⁷²

Whatever the exact mixture of postbellum chicanery that made up the campaign and election day events, Burke finally found himself on the winning side. The reasons were ample. As a prominent member of the New Orleans fire department, Burke used the department as did other aspiring Gilded Age bosses in New York and Chicago. Its essential public services served as a vehicle to cultivate numerous personal and political connections. His service as a fireman also provided useful experience during his campaign for administrator of improvements. Crescent City firemen had to overcome the city's shoddily paved streets and unreliable municipal water supply, at times petitioning the administrator of improvements to rectify the situation.⁷³ Serving as a fireman also provided inroads into the city's ethnic working class, among whom ward politics were crucial for political success. His association with the White League and role in the Battle of Liberty Place aided his standing with hyper-conservatives and racially motivated whites. At the same time, Burke's work on the Jackson Railroad made him known to the city's business interests. Finally, his public statements against the White League per se and previous partnerships with Liberal Republicans gave him a reputation for pragmatism that appealed to the most common sentiment among white Louisiana voters: calls for renewed prosperity and disillusionment with radicals. Toward that end, such brash displays of bellicosity as Burke exhibited in his physical altercation with Kellogg excited public attention and increased support for the major among those who favored bombastic populism. The Seventh Ward

⁷² Ibid, 93-94.

⁷³ Terry Golway, *Machine Made: Tammany Hall and the Creation of Modern American Politics*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), 109; O'Connor, *History of the Fire Department of New Orleans*, 206; *New Orleans Republican*, Apr. 9, 1873.

Reformed Republican Club, for instance, opened its meeting in the evening after Burke's run in with the governor by giving three cheers for Burke as a "noble champion."⁷⁴

As the votes came in, Burke beat his Republican opponent 25,915 to 14,025, and so gained a salary of six thousand dollars a year. More importantly for Burke's aspirations, the office of administrator of improvements had roughly one-hundred-eighty-five patronage positions to dole out, the number of employees needed to maintain forty miles of streets and over a dozen miles of wharves along with the city's drainage. As with Tammany Hall, control over street-cleaning and public infrastructures formed a core source of patronage and power. Located in room sixteen of City Hall, Burke's office also comprised a Bureau of Streets with seven positions and a Bureau of Drainage with two posts.⁷⁵ Burke used the patronage his office afforded to reward men who had helped undermine Republican control in the 1874 election. William Alexander, the black organizer who supported the Democratic ticket, became a foreman overseeing a group of labors on the levee.⁷⁶ However, election to public office meant Burke retired from his railroad career. The president of the New Orleans, St. Louis, and Chicago Railroad, Henry S. McComb, regretted that Burke was resigning in order to pursue "political preferment" but expressed confidence that the railroad's loss "has been the city's gain." New Orleans would reap the "benefits arising from [Burke]'s wisdom," "energy, capacity, and promptitude in the discharge of every duty."⁷⁷

However, politicians in Louisiana were increasingly confronted by the economic contraction of the Panic of 1873. New Orleans received a deluge of laid-off workers from

⁷⁴ *New Orleans Bulletin*, Oct. 30, 1874.

⁷⁵ Golway, *Machine Made*, 135; *New Orleans Bulletin*, Nov. 5, 1874; *Soards' New Orleans City Directory, 1875* (New Orleans: L. Soards & Co. Publishers, 1875), 840.

⁷⁶ *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Third Congress*, 681-682.

⁷⁷ H. S. McComb to Burke, November 30, 1874, Policarpo Bonilla Correspondence, Caja Sin Fecha, No. 5, Archivo Nacional de Honduras, Antigua Casa Presidencial de Honduras, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

surrounding areas that added to the already swelled ranks of the city's unemployed. As a result, a dynamic movement began in 1874 that gave voice to a host of popular cries for relief. In the winter months following the 1874 election, an invigorated Mechanics, Workingmen, and Laborers' Association set its sights on rooting out government waste and mismanagement. The city's financial condition was indeed desperate. New Orleans banks that had not closed were faltering, having already suspended currency payments in October 1874. The association railed against the "inefficiency and fraud of men in office" who had furthered the crisis, even presenting a proposal that the positions of city officials "drawing large salaries and doing very little for it" be replaced by working class jobs on public works and transit. Such working-class resentment also expressed itself by arguing that party patronage had bloated city budgets with needless administrative positions and sought to remedy the situation by calling for public transparency of all municipal jobs, those who filled them, and what salaries they drew.⁷⁸ When the association organized workers to refuse to pay when riding street cars until city officials added more public works jobs, municipal authorities quickly dispatched the city police to suppress the movement.

The decisions of Burke and Democrats during the mid-1870s illuminates where their loyalties lay. Burke, in his quest for the administrator of improvements and role as Democratic campaign operative, had long railed against the "languishing" condition of the city's "commerce, industries and real-estate interest."⁷⁹ Burke was among those who were quick to assert that the root cause, made more apparent in the wake of the Panic of 1873, were burdensome taxes and inefficient use of funds. The promised recourse, then, was smaller budgets and lower taxes, each of which would benefit business interests. Simultaneously, Burke had assured loyal

⁷⁸ Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, 46.

⁷⁹ *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Third Congress*, 655.

working-class conservative voters that the spoils of patronage would flow their way when proper government was restored. However, compounding the problem of city and state finances were the numerous public notices of property auctions the tax collector's office held for derelict taxes stemming from the Panic of 1873.⁸⁰

Even the Louisiana Lottery was not immune from the panic's effects. It lowered its grand prize from fifty thousand to twenty-five thousand, but also reduced ticket prices by fifty percent in order to stimulate sales. Nonetheless, gamblers realized that the reduced prizes were worth more on the dollar in the aftermath of the panic.⁸¹

Thus, Burke was confronted with a difficult choice a year into his post as Administrator of Improvements. Burke figured 5,000 men in the city were unemployed. While city newspapers estimated the numbers were no less than 2,000 unemployed men, they concluded that as many as 15,000 family members were impoverished within the city as a result. Such dire straits led the *Picayune* to project that the "great deal of distress among the laboring classes" meant "perhaps there has never been more in the history of the city."⁸² Burke was besieged by skilled laborers and businessmen who previously "had a thriving business" but were reduced to begging for jobs as low-wage day laborers. All told, Burke in 1875 reckoned that over three thousand job seekers came to him "from all classes...pleading for any employment that will give their families bread."⁸³ Burke made his choice in early June 1875, significantly cutting the size and scope of the Administration of Improvements. Ever the adroit politician, however, Burke acquiesced to working-class anxieties about what they considered over-paid city officials when he likewise reduced the salaries of public works officers. Moreover, Burke and local Democrats

⁸⁰ *New Orleans Republican*, Jul. 12, 1876.

⁸¹ *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Dec. 27, 1873.

⁸² As quoted in Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, 45.

⁸³ *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Third Congress*, 655.

shifted the debate by emphasizing the job opportunities available for those helping Captain James Buchanan Eads continue the long-awaited engineering project to allow ocean-going steamers access to New Orleans that had begun the previous August.⁸⁴

Nonetheless, the conservative stabilizing forces of both the two party system and American capitalism converged in the press and helped leaders like Burke weather the storm of labor unrest. Newspapers overwhelmingly supported the status quo and took strides to maintain business confidence. As Burke's rhetoric indicates, defining progress as material progress became redundant in the Gilded Age. Working-class politics and racial activists were seen as inherently unsettling to the environment of business and politics on which prosperity was based. Newspapers tended to focus on the disruptive results of class or race-based protests and strikes rather than the issues themselves. When a contingent of white working-class Democrats in the Second Ward responded to Burke and city officials' rejection of more public works employment by bolting from the Democracy to form an Independent Workingmen's Club in March 1876, even the city's Republican press quipped that their demands should "rest in a dusty pigeonhole for all time to come." Nor were some of the nation's press above fabricating anti-labor issues whole-cloth from made-up interviews with unsavory labor leaders or false reporting of violence.⁸⁵

Nonetheless, Burke helped ensure a substantial, and ultimately decisive, number of white working-class New Orleanians remained in the Democratic fold. Johnnie McGeehan, whom Burke made superintendent of carts, was indicative of an Irish working-class leader tapped for his crucial links to ward politics. McGeehan was born in New Orleans to Irish parents, entered the skilled industrial trades as a molder, joined the Irish American club, was on the Crescent City

⁸⁴ Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, 46, 274.

⁸⁵ Summers, *Party Games*, 84-85; as quoted in Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, 46.

Democratic club's board of directors, and had previously held the patronage positions in Orleans parish of court clerk and deputy sheriff. Described as "very efficient," "energetic," and "very popular with the voters of New Orleans," McGeehan delivered enough reliable votes to be appointed to the lucrative position of license inspector during the height of Ring power, in John McEnery's governorship.⁸⁶

A couple of years later, Burke deployed his gamesmanship in national affairs as the representative of Louisiana's Democratic gubernatorial candidate Francis Tillou Nicholls' claim to victory in the 1876 election. Burke chose not to run for reelection as Administrator of Improvements or any other post that year, instead devoting his energies to party mobilization and campaigning. 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.⁸⁷ Louisiana had been the most hotly contested political arena in the Union, and by 1875 it had become the "Republican party's albatross."⁸⁸ As chairman of the Democratic State Registration and Election Committee, Burke wrote an official report that detailed Republican fraud, lamented that state government was "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 whites in favor of colored."⁸⁹ Republicans thundered their own complaints against White

⁸⁶ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1892), 487-488.

⁸⁷ Ballou, "Major Edward A. Burke," 2. John McCaffery ran for Burke's former post. See "9th Ward Democratic and Conservative Ticket," printed ephemera, Vertical files, Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans.

⁸⁸ Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 143.

⁸⁹ E. A. Burke, "Statement of Facts Relating to the Election in Louisiana, November 7, 1876," 3, 5.

League intimidation and Democratic voter fraud.

Following the unresolved election returns, Burke partnered with Louisiana's congressional delegation in Washington to put in place a Democratic strategy to continually pressure and negotiate with Republicans to acknowledge a Nicholls gubernatorial victory. Democratic congressman from Louisiana's Second District, E. John Ellis, took part in more than fifty meetings with President Grant during the crucial moments of the winter of 1876.⁹⁰ Yet Burke, whom Ellis later recalled as "the factotum of that whole series of conferences from beginning to end," emerged as the leading actor.⁹¹ In smoked filled rooms with high level Republicans, including President Grant, Burke threatened to help organize a southern filibuster to prevent Republican candidate Rutherford B. 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. An observer in Washington wired back to New Orleans that "Burke deserves infinite credit for his keen and diligent preparation of the case . . . , both in committee and for presentation before the Tribunal."⁹²

Democrats back in Louisiana seized on the paralysis in the capital to consolidate their control of the apparatus of state power. With Packard's Republicans in retreat, the Crescent City White League met at Masonic Hall on January 9, marched through the city, and was formally sworn in at Lafayette Square as a part of the state militia.⁹³ The city and state were once again a powder keg. In February, Republicans claimed Democrats made an assassination attempt on Packard. A month later, Democrats instigated rumors that Republicans had organized an attempt

⁹⁰ Robert Cinnamond Tucker, "The Life and Public Service of E. John Ellis," *Louisiana History* 29 (July 1946): 732

⁹¹ "Presidential Election Investigation," *House Miscellaneous Documents*, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., Doc. No. 31, vol. III, 598, as quoted in Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction*, 192.

⁹² Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 44, 45; *New Orleans Daily Democrat*, Feb. 13, 1877.

⁹³ McGinty, *Louisiana Redeemed*, 94.

to blow up the state supreme court building with gunpowder.⁹⁴ Democrats, who had established their own rival “state house” at St. Patrick Hall steadily siphoned legislators from Packard’s contingent of supporters, who were headquartered at the St. Louis Hotel. According to the New Orleans press, Democrats paid low level Packard legislators eight dollars per day to help form a quorum with Nicholls’s legislature while fifteen thousand dollars was spent to erode support for Packard amongst Republican leaders.⁹⁵

Charles T. Howard and John A. Morris, leaders of the Louisiana State Lottery Company, took advantage of the political vacuum to demonstrate to both sides the power of the lottery purse. The issue arose when the lottery’s state-mandated quarterly payment of ten thousand dollars was due at the end of March 1877, but there was no legitimate government to receive it. The ever pragmatic lottery did not want to make enemies with either faction and was confident that it could deal with whichever side won the state house. So Howard and Morris sent their lottery tax to the state bank in the form of a check addressed to the state auditor without acknowledging either gubernatorial candidate as the victor. In a high stakes battle against the clock, the Nicholls and Packard regimes went to their respective courts, received writs of sequestration, and raced to the state bank to collect the funds. The Nicholls people won and claimed the money. Other businesses and individuals simply refused to pay their taxes until they knew which side had won. Thus, attempts at tax seizures was a daily nuisance to city and state business.⁹⁶

Later, during three days of interrogation and testimony before a congressional committee to determine the details of the compromise, Burke would be pressed by another bombastic and

⁹⁴ Ibid, 109.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 124.

⁹⁶ “Auditor Jumel Makes an Issue,” *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Apr. 4, 1877; “Anarchy in Louisiana,” *New York Times*, Apr. 13, 1877.

controversial figure in Louisiana, former Union general Benjamin Butler, who was now a congressman from Massachusetts. Although Butler was described as an interrogator of “considerable dramatic skill,” Burke remained the same levelheaded politician, unflustered by Butler’s prodding.⁹⁷ 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.” 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.”⁹⁸ 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.”⁹⁹

While Burke’s politicking in the so-called 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 that 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 political skills 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 masterminds of the Union.” Finally, in the aftermath of the

⁹⁷ “Spoiling Butler’s Game,” *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 1878.

⁹⁸ “Negotiations of Burke,” *New York Times*, Aug. 21, 1878.

⁹⁹ “Presidential Election Investigation,” *House Miscellaneous Documents*, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., Doc. No. 31, I, 990 & 1015, in Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction*, 204-205.

Wormley House Bargain, Burke played an active role in shaping his public image by giving the Associated Press the story. The bargain, as C. Vann Woodward points out, allowed Burke rhetorically to 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.” Early in the midst of congressional dealings, the official organ for Louisiana Republicans cried that Burke’s “only practical utility consists in cheering the Democratic mind in Louisiana with highfalutin telegrams.”¹⁰⁰

On April 24, 1877, fifteen years to the day since federal troops first began occupying New Orleans during the Civil War, President Hays’ promises were carried out when federal forces withdrew to their barracks and Packard evacuated the state house. Three days later, jubilant Democrats organized a torchlight procession through New Orleans streets to celebrate the Nicholls government taking power.¹⁰¹

All of this allowed Burke to play an even larger role in the coming age of Democratic “home rule” in Louisiana. Democratic gubernatorial victory in the 1876 election resulted in Louis A. Wiltz ascending to the position of lieutenant-governor and president of the Louisiana Senate. As leading Louisiana Democrats set about consolidating their power, Burke won the office of state treasurer by a landslide in 1878 and began an association with the most notorious of political entities within the state, the Louisiana State Lottery Company.¹⁰² The subsequent

¹⁰⁰ “Spoiling Butler’s Game,” *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 1878; Ballou, “Major Edward A. Burke,” 2; Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction*, 207. There is no doubt that Burke’s role garnered attention from congressional investigations and his activities in Washington D.C. were reported frequently in the national press. See Allan Peskin, “Was There a Compromise of 1877,” *Journal of American History* 60 (June 1973): 63-75; “Presidential Election Investigation,” *House Miscellaneous Documents*, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., Doc. No. 31, vol. III, 598; “Negotiations of Burke,” *New York Times*, Aug. 21, 1878; “Spoiling Butler’s Game,” *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 1878; Ballou, “Major Edward A. Burke,” 2; *New Orleans Republican*, Feb. 10, 1877.

¹⁰¹ McGinty, *Louisiana Redeemed*, 122. Republicans would not control the governor’s mansion of Louisiana again until 1980.

¹⁰² G.W. McGinty, “The Louisiana Lottery Company,” *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 20 (March 1940): 339.

league of state power brokers, including Samuel McEnery, John McEnery, Louis Wiltz, Charles T. Howard, and Burke, inaugurated what opponents would call the 'Ring' for its machine-like grip on state politics throughout the next decade.

Chapter Two: Major Edward A. Burke and Louisiana Machine Politics

By 1875, Burke's stature in Louisiana had grown enough that he was included in a widely popular account of the participation of Louisiana's native sons in the Civil War and their postbellum careers, despite, of course, not being a native of Louisiana (See Appendix A). None other than T. Harry Williams proclaimed Napier Bartlett's *Military Record of Louisiana* a "valuable source" of "permanent significance." Relying heavily on the personal accounts of the individuals in question, Bartlett's work functions as an edited collection of autobiographies. Thus, it provides an important window on how Burke consciously constructed his public persona for political gain. Burke's "Irish stock" was heavily emphasized, with Bartlett presenting him as a son of Éirinn akin to Andrew Jackson and John C. Calhoun.¹

Paramount in the description of Burke was a masculine work ethic in the vein of wage laborers and artisans with no hint of the attributes of frugality or self-control attributed to white-collar professionals. Burke cherished a pride "upon having earned his living in a red flannel shirt as a common laborer when necessity demanded it," Bartlett gushed, and possessed "a constitution capable of enduring any fatigue, natural activity, [or] energy." Burke was praised not only for having the grit and drive of an industrious and self-respecting laborer, but also for understanding and advocating their cause. As he advanced rapidly in railroad crews, Burke "familiarized himself with laborers and mechanics and learned to understand their wants and ideas." Knowledge of such practical vocations allowed him to learn life-lessons more valuable than a college education rooted in "musty Latin and Greek textbooks."²

¹ T. Harry Williams, "Foreword" in Napier Bartlett, *Military Record of Louisiana: Including Biographical and Historical Papers Relating to the Military Organizations of the State* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), vii, viii, 18.

² Bartlett, *Military Record of Louisiana*, 18-19.

Accounts of Burke's service in the Civil War followed the theme of determination, pluck, and pugnacity. Burke was presented as an able horseman, an impromptu marine, and even as a lassoing Texan. These endeavors paled in comparison to his managerial skills as a Confederate major. His reorganization of the Trans-Mississippi's field transportation "became the basis of the organization of the Field Transportation Department of the Confederacy." After he resigned his business interests in Galveston, Burke's experience of temporary but grinding poverty was cast to strike another chord with laborers. The major wandered the streets, was "anxious about his next meal" but "still unwilling to be a burden."³ Hard work and an honest character remedied his situation, which allowed Burke to play a central role in the struggle for "better government." Burke displayed "political sagacity," "finesse," "unremitting watchfulness," and "organizing capacity," which enabled him, in an ironic premonition of things to come, to oversee "large moneyed interests."⁴ Thus, Burke presented himself as a proud descendant of immigrants, pugnacious and gregarious, familiar with physical labor, unselfish, clever, and attentive to the needs of the common people. Manhood was viewed as a necessary requirement to rebuild New Orleans and, through it, the South as a whole. These were fundamental qualities for a postbellum New Orleans politician and the bedrock of Burke's personal appeal. Hyperbole and possible fabrications aside, politics in the late nineteenth century still revolved around the truth that perception is more important than reality.

All of this allowed Burke to play a larger role in the coming age of Democratic "home rule" in Louisiana. Democrats in the Nicholls administration were responsible for distributing patronage positions to some nine thousand applicants within weeks of taking over the state house, which led the *New Orleans Times* to begin the siren call of corrupt and inefficient

³ Ibid, 20, 22-24.

⁴ Ibid, 25, 27, 17.

government, this time under Democratic auspices. Nicholls appeared to agree. Burke and other Democratic insiders aligned with Wiltz grew increasingly alarmed that the newly inaugurated governor planned on holding firm to campaign promises of meritocracy and undermining the spoils system. A Confederate veteran and a hero of Chancellorsville who lost an eye, an arm, and a leg in battle, Nicholls proved to be a tough man to bend to the machine's will. However much Nicholls sought to undercut machine patronage, he could not refuse Burke an appointment to one of the most powerful and lucrative positions at his disposal. Nicholls appointed Burke the state tax collector for the first district (See Appendix B). With an office at 47 Carondelet, located in one of the wealthiest portions of New Orleans, Burke's office was reported to earn thirty to fifty thousand dollars a year. By 1878, Burke also employed his long-standing cashier and private secretary, Alfred W. Cockerton, who would later be indicted in Burke's bond fraud and abscond with him to Honduras. Burke's old friend, former Galveston partner and fellow Democratic operative Marshall Stoddard, was also one of Burke's clerks.⁵

Nicholls's position grew increasingly tenuous in the summer of 1877. The Orleans parish court defied the wishes of the governor when it flexed its Democratic muscles and indicted the four members of the Kellogg-appointed Louisiana Returning Board. Rumors circulated that the indictment of the board was a Ring scheme to trap Governor Nicholls, who was inclined to pardon the officials. Ring operatives would then use the pardons as a means to remove Nicholls

⁵ Garnie William McGinty, *Louisiana Redeemed: The Overthrow of Carpet-Bag Rule, 1876-1880* (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Company, 1941), 125-126; *Soards' New Orleans City Directory, 1878* (New Orleans: L. Soards & Co. Publishers, 1878), 640, 202; Along with Stoddard, Joseph Desposito and Albert Rodenberg were also listed as Burke's clerks, see *Soards' New Orleans City Directory, 1878*, 645, 239, 584; Burke's residence in 1878 was listed at 235 Camp Street, see *Soards' New Orleans City Directory, 1878*, 172; "History of Major Burke's Frauds," *New York Times*, Mar. 22, 1894; 30,000 dollars in 1877 equals roughly 700,000 in 2018; For an account of New Orleans' seven districts and seventeen wards in the 1880s see Joy J. Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age: Politics and Urban Progress, 1880-1896*, Second Edition (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 7-9 and William H. Coleman, *Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans* (New York: Coleman, 1885), 3-5; Simeon Toby to W. H. Pipes, December 1, 1888, State Treasurer's Office Records: 1870-1928, Louisiana State Archives, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

from power. If there was a Ring scheme to skewer Nicholls, it was thwarted when the state supreme court overturned the Orleans Parish's guilty verdict.⁶

The wedge between Nicholls and machine Democrats widened over whether to amend the Republican-directed state constitution of 1868⁷ or draw a new charter. In February 1878, both houses of the Louisiana legislature approved twenty-one constitutional amendments for a plebiscite during the upcoming elections. White rural voters and New Orleans machine-led ward clubs, despite objections from Governor Nicholls, the New Orleans press, and commercial interests, favored writing a new constitution rather than amending the old one. Internecine struggles continued to plague the Democrats when the Democratic state central committee met in May 1878, to nominate candidates. Burke gained the nomination for state treasurer over two other candidates on the fifty-eighth ballot. The election, to be held on November 5, 1878, would set the tone, personnel, and course of Democratic rule.⁸

Burke and Regular Democrats encountered significant opposition. The Greenback party was growing, particularly in the upcountry parishes where farmers affiliated with the Grange were receptive to its message. Oscillating working-class discontent rose again in New Orleans, where another incarnation of the Workingman's Party put forth a slate of candidates with a Greenbacker agenda. The familiar foe of Republican mobilization likewise appeared problematic. Democrats responded with traditional methods. A Democratic organ in north Louisiana, the *Natchitoches People's Vindicator*, used race-baiting by declaring, "[We shall] treat all who do not aid us as negroes, whether their skin be white or black." In one northern

⁶ McGinty, *Louisiana Redeemed*, 128-135.

⁷ For debates over the 1868 state constitution, see John C. Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields: From Slavery to Free Labor in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes, 1862-1880* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 98-103.

⁸ McGinty, *Louisiana Redeemed*, 153-155, 148.

parish along the Mississippi, Democratic operatives led vigilantes who violently dispersed a campaign for a biracial Country People's ticket. Democrats in New Orleans deployed their new grip on the city machine, where the U.S. circuit court charged at least four clerks for refusing to register African American voters. Election fraud in the Crescent City likewise played a role in suppressing the Workingman's Party, which received only two hundred votes.⁹

The use of these means reflected the high stakes for the Democracy. All state house members, eighteen state senators, the state treasurer, six congressmen, and most parish and city-level positions were on the ballot. The Democratic ticket proved victorious and won positions from the federal level to municipal government. For his part, Burke won the office of state treasurer in a landslide. In addition to the power the office afforded, 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. Born into a slaveholding family of *gens de couleur libre*, Dubuclet was the richest free black sugar planter in Louisiana before the war, with over one hundred slaves. As treasurer, he was the only African American during Reconstruction to hold the office for more than one term. 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, Democrats soon used their newly attained power to launch an investigation of the treasurer.¹⁰

The *Richland Beacon*, a Democratic newspaper from the cotton parishes of north Louisiana, recounted a familiar means of corruption in the state treasury, through the redeeming

⁹ Matthew Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-Labor Insurgency in the Late Nineteenth-Century South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 39-40.

¹⁰ Charles Vincent, "Aspects of the Family and Public Life of Antoine Dubuclet: Louisiana's Black State Treasurer, 1868-1878," *Journal of Negro History* 66 (Spring 1981): 26-27.

of state warrants and bonds. It contended that a "speculating ring of New Orleans" told people seeking to cash a warrant that the treasury was out of money. Individuals were then left with no choice but to locate a broker and sell their bonds at a measly thirty to sixty cents on the dollar. Middlemen would then redeem the bonds at full value through a treasury official who received part of the profits. According to the *Beacon*, Dubuclet was apt to understate the total receipts in quarterly and fiscal year reports in order to keep the price of bonds low. The newspaper hoped that Democrats could ensure "a strict accountability for a faithful and honest discharge" of the treasury. They worried, however, that should such commonplace corruption continue through the upcoming election, a new treasurer might "be exposed to the temptations with which the office is now surrounded." Despite Democratic efforts, the legislative committee did not find enough evidence to indict Dubuclet, but the *Richland Beacon's* fears would prove prophetic during Burke's term in office.¹¹

Meanwhile, all amendments but one, to move the capitol to Baton Rouge, failed in the 1878 elections. Apparently, a faction of Democrats mobilized voters to reject the amendments as a means to strengthen the call for a new constitutional convention. *The Sentinel* of Bayou Sara and West Feliciana Parish concluded as much. It argued that the defeat of the proposed amendments meant that the people supported a wholesale new constitution rather than tweaking the old one. With his preference to change Louisiana law through amendments defeated, Nicholls's belief that "the work of relieving the people of the state from all the burdens consequent upon so many years of misgovernment" trumped his distaste for a new constitution.

¹¹ Richland, La. *Richland Beacon*, Jun. 1, 1878.

In early January, Nicholls publicly endorsed a new constitutional convention.¹²

In early 1879, Burke also played an active role among leading Louisiana Democrats who set about consolidating their power. One of the first items on the agenda for machine Democrats was to select Louisiana's next U.S. senator. A revolving door of nominations by Republicans and Democrats alike offered over a dozen ballots during a seventeen-day period that yielded a who's who of leading Louisiana politicians. Albert Sidney Badger, Pinckney B. S. Pinchback, Edward Pilsbury, E. John Ellis, and even Gen. John Bell Hood received nominations. According to the *Picayune*, the deadlock was a strategy on the part of Democratic insiders to get rid of Nicholls by presenting the governor as the only candidate capable of ending the impasse. This measure, they knew, would ensure that the machine-aligned lieutenant-governor, Louis Alfred Wiltz, would ascend to the executive mansion. Alternatively, the over two-week long process of selecting a senator reflected factional rivalries within Democratic ranks.¹³

With Wiltz presiding as president of the legislature, Burke was nominated on the eighth ballot, the same day that Nicholls approved legislation for a constitutional convention. While the major received only five votes, they were from prominent party insiders. As ever, the adroit Burke knew the most influential people with whom to partner, thus developing ties with men of the same cosmopolitan persuasion as himself. Leading them was Lewis Emmanuel Texada, a

¹² "A Constitutional Convention," Bayou Sara, La. *Sentinel*, Jan. 11, 1879; McGinty, *Louisiana Redeemed*, 148-150, 156-157.

¹³ *Official journal of the proceedings of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana at the Regular Session, Begun and Held in New Orleans, January 1, 1879* (New Orleans: Democrat Publishing Company, 1879), 41, 43, 49, 55, 66, 72, 78, 83, 96, 106, 114, 123, 126, 135, hereafter cited as *Proceedings of the Louisiana House of Representatives, January 1, 1879*; G.W. McGinty, "The Louisiana Lottery Company," *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 20 (March 1940): 339; New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, Jan. 18, 1879; McGinty, *Louisiana Redeemed*, 158; Hood was related by marriage to John A. Morris. When Hood and his wife, Anna Marie, died of yellow fever in 1879, Morris ultimately took in and raised Hood's twin eleven year old daughters. See "A Lottery Queen's Protegees," New York *Illustrated American*, Sept. 27, 1890, and Valerius Cincinnatus Giles, *Rags and Hope: The Recollections of Val C. Giles, Four Years with Hood's Brigade, Fourth Texas Infantry, 1861-1865* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1961), 10-12.

prominent Regular Democrat from Rapides Parish who ensured the party's control of Alexandria, a seminal geopolitical area for central Louisiana. His grandfather, Don Manuel Garcia de Texada, had emigrated in the 1770s to Spanish Louisiana from Castile, Spain. Born in 1818, Lewis Texada graduated from the University of Virginia before inheriting his family's three thousand acre cotton plantation in Rapides, aptly named Castile, serving as a Whig in the Louisiana legislature, acting as a delegate to the state's secession convention, and serving in the Confederacy. During Reconstruction, Texada joined Burke and other leading Democrats to partner with Henry Clay Warmoth in crafting the Fusion ticket of 1872, the ultimately futile attempt to oust federally supported Republicans.¹⁴

Yet a lot had changed in Louisiana politics since 1872. When both parties finally settled their internal disputes on the fourteenth ballot and selected their respective candidates, Texada led the Democratic delegation in nominating Benjamin Franklin Jonas to oppose the Republican choice of Henry Clay Warmoth. Jonas won election to the U.S. senate on a straight party line vote of ninety-nine to twenty-nine. Jonas' experience and stature made him a good choice in uniting Democratic factions. Following in the footsteps of Judah P. Benjamin, Jonas was active within Louisiana's Jewish community, a prominent lawyer, and a Confederate veteran. He had been an active opponent of Kellogg, the city attorney for New Orleans, and a Democratic leader in both the state senate and house during the 1870s. Until his term expired in 1884, Jonas advocated for concerns central to Democrats of Burke's ilk. He helped gain appropriations for improving the Mississippi, promoted tariff protections for Louisiana sugar, and defended Democratic interests on congressional committees investigating voter fraud and intimidation in

¹⁴ *Proceedings of the Louisiana House of Representatives, January 1, 1879*, 83-84, 135; Lewis Texada Family Papers, Mss. 2985, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge; Henry Clay Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1930), 189; .

the South. Jonas was also an intrepid Democratic insider, a man with “few equals . . . in the art and science of planning and conducting successful campaigns.” He represented Louisiana on the Congressional Democratic Committee and actively canvassed for Regular Democrats in state elections. For his services on the National Democratic Executive Committee, which directed Grover Cleveland’s successful presidential campaign, Jonas was rewarded with the crown jewel of federal patronage in Louisiana in 1885, customs collector for the port of New Orleans.¹⁵

While Burke’s candidacy for U.S. senator was unsuccessful, he did benefit from a large appropriations bill. A deficiency bill crafted in early 1879 used state revenues to refund the expenses of officials and departments from the previous few years, which included Reconstruction partisan fights. After both legislative houses presented amendments to designate the amount of funds given to each position, from parish assessors and municipal school boards to state printing contracts, a joint committee convened to determine the end result of the patronage appropriations. Warmoth and the Republicans objected to a host of Democratic amendments, including a refund of \$619 that the state immigration board had borrowed from Burke “for expenses of immigration to Louisiana.” Intentionally vague, this payment had likely been used to facilitate immigrant naturalization and voter registration from when Burke was leading efforts against Kellogg. The use of party money to cover immigrant expenses was a common tactic in Gilded Age electioneering. Ultimately, the joint committee, with Texada leading the senate contingent, settled on a compromise that appeased both Republicans and Democrats. The state’s

¹⁵ *Proceedings of the Louisiana House of Representatives, January 1, 1879*, 135; Association for the Relief of Jewish Widows and Orphans, *The dedication of the Home for Jewish Widows and Orphans of New Orleans, January 8, 1856: containing a description of the ceremony, together with the oration of B.F. Jonas* (New Orleans: Sherman, Wharton, 1856), 5; *Biographical And Historical Memoirs of Louisiana*. . . vol. I (Chicago: the Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1892), 495-498; Washington D.C. *Vedette*, Aug. 15, 1880, 16.

reimbursements to Burke made the final bill.¹⁶

While previously entertaining ideas to eliminate the Republican-created Louisiana State Lottery Company, Democratic leaders came to recognize the lucrative and powerful benefits partnering with the state-sponsored gambling monopoly could infer. The league of state power brokers, including Samuel McEnery, John McEnery, Louis Wiltz, Charles T. Howard, and Burke, that formed the Ring strengthened their machine-like grip on state politics throughout the next decade. Yet there was a significant contingent of voters, newspapermen, and politicians in Louisiana who were opposed to the lottery. Overcoming anti-lottery schemes and partnering with the corporation was a primary, and highly contentious, task for Burke and other pro-lottery Democrats.

One of the Regular Democrats' most strident antagonists was another ex-Confederate editor of a partisan Democratic newspaper and one of the Crescent City's most iconoclastic citizens, Major Henry James Hearsey. Hearsey was the first newspaperman in the state to finger Burke as a leading political mastermind and central cog in the new Democratic machine. But where Major Burke courted outside capital from the outset in his paper, Major Hearsey was an exceptionally vitriolic Lost Causer, race-baiter, and Yankee basher in an age when such people were as common in the South as mosquitoes. Not only did Hearsey oppose Burke's economic strategies, he also led the chorus of voices that routinely objected to Democratic machine politics. As editor of the *New Orleans Democrat*, Hearsey issued incessant diatribes against the hypocrisy of Democrats who put patronage over principle and partnered with the monopolistic,

¹⁶ *Proceedings of the Louisiana House of Representatives, January 1, 1879*, 124, 150, 154; \$619 in 1879 equals roughly \$15,000 in 2018; *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Third Congress, 1874-1875*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1875), vol. 5, 654; Mark Wahlgren Summers, *Party Games: Getting, Keeping, and Using Powers in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 99.

Republican-created, Louisiana State Lottery Company. Ultimately, the lottery's wealth and muscle made it one of the Ring Democrats' greatest assets. Yet it also became the Achilles heel of party regulars, who were routinely threatened by reformers seeking to eliminate the monopoly's charter.

The Democratic party's partnership with the lottery was indeed a recent shift in the state's political landscape. The Louisiana lottery was an outgrowth of a lottery syndicate based in New York City under the name of C. H. Murray & Company and approved shortly after the Civil War for operation in Mississippi, Missouri, Kentucky, and Virginia. By 1867, Charles T. Howard managed its New Orleans branch. The following year, Howard and John A. Morris attained an act of incorporation and twenty-five year charter for a new state-sponsored lottery called the Louisiana State Lottery Company. Immediately after ratifying the Fourteenth Amendment, the act incorporating the lottery was approved in the first legislative secession under Louisiana's Republican constitution of 1868, reportedly at the cost of over two-hundred-thousand dollars in bribes. The Louisiana lottery came to being in spite of Congress passing an anti-lottery statute earlier that year. It would not be the last time Morris and Howard's lottery defied the law.¹⁷

The original charter granted the lottery an exclusive monopoly and exemption from taxes, although it was required to pay forty thousand dollars annually to the state in quarterly installments, the money to go to public education and Charity Hospital. Howard and Morris led successful lottery efforts to increase its powers throughout Reconstruction. First, lottery advocates benefited from a significant legal loophole rooted in New Orleans' antebellum

¹⁷ "The Courts: Superior District Court," *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Feb. 10, 1876; "Louisiana State Lottery Company vs. Allen Jumel et als," *Idid*, Apr. 2, 1879; Wayne E. Fuller, *Morality and the Mail in Nineteenth-Century America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 196.

traditions of gambling and horse racing. A civil code passed by the Louisiana legislature in 1825 forbid state courts from mandating payment of winnings earned through "gaming or by a bet, except for games tending to promote skill in the use of arms, such as the exercise of the gun, foot, horse, and chariot racing." With little fanfare, the gambling provision of the antebellum civil code was included verbatim in a revised civil code adopted in 1870. Thus, lottery winners had no legal means of requiring the company to pay them the full amount of their winnings or anything at all. The threat of public outrage over so explicit a swindle kept lottery insiders from employing this prerogative except in the case of an inside job to steal from the corporation. In 1874, the Republican-controlled government also approved new laws that directed the police and judges to shut down and fine, without a jury trial, any individual or operation that sold, distributed, or held any lotteries other than the state-sanctioned monopoly. These laws, contemporarily known as "Act 9" and "Act 10," were routinely enforced.¹⁸

As late as 1878, the Democratic legislature passed a law that taxed lottery profits and property. In "John A. Morris vs. E. A. Burke et als," lottery leaders sued state authorities to challenge the law as a violation of the corporation's legal charter. The suit targeted Burke because he was the tax collector for the city's first, and most powerful, district. The courts ultimately sided with the lottery, but the law in question and the case itself reflected internal divisions among Democrats over the lottery question. As editor of the *Democrat*, Hearsey was first to bring public attention to Act 9 and Act 10 as evidence of the lottery's expanding

¹⁸ "Auditor Jumel Makes an Issue," *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Apr. 4, 1877; "No. 4692, James Reid vs. Louisiana State Lottery Company," in *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Louisiana for the year 1877*, ed. Percy Roberts (New Orleans: F. F. Hansell, Publishers, 1878), vol. 39, 396; *Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, at the Second Session of the Third Legislature, In the City of New Orleans, January 5, 1874* (New Orleans: Republican Printing Office, 1874), 47-49.

powers.¹⁹

Despite its main office still garnering over twenty-three-thousand dollars a week in money orders alone, the year 1879 opened with lottery fortunes and prospects at an all-time low. Its stock, traded on the New Orleans Stock Exchange, was worth thirty-five dollars a share despite a one hundred dollar par value.²⁰ It also faced a backlash from rivals, the courts, and a strong faction of Democratic state legislators. The Crescent City's leading role as a circum-Caribbean port and its strong Latin American ties presented both opportunities and threats for the Louisiana lottery. Its biggest rival was the Spanish-run Havana Lottery, which held eighteen lotteries a year under the direction of the colonial government. According to *Frank Leslie's Monthly Magazine* in 1880, most of the millions of dollars a year that Americans spent on lotteries ultimately went outside the country. With tickets sold as far away as Europe and the Spanish Philippines, the Gulf South and New York City joined Latin America and the Caribbean as the Havana lottery's primary hub. The magazine dubbed it "the principal lottery of the Western Hemisphere."²¹

Despite the Louisiana lottery's legal status as a monopoly, the Havana lottery was flagrant in its violation of state law. The Cuban-based firm placed prominent advertisements in New Orleans city directories and often paid Latino residents and businessmen in New Orleans to sell tickets on the side. Manuel Bornio advertised his import and wholesale company of Cuban tobacco on 77 Gravier Street along with his credentials as a Havana lottery agent. Business was good enough for Bornio and others to be frequently arrested and fined five thousand dollars for

¹⁹ "The Courts: United States Circuit Court," *New Orleans Times*, May 8, 1878; "Our New Orleans Letters, No. 3," Natchitoches, La. *People's Vindicator*, Jun. 8, 1878.

²⁰ Fuller, *Morality and the Mail in Nineteenth-Century America*, 201; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Apr. 2, 1873; *New Orleans Times*, Sept. 25, 1875; Berthold C. Alwes, "The History of the Louisiana State Lottery Company," *Louisiana History* 27 (October 1944): 1002.

²¹ Frank H. Norton, "Lotteries: Their History, Ancient and Modern," *American Magazine: Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* 10 (July to December 1880): 751.

running the Havana lottery in multiple shops throughout the city. It was so easy to buy a Havana ticket that a frequent strategy used by the Louisiana lottery was to pay a regular customer to act as a spy and purchase a ticket from the Cuban company as proof of wrongdoing.²²

The Havana lottery was an immediate and constant threat, as Howard brought suits against their primary rival as early as 1870. Within several years, the volume of court cases and police man hours dedicated to the seemingly impossible task of shutting down the Havana lottery and others put an enormous strain on the city's legal system and law enforcement. Lottery related cases often constituted a majority of daily dockets in New Orleans courts. The Louisiana lottery not only took illegal lottery vendors such as Bornio to court for between one and five thousand dollars, but it also showed no mercy in prosecuting individual Havana peddlers for fines of twenty-five dollars. In addition to legal recourse, Louisiana lottery operatives also planted anonymous editorials to increase doubts about their rivals' operations. One such piece written under the pseudonym "Justice" claimed that Havana agents bought tickets in bulk from the Cuban government but marked up the price in Louisiana and often paid out discounted prizes. The editorial also played to New Orleanians' sense of pride, arguing that the state-sponsored lottery was a "home institution . . . owned and conducted by your own people." That Howard, Morris, and others were not from Louisiana, or the south, was not mentioned.²³

The Louisiana lottery's greed and overreach nearly brought it down in the late 1870s. Up until then, the Louisiana and Havana lotteries had both won battles in court, which prompted the *Picayune* to quip that lottery suits were decided according to "which has the largest surplus to pay the lawyers." The decisive case came in May 1878, when a recidivist small-time Havana

²² *Soards' New Orleans City Directory, 1875* (New Orleans: L. Soards & Co. Publishers, 1875), 34

²³ *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Jun. 30, 1870; *Ibid*, Jul. 20, 1870; "The Courts," *Ibid*, Dec. 21, 1878; *Ibid*, Jan. 20, 1874.

lottery agent, Antonio Agusti, who had been repeatedly convicted and fined twenty-five dollars in criminal courts, was charged again. Agents of the Havana lottery and opponents of the Louisiana lottery seized on the opportunity to undercut the latter's powers. Dubbed "the Lottery Habeas Corpus Case" and "the Lottery War" in the Louisiana press, the Agusti affair quickly devolved into a jurisdictional dispute. When Agusti refused to pay the fine and opted for jail time instead, criminal court judges, who had a long history of pro-lottery rulings, sent him to jail. However, a civil court judge issued a writ of *habeas corpus* to release Agusti and declared that Act 9 violated provisions for a trial by jury and was therefore unconstitutional. Ultimately, Governor Nicholls was caught in the crossfire, with the civil authorities requesting that he call out the state militia, even that he declare a formal "*posse comitatus*." The issue subsided when Nicholls demanded that all sides halt while he consulted with the state attorney-general.²⁴

At the center of the issue was the power of the Louisiana lottery and its authority as a state-sponsored monopoly. Agusti had been "*habeas corpus*-ed and *mandamus*-ed from pillar to post" in a conflict that revealed Louisiana's Latin American ties, consumed Louisiana's public attention, and came to define the terms of debate within the state's Democratic party. In the *Democrat*, Hearsey led the growing chorus of voices arrayed against the Louisiana lottery. Hearsey claimed that Howard's "pimps and private detectives" brought trumped up charges of trading in Havana tickets against prominent and honest businessmen before the courts without cause.²⁵

Views expressed in the *Democrat* carried significant weight, as the paper was still the official organ for the state Democracy. Following the return of Democratic rule in 1877,

²⁴ Ibid, Jun. 14, 1874; "The Lottery Habeas Corpus Case," *New Orleans Times*, May 26, 1878; "The Lottery War," *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, May 29, 1878; "A Contest of Authorities," *New York Times*, May 30, 1878.

²⁵ "The Lottery War," *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, May 30, 1878; *New Orleans Daily Democrat*, May 15, 1878.

Nicholls had stripped the *New Orleans Republican* of the lucrative patronage position of state printer and gave it to the *Democrat*, owned by George w. Dupre. Its voice influenced Democratic opinion well beyond New Orleans. Jason H. Cosgrove, editor of the most circulated rural paper in the state, the *People's Vindicator* of Natchitoches, was one such example. The paper spoke for disgruntled Democrats amid the Agusti affair by reminding voters that "Governor Nicholls was elected on the platform of reformation of the great evils established by the Radicals in our midst." High taxes and perceived slights to white southerners notwithstanding, Cosgrove deemed the lottery to be "the most gigantic and most dangerous of all these evils." The main issue was not gambling or a lottery per se, but the lottery's powers. As a monopoly, it denied a free market, thwarted economic competition, and unfairly victimized "a poor fellow, struggling to support his family." It made police officers "spies and informers" and flouted habeas corpus. Convictions were achieved without a jury trial in odious special courts by judges who had "prostituted" their office. Moreover, it seemed, as "an act purchased from the most venal of legislatures," to be a fetid holdover from carpetbagger-rule. According to Cosgrove, the lottery only continued because a growing faction of Democratic leaders in the executive branch, such as Burke, were in lottery pockets and "officially mum" about their stance on the issue.²⁶

On occasion, the Louisiana lottery spoke for itself through paid spaces in New Orleans newspapers that assuaged hesitant customers amid the rising chorus of critics. Their argument foreshadowed trickle down economic theory and claimed that "every enterprise calculated to direct the flow of money towards New Orleans" was "deserving of encouragement." Pointing to the calamitous effects of the Panic of 1873, lottery officials asserted, "With the influx of capital

²⁶ John Wilds, *Afternoon Story: History of the New Orleans "States-item"* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), 24, 27-29; "Our New Orleans Letters, No. 3," Natchitoches, La. *People's Vindicator*, Jun. 8, 1878.

comes, directly or indirectly, increased prosperity." The lottery also boasted that since the company was expanding nationally to "nearly every prominent city and town throughout the Union," it should be a point of pride, not derision for Louisianans. The lottery company did not directly address accusations of graft and fraud. Instead it took a pragmatic approach by implying that since Americans would inevitably gamble, Louisiana should reap the benefits as much as possible. According to lottery logic, the unprecedented number of ticket sales expressed consumer confidence and was sufficient proof of "the integrity and acknowledged fairness" of its operation. Moreover, the success of the Louisiana lottery aided U.S. business, as its sales undermined the flow of American money to "Havana and other places abroad."²⁷

However, in January 1879, the Augusti affair put enough pressure on Louisiana politicians for the legislature to debate bills that limited the lottery. The state's lower chamber had been sympathetic to bills limiting or ending the lottery, but never garnered enough votes to enact a law. The situation in 1879 proved different. The house debated a bill not only to end the Louisiana lottery, but also to "prohibit lotteries and the sale of lottery tickets" in the state. Several members spoke against the bill by arguing that to repeal its monopoly would burden taxpayers with a forty thousand dollar shortfall that must be made up with an involuntary tax, rather than to tax people who choose to partake in the lottery. Moreover, many legislators were unsure they had the authority to rescind a state-granted act of incorporation. Others thought it unfair that the lottery was singled out as a monopoly and attempted to shift the debate to privileges granted to the Slaughter House Company and the Levee Company. Such opposing views crossed party and racial lines. A Democrat from Caldwell Parish echoed a black

²⁷ "A Successful Enterprise," *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Mar. 26, 1876; "Coming Relief for the Sick and Destitute," *Ibid*, Mar. 6, 1877.

Republican's concerns that the bill was fiscally irresponsible and discriminatory in its singling out of the lottery.²⁸

People who argued in favor of repeal often did so because they viewed the lottery as a legacy of Republican fraud. While conceding that lottery taxes and charitable drives contributed to Louisiana finances, one representative contended that it was tainted money taken from hapless "dupes who bought its tickets." Another legislator alluded to the power of such anti-lottery newspapers as the *Democrat* by arguing that public criticism of Democrats who supposedly lacked the courage to confront lottery power was a challenge to avenge Democratic pride by destroying it "root and branch." While still others pledged to vote for repeal "on conscientious grounds," Warmoth, the former Republican governor, astutely concluded that the overriding reason Democrats opposed the lottery was because of its political power, not any moral, economic, or constitutional principle. Ultimately, sixty-three Democrats and three Republicans in the house voted to end the lottery, as opposed to only six Republicans and four Democrats who voted against the bill.²⁹

The state senate, however, was already becoming a bulwark of party strength that checked the more reform-minded lower house. While the rationales for state senators who opposed the bill echoed those in the lower house, many were also pragmatic. Some senators argued that Louisianans would gamble in violation of a lottery prohibition in any event. Since the repeal bill would ensure any violators would receive a jury trial, Senator Garland argued that lotteries were so prominent and accepted, "especially so in the city of New Orleans," that juries would acquit all suspects. In reality, Garland argued, to end monopolistic privileges of the lottery only meant that a ubiquitous black market of lotteries would operate with open, if still

²⁸ "The Louisiana Lottery Co.," Bayou Sara, La. *Sentinel*, Jan. 11, 1879 and Jan. 25, 1879.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

technically illegal, competition. Due to the habits and culture of Louisianans in the late 1870s, Garland proclaimed that "this was not the time and this was not the people" to repeal a popular leisure activity and naively assume the law would be obeyed. Many senators concluded that the geographical characteristics of New Orleans as a major Gulf South port and nexus of the Mississippi meant repealing all lotteries was like trying to stem the tide. To the contrary, nefarious agents from outside lotteries would run rampant and Charity Hospital, having lost forty thousand dollars of its budget, would be forced to kick out the most destitute of Louisiana's citizens. Another senator resented that the issue had been driven by the whims of such newspapermen as Hearsey. "Whether the "*Democrat* [should] rule the Democratic Party with a rod of iron or not" was a bigger issue.³⁰

Just as the momentum appeared to be on the side of voting down the lottery repeal bill, Senator F. C. Zacharie delivered a bombshell that changed the course of debate. His statements alluded to collusion between the Nicholls administration and the Morris and Howard lottery. Zacharie recounted his experience as part of a high level Democratic group dubbed the Committee of Safety in early 1877, when Nicholls' closest advisors were discussing how best to claim and keep power. Given the chaos within the Republican party, Howard and lottery managers decided to parlay with Nicholls' embattled partisans. A deal was hatched. Betting that it was only a matter of time before Republicans lost control of Louisiana, as they had done nearly everywhere else in the South, Howard and Morris struck a deal with the administration. P. B. S. Pinchback, one of the leading amoral rogues in the state, acted as a middleman for the lottery and the Nicholls regime by arranging lottery payments of as much as sixteen thousand dollars to state senators who left the Packard legislature to aid the quorum in its Democratic counterpart.

³⁰ "Devices of Policy Dealers," *New York Herald*, Mar. 10, 1879; "Arguments on the Lottery Bill," *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Jan. 31, 1879.

According to Zacharie's statements from the Louisiana senate floor, "The Legislature would pledge itself not to appeal the charter of the Louisiana Lottery Company [so] that the company might render material service in establishing the Nicholls Government." Zacharie opined that the tenuous position of the Nicholls government and the specter of returning to Republican rule, as had occurred after the Battle of Liberty Place, allowed Democratic hopefuls to allay the concerns of big business. Implying that the economic sector of New Orleans favored Republican policies, or was at least leery of Democratic changes, Nicholls insiders attempted to "obtain the influence of all" and avoid promoting "hostility against any of the rich corporations which existed in New Orleans."³¹

Perhaps worrying that his statements undermined the legitimacy of the Nicholls government, Zacharie then backtracked when other senators questioned him. He said that there was only a "tacit understanding" and that no *quid pro quo* nor "pledge was entered into" that he "was aware of." As a result of some Democratic disagreement with the compact, either because they were unaware of it or as a deliberate means to feign reform and constituent concerns, the Democratic controlled state legislature introduced bills in legislative sessions of 1877 and 1878, respectively, to end the lottery's charter. Yet lottery pressure ensured that enough members of the legislature were persuaded to remember their end of the bargain. Moreover, Zacharie had emphasized a pragmatic, ends-justify-the-means mentality. A partnership between Democrats and the lottery, while not desirable in theory, was a better alternative than a principled obstinacy that would have led to continued Republican rule. In addition, Zacharie presented fulfillment of the arrangement as the honorable and dutiful response of a gentleman who honors his pledges.

³¹ "Arguments on the Lottery Bill," *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Jan. 31, 1879; Justin A. Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War: Race, Politics, and a New Birth of Freedom* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 181.

On the whole, his remarks largely corroborated congressional inquiries that found the Packard regime had collapsed owing to lottery pressure and money.³²

The bill to repeal all lotteries in Louisiana passed the senate by a vote of nineteen to seventeen, and Nicholls signed it into law on March 27, 1879. Other communities across the country did not let major news of the lottery's fate pass without missing an opportunity to jab at Louisiana. "The Legislature of Louisiana has repealed the lottery law," the *Daily State Journal* of Springfield, Illinois, proclaimed, "now let it abolish Mardi Gras." The exact particulars of which group, Democrats or lottery agents, engaged whom were debated back and forth in the aftermath of the bill's passage and Zacharie's explosive revelations. Proponents of the lottery and partisan Democrats emphasized how Zacharie's ambivalent remarks about the agreement meant that no firm understanding was reached and therefore no impropriety had occurred. The *Picayune* even sent a reporter to Howard's office to get his account of whether or not a deal had been struck. Howard did not deny that an understanding of mutual support had been reached, but he insisted that the lottery had not made the first move or initiated an arrangement. According to Howard, a Democratic operative went to Howard's office and arranged for Howard to meet "another gentleman at the City Hotel" to discuss a partnership with Democrats. Yet Howard was tight-lipped about which Democrats were directly involved. Nonetheless, it is highly unlikely that Burke, as chair of the Nicholls gubernatorial campaign responsible for assuring its success through political maneuverings in Washington, D.C., and later rewarded with the lucrative

³² "Arguments on the Lottery Bill," New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, Jan. 31, 1879; Along with Burke, Zacharie was nominated but did not win an election as U.S. Senator in January, 1879. See *Proceedings of the Louisiana House of Representatives, January 1, 1879*, 78.

appointment of First District Tax Collector, was not aware or did not approve of the plan.³³

Burke's past associations with Howard and Morris, the outcome of the 1879 state constitution, and Burke's ultimate partnership with lottery leaders to acquire a managing stake in New Orleans newspapers offer compelling evidence that the audacious major was an early part of Democratic partnerships with the lottery. Five years prior to the contentious lottery debates among Democrats, Burke and John Fitzpatrick, a fellow machine politician who rose to be the Democratic boss of the Third Ward, were among members of the Firemen's Charitable Association when Howard donated a new fire engine. The christening of the engine took place during a banquet at Howard's lavish home. Burke, then in the midst of his successful campaign for administrator for improvements, was one of the local dignitaries who delivered a laudatory speech about Howard's generosity. Howard's donation of the engine to the F.C.A., which had strong ties to the Irish and immigrant communities, and Burke's speech were also politically strategic. That October, Burke was head of the Democratic and Conservative State Central Committee's registration initiatives and highly publicized for actively resisting Kellogg's attempts to strike a large portion of naturalized citizens from the rolls. The following May, Burke was elected to the board of the Louisiana Jockey Club, where he joined Howard and Morris, both avid horse breeders.³⁴

On April 1, 1879, the day after the lottery's repeal was to have gone into effect, the Louisiana lottery carried on as usual. The company paid its usual quarterly sum of ten thousand dollars to Allen Jumel, the state auditor. When he refused the payment, citing that their charter

³³ Springfield, Ill. *Daily State Journal*, Feb. 5, 1879; "Premium Bonds," *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Feb. 7, 1879; "Bottom Facts" and "Local Miscellany," *Ibid*, Feb. 1, 1879.

³⁴ Thomas O'Connor, ed., *History of the Fire Department of New Orleans* (New Orleans: Np, 1895), 401; *New Orleans Times*, Oct. 29, 1874; "Kellogg's Proposition Rejected: The Central Committee Refuse to Make Any distinction in the Votes of Naturalized Citizens," *New Orleans Bulletin*, Oct. 29, 1874; *New Orleans Times*, Oct. 11, 1874, and May 11, 1875.

had been repealed, Morris and Howard immediately filed suit in the Fifth Judicial Circuit Court. Lottery lawyers again argued that the legislature did not have authority to violate their corporate charter and that the repeal violated the company's vested right to operate until January 1, 1894. The judge hearing the case was Edward C. Billings, one of the lottery's former attorneys. The ever combative *Democrat* asserted that Howard and the lottery company "own[ed] Billings, body and boots." The lottery won the injunction and remained in operation during the constitutional convention that convened on April 21.³⁵

The crafting of a new state constitution in 1879 to replace the Reconstruction era state constitution of 1868 demonstrated the simultaneous consolidation of Ring power and the promotion of a New South vision. New Orleans Ring politician and lieutenant-governor Louis Wiltz was elected president of the convention in a landslide. With five-thousand copies printed for circulation, the former New Orleans mayor's acceptance address was delivered as a campaign speech and foreshadowed his attainment of the governorship in the coming year. Chief among the machine initiatives enshrined in the new constitution were new and expansive gubernatorial appointive powers. The new constitution also expanded executive power at the expense of the state legislature and local authorities. The constitution strengthened machine control by enfranchising all immigrants in state, parish, and municipal elections who merely expressed an intent to become citizens. Despite repealing all lotteries earlier in the year, Democrats compromised on the lottery question. The new constitution established a new twenty-five year charter for the Louisiana lottery but stripped its guarantee of a monopoly. The legislature was authorized to grant additional lottery licenses to companies that paid the state at least forty

³⁵ Wilds, *Afternoon Story*, 26-27; "Louisiana State Lottery Company vs. Allen Jumel et als.," *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Apr. 2, 1879; "A Card," Washington D.C. *Evening Star*, Feb. 5, 1879; *New Orleans Daily Democrat*, Apr. 8, 1879.

thousand dollars per year. Thus, Burke and the machine gambled that the executive mansion and state house would remain in the hands of enough pro-lottery Democrats to ensure no rival lotteries received a license.³⁶

Once the lottery's survival was assured, Burke partnered with Wiltz to oust anti-lottery officeholders. Governor Nicholls, who came down on the side of those opposed to the lottery when he signed the repeal bill into law, was their primary target. In the closing days of the convention, Burke and his allies were instrumental in passing a clause that mandated a new election of state officials and legislators, including the governor. Burke's office of state treasurer was the only exception. Moreover, as testament to Burke's influence, the convention extended the major's term for two more years, under the auspice of correlating the election of treasurer with other state elections. This gave Burke six consecutive years in the office before standing for reelection in 1884.³⁷

Yet there were several areas where Democrats found agreement more readily. They amended the tax code to grant exemptions from state taxes to nearly all manufacturers for ten years. Government expenditures were cut and the state property tax, which was as high as twenty mills in 1872, was constitutionally limited to six mills. These measures went a long way towards ensuring Democratic loyalty among rural whites who were burdened by precipitous declines in cotton prices. Calls to limit suffrage among blacks and poor whites through such measures as a poll tax were widely rejected. Whether as tools of manipulation, fear of federal

³⁶ William Ivy Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics, 1877-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 64, 101-104; William H. Coleman, *Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans* (New York: Coleman, 1885), 316; Donna A. Barnes, *The Louisiana Populist Movement, 1881-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 128; *Official journal of the Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Louisiana, Held in New Orleans, Monday, April 21, 1879* (New Orleans: J. H. Cosgrove, 1879), 5-9, 229-231.

³⁷ Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 64, 101-104; Coleman, *Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans*, 316; Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 193-194.

oversight, or a genuine belief in democracy, most Louisiana politicians in the decade after Reconstruction supported voting rights. However, this sentiment did not extend to civil rights provisions African Americans had won in the 1868 constitution. For example, a statute forbidding discrimination in public accommodations was removed. Louisiana's "home rule" constitution, therefore, foreshadowing the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in a series of 1883 cases that decisively gutted the federal Civil Rights Act of 1875.³⁸

However, the convention floor witnessed only one part of a two-front campaign that machine Democrats waged against dissident Democrats. While Burke, Wiltz, Houston, McEnery, and Fitzpatrick increasingly partnered with Howard and Morris to advance their interests in the constitutional convention, they also engaged in subterfuge to ensure the party press in New Orleans did not challenge their rule. A day after the convention closed, Burke and Howard successfully finished a plot to push out the *Democrat's* leadership and take over the paper for themselves. They did so by turning the poor condition of Louisiana state finances to their advantage.³⁹

The end of Reconstruction was also the end for the *New Orleans Republican*, which did not last long without state patronage. The former production superintendent of that paper, H. W. Green, was given a job at the *Democrat* but was soon fired. Green then sought retribution in December 1878 by alleging that Dupre was wantonly overcharging the state for printing official documents, a common practice in the Gilded Age. An investigation into the matter exonerated Dupre and, in the process, Green admitted that he pursued the charges after an outside party approached him. While it cannot be known for certain, circumstantial evidence links Charles T.

³⁸ Barnes, *The Louisiana Populist Movement*, 57; Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 101-104; Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 194.

³⁹ Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 21.

Howard and the lottery to the underhanded scheme to undermine the *Democrat* ahead of the lottery fight at the constitutional convention.⁴⁰

Foiled in its initial plot, the lottery seized upon the nature of Louisiana politics to destroy Dupre's newspaper. During the investigation, it was revealed that the state paid Dupre mostly in state bonds. The Louisiana attorney general, perhaps due to lottery influence, then delayed even those payments. Moreover, the state senate, despite no evidence of wrongdoing on Dupre's part, stripped the *Democrat* of its position as state printer. Nicholls, who had a simultaneous personal falling out with Dupre, subsequently transferred the privilege to George Nicholson of the *Picayune* in March 1879. Whether in the midst of a backlog of state payments or as a strategy to overcome the fact that there would be no future payments after his position as state printer was revoked, Dupre used forty thousand dollars of state bonds as business collateral for a bank loan. Shortly thereafter, the ruling of a federal district judge in New Orleans undercut the validity of such state warrants as those issued to the *Democrat*. Dupre's lenders then foreclosed on his property in the spring of 1879 when the bonds fell to ten cents on the dollar. In his last editorial for the *Democrat*, Hearsey "bid a journalistic adieu" with his characteristic animosity. "Every ring, monopoly, and bondholder in the state arrayed themselves against us," he declared, with the *coup de grace* dealt by "an infamous judge" who was the "tool and property of the rings we have fought."⁴¹

Burke and local ward boss James Houston immediately partnered with lottery president Charles Howard to purchase the paper. Within months, the federal court reversed its prior decision on state bonds and New Orleans bankers accepted the *Democrat*'s scrip, now in the

⁴⁰ Wilds, *Afternoon Story*, 24, 27-29.

⁴¹ Wilds, *Afternoon Story*, 27-29; Alwes, "The History of the Louisiana State Lottery Company," 1001-1002; *New Orleans Daily Democrat*, Apr. 24, 1879.

hands of Burke and his allies, at full value.⁴² By the end of 1879, Burke was managing editor of the *Democrat*. The means that allowed Burke to begin what would become an internationally respected career as a journalist is telling. The genuinely beneficial policies he advocated for a New South were rooted in transnational links that cannot be separated from, indeed were a product of, the dubious and venal maneuverings that characterized the Gilded Age. In other words, tangible and legitimate goals and policies on the one hand, and ethical ambiguity on the other, were not mutually exclusive.

Burke's duplicity was front and center in an 1879 visitor's guide to the Crescent City. In the first advertisement space, Burke did more than proclaim the *Democrat* as the "organ of the Louisiana Democracy" that "stood by the pledges of the Democratic Party." He announced that his paper was opposed to "all Rings and Monopolies." Thus, the veteran politico acknowledged popular disillusionment with machine rule and monopolies such as the lottery. He blamed them, however, on "Radical [Republican] Legislation" and the "Independent Press." Identifying the Democratic party as the only legitimate voice of the people, Burke hoped to channel any reform attempts through the gauntlet of the party, which he helped stock with men and machinations to mitigate reform.⁴³

Burke's direction of the state's Democratic press proved immediately useful in staving off a viable threat to Ring rule by a vocal coalition of reformers stung by the fall of Nicholls. With Wiltz's deft oversight of the constitutional convention and the ultimate extension of lottery power, Nicholls, sensing defeat and citing health reasons, removed himself from consideration in the upcoming election. As his former campaign manager and close confidant during the debates

⁴² Alwes, "The History of the Louisiana State Lottery Company," 1001-1002; Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 25.

⁴³ J. Curtis Waldo, *Illustrated Visitors' Guide to New Orleans* (New Orleans: J. Curtis Waldo, 1879), 1.

over Louisiana's electoral votes in 1877, Burke's partnership with Wiltz no doubt was a particular blow to the former Confederate general. With Nicholls removed, the reform element of the Democracy turned to Frederick Nash Ogden. Lauded as the leader of the White League and the hero of the Battle of Liberty Place, Ogden was widely respected. Regular Democratic hopes for an easy Wiltz victory grew dire when Louisiana congressman E. John Ellis announced his support for the former White Leaguer.⁴⁴

Democrats who favored Ogden used the fifth anniversary of the September 14, 1874, street battle to boost his candidacy. Both the *Times* and the *Picayune* drew parallels between Ogden's seminal role in defeating the corrupt insiders of Reconstruction and the need to rid the state of the taint of machine rule. Where once Warmoth and Kellogg took the brunt of abuses, Ogden's supporters saw the Ring as aspiring to fill their shoes under the auspices of the Democratic party. In stump speeches for Ogden, Ellis stirred class and racial divisions. He sought to mobilize the "poorer class of people" who suffered under the "rapacity and exactions of Democratic officials." "Democratic success," Ellis contended, "brought no relief" from jobbers and corrupt bargains that had hamstrung average Louisianans. Turning Burke's emphasis on economic development on its head, Ellis argued that machine rule kept away "emigration, capital, [and] enterprise." Despite campaigning for the former general of the White League, Ellis endorsed the logic of reformers who pinned excessive "bulldozing," or political violence, against black voters in the sugar parishes on New Orleans party men and their Bourbon planter allies. In so doing, Ellis also courted reformers who disdained the transactional politics

⁴⁴ Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 196; Edward F. Haas, *Political Leadership in a Southern City: New Orleans in the Progressive Era, 1896-1902* (Ruston, La.: McGinty Publications, 1988), 7.

of party regulars.⁴⁵

Burke used his editorial pen to counter the Ogden contingent. Recognizing the relatively unsullied reputation of Ogden, who cleverly did not campaign on his own behalf, Burke focused the Regular Democratic counterattack on Ellis. Burke tactfully acknowledged Ellis' stature as a "prominent" and "distinguished" Democrat, but then emphasized how unfortunate it was that such a man got carried away with false allegations. According to Burke, a "pruning knife, or rather . . . the ax of the woodsman" was needed to remove the excessive hyperbole of the congressman's statements. More specifically, Burke charged that Ogden and his allies had "inflam[ed] the Northern mind" against the Louisiana people and had begun to initiate "a panic among the masses of ignorant negroes." In an era when most white politicians used racial anxieties as political posturing, Burke argued that Ogden's previous White League campaign "to establish an out-and-out white man's government" would needlessly reopen racial strife and invite federal intervention. That Burke had served as Ogden's aide during the Battle of Liberty Place was not mentioned.⁴⁶

Where Ellis questioned the character and morality of Wiltz and Ring men, Burke cleverly did the opposite. His paper printed interviews with notable personalities and leaders in New Orleans who explained their endorsement of Wiltz. Some interviews featured men with strong ties to the city's immigrant communities and labor unions, such as future mayor William J. Behan, as a means of mobilizing the machine's base. In this respect, Burke took advantage of the *Democrat's* role as the party's official paper, as its editorials and interviews were commonly reprinted in the city's ethnic newspapers, such as the German-language *Deutsche Zeitung*.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 197; *New Orleans Times*, Sept. 10, 1879; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Sept. 14, 1879; *New Orleans Daily Democrat*, Sept. 23, 1879; Terry Golway, *Machine Made: Tammany Hall and the Creation of Modern American Politics*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), 132.

⁴⁶ Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 198; *New Orleans Daily Democrat*, Sept. 23, 24, 28, 1879.

Through these interviews, Burke emphasized that Ogden was no doubt “an honest merchant, a good citizen, and a brave soldier . . . but honesty and bravery, priceless jewels though they be, do not suffice for government.” When it came to experience in administering the levers of government, the Regular Democracy was the natural choice.⁴⁷

Burke’s campaign skills and the Ring’s firm grip on the party apparatus proved decisive when the Democratic convention convened in October. Wiltz was nominated and newspapers that had previously championed Ogden fell into line by dropping any mention of an independent reform ticket. The Republican candidate was Taylor Beattie, a judge, sugar planter, and lilly-white scalawag. Democratic legwork was already complete when Louisianans went to the polls on December 3, 1879. The new constitution and the Democracy’s slate of candidates were endorsed handily. As a new decade dawned, Burke and the Ring were firmly in control.⁴⁸

Indeed, Burke was reaping the rewards of membership in the political ruling class. According to the 1880 census, he resided in the Democratic stronghold of the Third Ward at 235 Camp Street, which was five blocks west of the river and two blocks south of Canal Street, the main thoroughfare of the city. Thus, Burke lived in the heart of the financial and commercial sector. Government salaries and patronage politics allowed the major to afford a large household. It included his wife Susan, sister-in-law Laura, eighteen-year-old stepson W. M. Montgomery, seven-year-old son Lindsay, two young female servants 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.⁴⁹

Yet Burke’s rapid acquisition of wealth and power brought inveterate enemies. Chief

⁴⁷ Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 199; *New Orleans Daily Democrat*, Sept. 28, 1879.

⁴⁸ Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 199.

⁴⁹ 1880 Census, New Orleans, Orleans, Louisiana, Roll 459, Family History Film: 1254459, Page: 203B, Enumeration District: 009, Image: 0064; Burke showed interest in raising Montgomery as his own; he paid for and

among them was the indomitable James Hearsey. While Burke and Hearsey did not share many views, other than a hostility to radical Republicans, each man had a potent mix of dogged persistence and pugnacity. After he was forced out of the *Democrat*, Hearsey wasted no time in forming another paper, the *Daily States*, which first appeared on January 3, 1880. Through its columns, he continued his attacks on Burke, the lottery, and the Ring. By then, Burke's *Democrat* was the official journal of the state of Louisiana, which was a particular sore spot for the recently ousted Hearsey. In only a matter of weeks, both papers accused the other of routinely lying. Hearsey's temper and Burke's resoluteness were then transformed from a war of words to the *code duello*. Hearsey challenged Burke to a duel, which he promptly accepted. When negotiations by their seconds failed, the editors met on the field of honor on the afternoon of January 27 at Metairie Ridge. Burke, "dressed with care, wore a glove on his left hand, a pink [flower] in his button-hole," and appeared "very cool and collected . . . [with] no sign of nervousness." After stepping off ten paces beneath the shade of a large live oak tree, both missed their shots with smoothbore dueling pistols. Hearsey then demanded an apology to end the affair. Burke refused. After loading another round, the second volleys missed as well. A parley by their seconds ensued, with Burke also acknowledging that Hearsey was "a gentlemen of honor and courage." When Hearsey then declared that he had satisfaction, "the principles advanced toward each other and shook hands."⁵⁰

Burke and Ring allies acquired another newspaper, the New Orleans *Times*, shortly thereafter, and by 1882 merged his papers to form the *Times-Democrat*. His consolidation and

kept updated about his stepson's education at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. See University of the South letters August 17 and October 31, 1877, Burke Papers: LSU.

⁵⁰ Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 24, 25; "Editors on the Field of Honor," *New York Times*, Jan. 28, 1880; "Under the Oaks: The Duel between Major E. A. Burke and Major H. J. Hearsey," *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Jan. 28, 1880. For an account of Burke's duel in 1882 with a member of the *Daily Picayune* staff, see Michael Shane Powers, "From Confederate Expatriates to New South Neo-Filibusters: Major Edward A. Burke and the Americas," (M. A. thesis: Clemson University, 2012): 44-45.

editorship of the *Times-Democrat* gave him such a powerful voice in the state that, according to one historian, “few men dared cross him.”⁵¹ Samuel D. McEnery, the successor to Governor Wiltz after his untimely death in 1881, was obsequious to the Ring to such an extent that opponents dubbed him “McLottery.” One Louisiana congressman noted that McEnery had “sold himself body and breeches to Burke.”⁵² As in most Gilded Age political machines, machine bosses preferred to place pliable men in the governor's mansion rather than seek the office themselves. None other than Jefferson Davis, who on more than one occasion met with Burke on trips to New Orleans from his residency at Beauvoir, approved of the editor's New South leadership. The former Confederate president demonstrated his faith in the former Confederate major when Davis recommended a personal friend as an “honest and capable Democrat,” well qualified for a job in Burke's newspaper.⁵³

The *Times-Democrat* had become the leading New Orleans newspaper by the mid-1880s. It boasted a daily distribution of roughly 17,000 copies and between 105,000 and 122,000 copies per week. The *Daily Picayune*, Burke's closest competitor, distributed 10,000 to 12,000 copies a day and between 70,000 and 87,000 each week. In a nationwide directory of American newspapers, Burke purchased the leading advertising space to proclaim the *Times-Democrat* as the “great representative journal of the New South.” Listing an agent in New York City, the ad targeted “enterprising merchants and manufacturers who desire their names known in every

⁵¹ Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 29.

⁵² As quoted in Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 101, 108, 109.

⁵³ Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 197; Jefferson Davis to Burke, September 28, 1883, E.A. Burke Papers, Mss. 547, 620, 641, 893, 1226, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge, hereafter cited as, “Burke Papers: LSU.”

Southern city.”⁵⁴

The first edition of the consolidated *Times-Democrat* set the tone for Burke’s message. “We this day inaugurate the effort to make the *Times-Democrat* the organ and exponent of Southern progress, industry, commerce, and civilization,” he announced. “We claim as our peculiar territory the great cotton states of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas and Texas, Western Florida, Southern Tennessee, Mexico and Central America.”⁵⁵ With still grander bravado, 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.⁵⁶

He effectively used his paper as a New South oracle to tout the merits of Louisiana’s Democratic party while also promoting the economic advancement of the Crescent City as a commercial and manufacturing hub at the epicenter of trade in the Western hemisphere.⁵⁷ Indicative of his transnational New South vision, Burke believed increased commercial ties with the Americas was of such importance that he established a Latin American department within the *Times-Democrat*. Burke selected E. A. Lever, a colonel under Benito Juárez in the Mexican forces against Maximilian’s French army in the 1860s, to head the department from Mexico.⁵⁸ Burke likewise sent correspondents to the tropics of Central America in hopes of stimulating

⁵⁴ George Presbury Rowell, *Rowell's American Newspaper Directory*, 19th edition (New York, Printers' Ink Pub. Co., 1887), 282, 899; Jessica Barbata Jackson, “Before the Lynching: Reconsidering the Experience of Italians and Sicilians in Louisiana, 1870s-1890s” *Louisiana History* 58 (Summer 2017): 310.

⁵⁵ New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, Dec. 5, 1881.

⁵⁶ Donald Clive Hardy, “The World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition” (M.A. thesis, Tulane University, 1964), 3; New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, Dec. 5, 1881.

⁵⁷ Watson, “Staging the Crowning Achievement,” 233; James F. Vivian, “Major E. A. Burke: The Honduras Exile, 1889-1928,” *Louisiana History* 15 (Spring 1974): 176; New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, Dec. 5, 1881.

⁵⁸ “The *Times-Democrat* in Mexico,” *Ibid*, Dec. 7, 1881.

southern industry and fostering commercial links with the Americas.⁵⁹

Unlike the ersatz invasions of antebellum filibusters, who sought political control, Burke's New South endorsed the late nineteenth-century Western coupling of commercial imperialism and progress. Assurances were given in the *Times-Democrat* that American interests in Mexico, for example, were not akin to the territorial desires of the Mexican-American War or the filibusters of prior decades. Commercial ties would not only spread progress and profits to Mexico, but also "leave no place for distrust or for the spirit of aggression and conquest on either hand."⁶⁰

Shortly after forming the *Times-Democrat*, Burke's paper had no shortage of noteworthy events to educate its readers about the benefits of Latin American and southern ties. Chief among them was a visit by Guatemalan president Justo Rufino Barrios, the man who inaugurated Liberal rule in Central America. While en route to Washington, Barrios stayed in the Crescent City in July 1882. Burke was among Louisiana dignitaries who joined the city of New Orleans in hosting a banquet in the Guatemalan's honor at the Spanish Fort, an elegant resort and entertainment complex on Lake Pontchartrain. The *Times-Democrat* described Barrios as a "fair type of the present Latin American Liberals," "a man of extraordinary ability," whose "liberal policy" of government sponsorship of telegraph, railroad, and educational developments had "rendered his country happy and prosperous."⁶¹

Mirroring the Mississippi Valley Convention of 1869, New Orleans leaders such as Burke sought other ways to capitalize on their geopolitical advantages. The New Orleans press

⁵⁹ "Extracts from our Exchanges: Our Commerce with Mexico," *Ibid*, Dec. 8, 1881; Eugene V. Smalley, "In and Out of the New Orleans Exposition," *New York Century Magazine* 30, (1885): 4; Watson, "Staging the Crowning Achievement," 245; William Hosea Ballou, "Major Edward A. Burke," *The Journalist*, 3 (April 17, 1886): 1.

⁶⁰ "Extracts from our Exchanges: Our Commerce with Mexico," *Times-Democrat*, Dec. 8, 1881.

⁶¹ Invitation to Banquet in honor of Señor Don J. Rufino Barrios, in Burke Papers: LSU; quote reprinted in the *Lake Charles Commercial*, July 15, 1882.

sought to make the Crescent City the entrepôt of a growing trade with Latin America, rather than with Europe, as markets for the crops and goods from the Mississippi River valley and the West. To accomplish this end, Louisianans routinely attempted to acquire congressional subsidies for a steamship line linking New Orleans and Latin America.⁶²

Burke even backed an expedition that explored the resources of the South's own untamed tropical landscape, south Florida. New Orleans businessmen had long sought to increase their steamship and railroad ties to Florida, which they dubbed "the pathway to the tropics." The most sparsely settled and undeveloped state in the Gulf South was in the midst of a revival in the national consciousness as regarded its prospects for travel, commerce, and tourism. Burke endeavored to realize the vision of "reciprocal trade with Cuba, St. Domingo, and their dependent islands" espoused by boosters since the late 1860s. The choice of Major Archie P. Williams to lead a *Times-Democrat's* expedition through the Florida everglades reflected Burke's personal connections. Williams had been a lieutenant under Burke during the Civil War and, like Burke, rose to social and political prominence as a member of New Orleans Southern Yacht club while also holding various parish offices as an active Democrat.⁶³

More specifically, Burke tapped into longstanding dreams of New Orleans political and financial leaders to partner with Gulf South neighbors in building a transportation network by sea and land from Texas to Florida to counter the increasingly dominant traders in Chicago and New York. Southerners in the Lower Mississippi valley and Gulf South sold their plan in two ways. According to these New South zealots, a Gulf South route to ship grains and other goods directly

⁶² New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, Jan. 21, 1878; New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, Jan. 12, 1883; L. Tuffly Ellis, "The New Orleans Cotton Exchange: The Formative Years, 1871-1880," *Journal of Southern History* 39 (November 1973): 329.

⁶³ Williams likewise claimed the distinction of having received military training from Stonewall Jackson while enrolled at the Virginia Military Institution and later from William T. Sherman while enrolled at the Louisiana Military Academy; see *Biographical and historical memoirs of Louisiana* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1892), 457.

to Europe was a third cheaper than going by way of New York. They also sought to capitalize on the commercial advantages of the Gulf South's geography by promoting the circum-Caribbean and Latin America as lands of all but incalculable value for southern markets and trade. They insisted that the results of such trade would "principally fall to the profit of New Orleans," which *Debow's Review* in 1869 considered to be "the great depot and entrepôt of the Gulf and South Seas."⁶⁴

The most vocal critic of this New South vision and Ring rule, Henry Hearsey, continued to oppose such schemes. In the winter of 1880, Hearsey's *Daily States* called for an entrenched position against any form of invading Yankee influence. Appomattox might have ended military rebellion and an independent Confederacy, "but the war against every form of imperialism, centralism and nationalism was never abandoned." Hearsey cried, "Not even railroads, telegraphs and telephones will reconcile us to reproduction on this continent of the Roman Empire." Less than a month later, Hearsey seized on Ulysses S. Grant's visit to New Orleans as an opportunity to focus his vitriol. He urged New Orleanians to remember the specter of Confederate defeat and Republican rule and to jeer the former president. In January 1881, however, even the recalcitrant Hearsey was forced to admit that the city needed outside capital to stimulate its truncated banking institutions and slow-growing industries.⁶⁵

Nor was the *Picayune* above criticizing such men as Burke who sought outside capital. The press declared ostentatiously a year after Democrats regained state control that Louisiana could "save herself, and stand alone, without a dollar of capital from other states." The *Picayune*

⁶⁴ Smalley, "In and Out of the New Orleans Exposition," 4; Watson, "Staging the Crowning Achievement," 245; Jesus Mendez, "From Adventure Travel to Leisure Tourism: The Florida Letters of William Drysdale in the New York Times, 1884-1893" *Florida Historical Quarterly* 89 (Spring 2011): 455-456; Ballou, "Major Edward A. Burke," 1; "Florida and New Orleans," *Debow's Review*, vol. 6, issue 8 (August 1869): 644-646.

⁶⁵ New Orleans *Daily States*, Feb. 27, 1880; Michael Ross, "Resisting the New South: Commercial Crisis and Decline in New Orleans, 1865-85," *American Nineteenth Century History* 4 (Spring 2003): 69.

contended that “self-reliance and action more than . . . foreign capital” was needed. Such opinions proved erroneous. A few years later, Louisiana investors failed to raise six-hundred-thousand dollars to build a long-anticipated rail link to Marshall, Texas, one-hundred-and-fifteen miles away. Indeed, hopes that the Mississippi River might again become commercially mighty were bolstered in 1879 when James B. Eads completed his state-sponsored construction of jetties at the mouth of the river, thus allowing access to oceangoing commercial steamers. One editorialist outside New Orleans believed that Eads’ work would in time transform the city into “the most eligible port in the world.” When newspapers in Cincinnati and Memphis doubted whether the jetties significantly facilitated large vessels, Burke’s paper printed verified accounts of steamers that drew twenty-five-plus feet of water, thus offering proof that further attempts to “belittle the jetties” would be “ridiculous.”⁶⁶

The coalition of Regular Democrats also took successful steps to accomplish the previously failed rail connections to Texas. In 1881, Jay Gould connected the city’s railways to its Texas neighbor and beyond when he established New Orleans as a hub in his consolidated Southwest rail system. Yet New Orleans discovered that the economic ground they had lost was too significant to regain against merchants and lines whose commercial connections had become firmly entrenched. Burke’s coalition continued to oversee a total of five railroad lines that had been completed by the end of the 1880s, and that made New Orleans a hub of trade with other portions of the country. The return of the tobacco trade was among the many hoped for results

⁶⁶ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, Jan. 6, 1878; Ross, “Resisting the New South,” 67; Samuel C. Shepherd Jr, “A Glimmer of Hope: The World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, New Orleans, 1884-1885,” *Louisiana History* 26, (Summer 1985): 273; Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1883), 508; “The Jetties,” *New Orleans Daily Democrat*, Nov. 2, 1881.

of these two initiatives. City boosters argued that the environment of the circum-Caribbean gave tobacco a “great benefit . . . passing through our mild and moist climate.”⁶⁷

The completion of the New Orleans Pacific Railroad during the 1880s typified the mixed benefits of the iron horse in the postbellum South. It opened up market opportunities for backcountry parishes, but also pulled them into the sinkhole of cotton production, crop-lien financing, and low crop prices. Burke’s New South vision was a strategy many hoped would alleviate stagnant cotton prices caused by overproduction. Increasing steamship routes and commercial ties with Latin America, small farmers in Louisiana’s interior were told to believe, would increase the demand and markets for southern cotton, thus allowing for a profitable price above ten cents a pound. While control of the party apparatus has been an acknowledged reason for the lack of a viable agrarian political revolt in the 1880s, the optimistic forecast of New South Democratic boosters contributed to rural white loyalty and delayed significant independent organizations until the late 1880s.⁶⁸

New South boosters confronted environmental obstacles as well. The specter of contagious disease in the Gulf South and Mississippi valley caused some northern businessmen to avoid investing in New Orleans well into the late nineteenth century. The yellow fever epidemic of 1878 was among the worst medical disasters in U.S. history and darkened perceptions of New Orleans’ commercial suitability for a long time thereafter. The modern phenomenon of diseases spreading through global travel and trade was realized in the 1878 yellow fever epidemic when steamboats and railroads spread its infectious web faster and wider than ever before. Once the disease had spread beyond the Crescent City, railroads cut access into and out of the city, and other ports often quarantined New Orleans vessels. Previous resistance

⁶⁷ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, Jan. 21, 1878; Ross, “Resisting the New South,” 68.

⁶⁸ Barnes, *The Louisiana Populist Movement*, 58-59.

by some southerners to Republican-led efforts to pave the streets, build sewers, and improve the water supply had the unintended consequence of adversely affecting the city's public health infrastructure. In June 1879, a prominent northerner linked "home rule" policies to poor health conditions when he remarked, the "fanaticism which has grown out of the war and politics has put a stop to the Northern man going down to New Orleans." The city, according to his view, was "delivered over to yellow fever . . . and folly."⁶⁹

Gilded Age misconceptions of health and the environment aided such city boosters as Burke who sought heavy industries. Not only was smoke itself a mark of pride and progress, industrialization and factories were seen by some people as aiding public health. The smoke they produced was credited with combating what contemporary's labeled miasma, the foul air from wetlands that they believed led to malaria and yellow fever.⁷⁰

Burke and ambitious-minded businessmen began the new year of 1883 by telling conservative cotton-minded stalwarts that their lackluster and backward-looking goals were failing. The *Times-Democrat* juxtaposed the Crescent City at its commercial height in 1860 with the continual obstacles of a postbellum economic climate. The newspaper emphasized that while the yearly cotton harvests of the early 1880s had increased to six million bales from the 3,200,000 harvested in 1860, New Orleans's role in the trade had declined. It dropped from handling 69% of the cotton trade in 1860 to just 23% in 1883. Tobacco in New Orleans had similarly declined from 78,000 hogshead annually to under 10,000, despite rising national

⁶⁹ Ross, "Resisting the New South," 67; For an account of the epidemic traveling upriver to Memphis, see Jeannie M. Whyne, *Delta Empire: Lee Wilson and the Transformation of Agriculture in the New South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 39-42; Samuel Freeman to William Pitt Ballinger, June 29, 1879, as quoted in Ross, "Resisting the New South," 73.

⁷⁰ White, *The Republic for Which It Stands*, 495.

productivity. However, it was not just agricultural exports that experienced a precipitous drop off: imports arriving in New Orleans fell from antebellum heights by more than tenfold.⁷¹

St. Louis was quick after the Civil War to adopt the method of dispatching commercial agents, called “drummers.” Over twelve-hundred agents flooded portions of the Mississippi River valley previously dominated by New Orleans merchants. Burke recognized the severity of the problem and chided New Orleans merchants for their pride and refusal to adapt to changing circumstances. “St. Louis merchants are not too aristocratic to touch even a five-dollar order if they can see their way to getting paid,” the *Times-Democrat* bemoaned, “and that fact accounts for the general prevalence of the St. Louis drummer within hearing of the Crescent City’s peaceful snore.” Whether it was selling groceries or dry goods, “Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana swarm with St. Louis drummers, working the very lines of merchandise in which New Orleans ought to take precedence.”⁷² The Gateway to the West also targeted the prime economic stronghold of its downriver neighbors, the cotton trade. St. Louis boosters in the 1870s raised funds and invested heavily in building some of the largest and most advanced cotton compresses in the country. Their bold incursion into the New Orleans cotton market paid off in the 1880s. At the beginning of the decade, St. Louis processed nearly a half million bales and became America’s third largest cotton market. No wonder, then, that Burke’s paper struck a tone of righteous indignation as it lamented that St. Louis was “encroaching very seriously upon New Orleans trade – trade which geographically, morally and sentimentally ought to be ours under all circumstances.”⁷³

Increasing Louisiana’s manufacturing capacity by connecting to Gould’s southwestern

⁷¹ New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, Jan. 5, 1883; Ross, “Resisting the New South,” 69.

⁷² New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, Jan. 15, 18, 1883; Ross, “Resisting the New South,” 62.

⁷³ New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, Jan. 15, 1883; Ross, “Resisting the New South,” 62.

rail system and encouraging large steamship vessels, were tangible strategies Burke pursued as a means of adapting to new economic realities caused by the rise of railroads and increased competition for agricultural sales. Cutting into trade with Latin America overlapped with all these initiatives. Burke's paper highlighted opportunities for New Orleanians to seize on Britain's declining control of trade with Mexico, Central America, and South America. "Our transatlantic cousins," Burke reported, were concerned that Americans were "gradually, but very decidedly" overtaking Britain's lion's share of "intertropical commerce." Over the course of the late 1870s and early 1880s, U. S. exports to Mexico, in particular, had increased at the expense of British trade. Reprinting a report from a British agent in Latin America, Burke's *Democrat* stated that "firearms and military artillery, cheap timepieces, sewing machines . . . light manufacturing machinery, [and] agricultural implements" were the exports Latin Americans most readily purchased from the United States. Therefore, Burke stressed that fostering southern industry and manufacturing, not merely reviving the Crescent City's control of agricultural exports, was paramount. These efforts were needed promptly, too, the *Democrat* warned, because the French and Germans were also poised to overtake British trade.⁷⁴

With "home rule" achieved and Regular Democrats consolidating their power, Burke's New South vision supported a vibrant homage to the Old South. In the postbellum era, New Orleans, which voted overwhelmingly for the Constitutional Unionist presidential candidate in 1860, shed its tradition as a city that was lukewarm to secession and war. In 1883, fifteen thousand people bought tickets to see veterans from the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of Tennessee partner with the Grand Army of the Republic to stage a Civil War reenactment at the New Orleans fairgrounds to benefit a Louisiana Confederate soldier's home.

⁷⁴ *New Orleans Daily Democrat*, Nov. 1, 1881.

With no less than twelve thousand residents born in former Confederate states other than Louisiana, Fitzhugh Lee remarked that New Orleans in the 1880s had become the “headquarters for Confederate sentiment, feeling, and action.”⁷⁵ Yet New Orleans also had a long history as a magnet for internal migrants from the North and West. The Crescent City in the Civil War era had more people from New York and Pennsylvania than any state below the Mason-Dixon line, excluding Louisiana.⁷⁶ The New South, like the Lost Cause, was a way to unite and reconcile a city and state when their extreme diversity made community identity difficult. Both were means by which southerners could achieve national reconciliation on their own terms, but in a way that was good for business. Burke and New South boosters were leaders who realized that, as historian Michael Ross has concluded “When it came to luring capital it was the public face that mattered.” Moreover, New South zealots sought to use the Lost Cause as a salve for the pains of a changing society. “The deeper the involvements in commitments to the New Order,” C. Vann Woodward declared, “the louder the protests of loyalty to the Old”⁷⁷

The New South and the Lost Cause became conscious attempts by Regular Democrats to combat threats to their control whether from such rural groups as the Grange and Farmers Alliance or from urban elites bent on reform.⁷⁸ New South advocates countered their influence by either making common cause with agrarian radicals or by trying to appropriate their strength. One strategy used by some vocal leaders for regaining New Orleans’s economic supremacy was to paint the city’s use of water trade as inherently more egalitarian than the monopolistic

⁷⁵ G. Howard Hunter, “Late to the Dance: New Orleans and the Emergence of a Confederate City,” *Louisiana History* 57 (Summer 2016): 297-298, 306; as quoted in Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 91.

⁷⁶ Ted Tunnel, *Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism, and Race in Louisiana, 1862-1877* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 19.

⁷⁷ Ross, “Resisting the New South,” 66; C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South: 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 155.

⁷⁸ Hunter, “Late to the Dance,” 308.

tendencies of railroads, thus appealing to the Jeffersonian agrarianism of the growing Granger and Farmers Alliance movements. The Mississippi, the *Picayune* proclaimed, was a “natural channel . . . a thoroughfare which cannot possibly become a monopoly” while transportation via iron horses represented “the artificial and more expensive lateral routes to the Atlantic seaboard.”⁷⁹

The control the Democratic party apparatus had over elections extended into country parishes. Rural whites criticized machine control of the convention system for selecting candidates. Whereas Orleans Parish was subdivided into wards, rural delegates were selected to parish conventions from meetings in local townships, communities, or even militia districts. Parish conventions would then nominate candidates for local office and elect members to serve in larger conventions for congressional or state office. Politicking arose, however, since party insiders often held Democratic community meetings at inconvenient times and locations or provided little public notification of the meeting.

Driving white rural angst with seeming party apathy was an increasingly dire economic situation. Louisiana farmers reckoned cotton needed a market price above ten cents a pound to provide a small farmer with sufficient profits. In 1878, cotton prices fell below that marker and would only hit ten cents or more for two years in the rest of the century.⁸⁰

While some districts did away with these layered local communal meetings, parish-wide meetings were often easier to control for party regulars. Mass parish meetings were invariably held at the parish seat, which often required greater time and travel for isolated farmers. Towns that were parish seats often had rail depots and were home to mercantile interests, planters, and

⁷⁹ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, Jan. 1, 1881; Ross, “Resisting the New South,” 68.

⁸⁰ Michael R. Hyman, *The Anti-Redeemers: Hill-Country Political Dissenters in the Lower South from Redemption to Populism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 45-47; Barnes, *The Louisiana Populist Movement*, 57-58.

the local partisan press, all of whom favored the maintenance of Regular Democratic control and who exerted disproportionate influence over parish delegates sent to state conventions.

Primaries were often seen as a measure of democratic reform, but they did not fully overtake the convention system until the early twentieth century. Even then, professional politicians could manipulate primary elections with as much, if not more, skullduggery than in general elections. No wonder that the leading scholar of Louisiana populism has concluded that “in no other post-Reconstruction state did planters so effectively dominate the political process.”⁸¹

Whether through the ward politics of New Orleans or rural parishes, the convention system gave Democratic operatives incentives to mobilize voters, suppress opponents, and manipulate the returns. The number of delegates at nominating meetings was determined by the number of Democratic ballots a particular parish cast in the previous election. This allowed planters in such black belt parishes as Tensas, Madison, and Concordia and urban ward bosses to ensure that reform candidates and policies were defeated. Nonetheless, the large number of business professionals and laborers in New Orleans meant that threats to party orthodoxy were more frequent and viable in the city than the countryside. If reform from within Democratic ranks was challenging, race baiting and sectional loyalties doomed the long term chances of independent tickets and third parties.⁸²

Political and economic structures in rural areas were a bastion of strength for Democratic party control. Unlike the norm for states below the Mason-Dixon line, where most sharecroppers were white, over seventy percent of Louisiana sharecroppers were African American. The economic vulnerability of cotton sharecroppers was a primary tool of social control and political

⁸¹ Hyman, *The Anti-Redeemers*, 48-50; Barnes, *The Louisiana Populist Movement*, 128.

⁸² Barnes, *The Louisiana Populist Movement*, 128.

suppression. Merchants and landowners threatened to reduce or eliminate crop-lien loans if sharecroppers acted contrary to their dictates.⁸³

In Louisiana, however, cotton was not the undisputed king (See Appendix C). Sugar was the overwhelming cash crop in eleven parishes in the postbellum era, meaning sugar reigned in nearly a quarter of the state. Sugar plantations were much more capital intensive than cotton. A moderate-sized sugar plantation equipped with refining equipment cost roughly two-hundred-thousand dollars in the mid-1880s. Moreover, sugar laborers were overwhelmingly African American. Unlike cotton sharecroppers or tenant farmers, laborers on sugar plantations worked in gang labor under close supervision and received a low monthly wage that was often paid in scrip good only at the plantation store. The distinct challenges facing cotton and sugar workers made agrarian political mobilization even more difficult in Louisiana than elsewhere. The cotton-oriented Farmers Alliance, for example, made a negligible impact on Louisiana's sugar parishes.⁸⁴ Another factor was that environmental geography fashioned a close bond between sugar planters and New Orleans politicians and businessmen. The Crescent City was within the sugar region of south and southeastern Louisiana, which facilitated frequent social visits, ownership of city homes, and "a stronger cosmopolitan outlook and commercial ethos" than among most other southern landowners.⁸⁵

African American resistance to Democratic rule, and the renewed strength it gave to sugar planters within the party's coalition, was immediate. While intimidation and fraud suppressed the rural black vote, planters nonetheless recognized the level of black resolve to exercise their political rights. Black workers feared that Democratic rule would bring back

⁸³ Ibid, 37.

⁸⁴ Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*, 139-141; Barnes, *The Louisiana Populist Movement*, 40-42.

⁸⁵ Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*, 26.

tactics used in the black codes allowed under President Johnson. Vagrancy laws, anti-enticement clauses, and contract-enforcement statutes were particularly prominent legal means used to exert white control. “The negroes quit the plantation to attend clubs,” a planter from the black-majority parish of Ascension lamented, and “go in a body to election meeting[s].” Despite real threats to their safety, more than a few African Americans voted against Democratic interests even when planters monitored the polls. Moreover, African American workers commonly convinced sugar planters to accommodate black political activity and delay intricate refining operations until after elections.⁸⁶

Democratic policies in New Orleans also confronted strident resistance from black Louisianans. At its height in the antebellum era, more free blacks called the Crescent City home than Charleston, Richmond, Mobile, and Savannah combined.⁸⁷ An increasing number of those who felt the decline in political participation voted with their feet to leave the state for Texas, Arkansas, or, most famously, Kansas. Black migration reached a crescendo in 1879. That year New Orleans was the site of a sizeable convention of African Americans, where debates over an exodus to Kansas were central. George T. Ruby, a leading black Republican from Texas, spoke to many rural and urban blacks in Louisiana who felt a haunting fear “in the turbulent parishes.” “The horrid form of peonage” was the “avowed disposition of the men now in power,” Ruby declared, as white politicians and businessmen sought to “reduce the laborer and his interests to the minimum of advantages as freemen, and to absolutely none as a citizen.”⁸⁸ Louisiana’s most prominent black politician, Pinckney B. S. Pinchback, addressed the convention and tied their fears to specific Democratic policies within the state. The former Republican governor laid the

⁸⁶ Ibid, 161, 166-168.

⁸⁷ Hunter, “Late to the Dance,” 300.

⁸⁸ Theresa A. Case, *The Great Southwest Railroad Strike and Free Labor* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 24-25; as quoted in Case, *The Great Southwest Railroad Strike and Free Labor*, 25.

blame on Democrats who left African Americans “starving . . . swindled . . . and afraid of the [upcoming Democratic-led] Constitutional Convention.” Black Louisianans from New Orleans and its environs were among the ranks of Mississippi valley African Americans who migrated first to St. Louis and from there to Kansas.⁸⁹

African American distrust of Louisiana Democrats was well placed. Following the adoption of the “home rule” constitution, people of color throughout the state immediately mobilized to retain their political and economic freedoms gained during Reconstruction. Indicative of the movement was a large-scale black sugar workers strike in 1880 over poor pay, deplorable conditions, and lack of control over their own labor. Regular Democrats responded immediately. Where Kellogg had only haltingly dispatched the state militia during the previous sugar strike of 1874, Wiltz wasted no time in deploying the militia. Machine politics in New Orleans dictated respect for labor concerns among dockworkers. Rural black workers toiling in the cane fields was a different matter entirely.⁹⁰

In the Crescent City, the Regular Democracy’s alliance with the lottery was a bulwark. Indeed, the strength of lottery power and Ring rule were one and the same, and both were at their height in the decade after Reconstruction. The lottery also furthered fulsome ties between the Lost Cause and New South, as Pierre G.T. Beauregard and Jubal Early presided over the crucial source of Democratic power through their sponsorship of the main lottery drawings. By 1888, the lottery’s monthly prizes were equal to the semi-annual prizes of 1878. With over one hundred “policy,” or ticket, shops and roughly three hundred ticket agents in 1880s New Orleans, vendors selling lottery tickets could be found throughout the city but were especially prevalent next to

⁸⁹ Ibid, 25; as quoted in Omar H. Ali, *In the Lion's Mouth: Black Populism in the New South, 1886-1900* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 19-20; “Revival of the Exodus: Arrival of Several Hundred Negroes in St. Louis,” *New Orleans Daily Democrat*, Jan. 28, 1880.

⁹⁰ Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*, 160-161.

cafés, saloons, and public markets. The lottery licensed each policy shop to a particular ward boss or other politician. Agents and runners working for a shop received a commission of as much as fifteen percent on each ticket sold (See Appendix D). The amount kicked back to the ward boss is speculation, but it was by all accounts significant. For daily drawings, a customer would purchase a numbered “policy,” which allowed customers to pick their own numbers. Gross income from receipts in each shop fluctuated from sixty to five-hundred dollars a day. Employing toughs or dispatching police to enforce Democratic or lottery interests were, if not overlapping, impossible to distinguish. Likewise, the lottery’s prevalence in working-class and immigrant communities provided a means for the Democratic machine’s mobilization. Recording the names of ticket purchases created a ready-made “database” of voters. Having established branch offices throughout Louisiana as early as 1870, the lottery was also an important means of extending and maintaining Ring influence in all areas of the state.⁹¹

The lottery devised professionally organized and hierarchical procedures to manage its business, from the individuals purchasing tickets to the dispersal of winnings. Unlike prostitution or other illicit vices, the legality of the lottery ensured that no opaque signals, passwords, or written ciphers were needed. A customer would enter a branch office or contact a lottery vendor, select the drawing he would like to enter, buy a ticket or policy, receive a receipt, and wait less than twenty-four hours after the drawing for word to arrive via telegraph. A lottery agent recorded the ticket numbers, amounts of the payments, and names of each player in a “book of plays,” the Gilded Age trade term for a sales certificate. Alternatively, customers could mail payments and specifications to the New Orleans home office. Forty-five minutes before the drawing in New Orleans, branch managers throughout the state would close their office, and

⁹¹ Alwes, “The History of the Louisiana State Lottery Company,” 1014, 1022-1024; Fuller, *Morality and the Mail*, 201; *Baton Rouge Daily Advocate*, June 11, 1870.

stamp a wax seal that enclosed a heavy envelope containing their branch's "book of plays." The branch agent would then deliver the envelope to a securities company, which would place it in a safe and mail it by package steamer to the lottery's secure carrier service in New Orleans, Pike, Brother & Co. After the drawing, lottery agents in the home office would then compile a report of the winning tickets and send it via package steamer to each branch office. The lucky few would present the company with their receipt of purchase and collect their winnings.⁹²

On the whole, the Louisiana lottery did most of its business outside the state. In so doing, it capitalized on one of the most iconic of American institutions. "The mail, like tendrils of a poisonous vine," asserts a historian of the intersection between the postal service and moral reform, "spread the temptations of a lottery throughout America." At the zenith of Ring and lottery power in the 1880s, the lottery operated in the vast majority of states and territories throughout the country, even Hawaii. At least one clandestine printing press was maintained in New England to ensure the ubiquitous presence of Louisiana lottery tickets in lucrative Mid-Atlantic cities. Lottery advertisements and winners were found in papers from coast to coast. Thus, the power of Ring Democrats was furthered not just by city and state networks, but also by the contributions of gamblers in nearly every state in the union.⁹³

The lottery and Ring rule led many people to bemoan what they saw as the moral decay of the late nineteenth century in Louisiana. The masthead of northern liberalism, *The Nation*, linked the pernicious effects of the lottery to the already well-known tradition of Louisiana's alcohol consumption. With only half the population of Texas but seventy percent more liquor

⁹² "No. 4692, James Reid vs. Louisiana State Lottery Company," *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Louisiana for the year 1877*, 388-396.

⁹³ As quoted in Fuller, *Morality and the Mail in Nineteenth-Century America*, 198; Peach Springs, Ariz. *Arizona Champion*, July 6, 1884; Robert Gamble, "Lotteries," *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia* (2017), <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/category/robert-gamble/> (accessed April 23, 2018).

dealers in the state, the paper linked alcoholism as key to the “demoralizing effects of the lottery system” that “extend[ed] its ramifications into the liquor business.” After also blaming illiteracy on the lottery, no wonder the liberal newspaper thought Louisiana as a whole was “retrograding in all that makes a community civilized.” Their solution: “overthrow the ring.”⁹⁴

The immigrant and ethnic population of New Orleans was also central to the Ring’s electoral success. On the whole, New Orleans in the late nineteenth century was unique in relation to other cities with a significant proportion of immigrants. The Italian population had its roots in the antebellum era, with the *Societa Mutua Benevolenza Italiana*, the city’s first Italian benevolent society, founded in 1846. Italian immigration was climbing in the 1880s, when the fifteen to twenty thousand who lived in New Orleans comprised roughly eight percent of the city’s population. The press and public of New Orleans was unique in the nation in viewing Italians as hard-working, honest, and capable citizens, rather than crime-prone vermin and akin to the Chinese in their unassimilation. For example, a *Times-Democrat* article, “From Sunny Italy, Arrival of a Shipload of Immigrants,” avoided demeaning caricatures of Italians and presented them as economically necessary laborers who were industrious and upwardly mobile. The timing of the article, published in mid-October 1888, suggests that Burke made calculated attempts to court immigrant votes ahead of an election. New Orleanians lavished particular praise on the Italian population for establishing a vibrant Sicilian citrus trade.⁹⁵

Adding to New Orleans’s distinctiveness was the fact that ninety percent of its Italian immigrants were Sicilians, significantly higher than the twenty-five percent of Sicilians among

⁹⁴ Alwes, “The History of the Louisiana State Lottery Company,” 1012; New York *The Nation*, Apr. 28, 1887; White, *The Republic for Which It Stands*, 172.

⁹⁵ Jackson, “Before the Lynching,” 324, 329; New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, Oct. 18, 1888, as in Jackson, “Before the Lynching,” 320. For an in-depth analysis of Sicilian immigrants in the citrus trade, see Justin A. Nystrom, *Creole Italian: Sicilian Immigrants and the Shaping of New Orleans Food Culture* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018).

Italian immigrants throughout the country. Immigrant support for the Ring was strengthened by a relatively high degree of ethnic mixing that fostered stronger commercial and political ties with the native-born in New Orleans than was found among the immigrant enclaves of many northern cities. The lack of tenements in the Crescent City ensured that racial and ethnic populations were dispersed and overlapping. Moreover, Catholicism had an established history of respect in New Orleans, perhaps more than in any other major city in the United States, which further facilitated positive views of immigrants. As historian Terry Golway has shown in regards to Tammany Hall, immigrants, especially those from Ireland and Italy, were not hapless tools of political machines. Immigrant communities retained a “political and cultural framework,” stemming from marginalization in their homelands, which complemented the brokerage politics of urban machines. They viewed politics as a battle of self-interested groups, not a dispassionate debate for the common good.⁹⁶

Regular Democratic, pro-immigrant policies drew support from beyond the Ring’s municipal machine. The *Richland Beacon* of northern Louisiana, the *Louisiana Democrat* based in Alexandria, and the *Weekly Messenger* of the southern parish of St. Martinville also encouraged European, including Italian, immigration. Indeed, long held beliefs about nationwide hostility towards Italians in the 1880s have been demonstrated by recent scholars to be a largely northern-based phenomenon. Most in New Orleans had already rejected a “transatlantic narrative of Irish degeneracy” that was common in New York and London.⁹⁷ Anti-Italian rhetoric mirroring that which was common from New York and Washington, D.C., to Chicago and San Francisco did not occur until after the highly publicized murder of New

⁹⁶ Jackson, “Before the Lynching,” 326, 327; A. Margavio, A. and Jerome Salomone, *Bread and Respect: The Italians of Louisiana* (Gretna, La.: Pelican Publishing Company, 2002), 40; Golway, *Machine Made*, xxiii.

⁹⁷ Jackson, “Before the Lynching,” 325, 302; Golway, *Machine Made*, xxii.

Orleans Police Chief David Hennessy in 1890. Anti-Italian sentiment was not so much the cause of the lynching of eleven Italians that followed, one of the single largest such episodes in American history, as it was justification for the public violence meted out to Italians.⁹⁸

That said, not all immigrants were on board with the Democratic machine. Immigrants and laborers in the Ninth Ward formed an “Honest Man’s Ticket” in 1880. Rallying voters “tired of the rule of Corrupt Men,” they used the slogan “No Dudenhefer in Mine” in an effort to send delegates to the state central committee who opposed the rule of their local boss, Ferdinand Dudenhefer. Part of the resistance to the Ring within foreign-born communities was due to its close association with the lottery, which made significant inroads within immigrant neighborhoods and businesses.⁹⁹

Nonetheless, the Crescent City’s social and economic progress, along with Burke’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 by 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” was in journalism. Writing in 1883, with the *Times-Democrat* in print for just over a year, Twain remarked that the press of New Orleans had become “a striking feature” of city life. The reasons for such a revolution in the quality 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-

⁹⁸ Jackson, “Before the Lynching,” 305.

⁹⁹ 9th ward “Honest Man’s Ticket,” 1880, printed ephemera, Vertical files, Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana; Alwes, “The History of the Louisiana State Lottery Company,” 1002, 1024.

grinding, but literature.” If the famous author did not mention Burke specifically, he did praise 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 and its extensive coverage of the “business of the towns of the Mississippi valley” that encompassed “two thousand miles” from the mouth of the river to Minnesota.¹⁰⁰

Burke’s guidance of the *Times-Democrat* to national prominence was also 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 that detailed 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 so that his transnational New South vision was the *sine qua non* for each. Ballou spoke of Burke’s New South boosterism when he credited the major’s unsurpassed efforts to facilitate the “growth, development and progress of New Orleans as a great commercial and manufacturing city” while also furthering 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 by 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” was only “equaled by that of Horace Greeley, and the enterprise

¹⁰⁰ Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1883), 341, 342.

of his paper by that of the *New York Herald*.”¹⁰¹

Burke’s journalistic endeavors also mobilized the Latino community in New Orleans. In 1888, Spanish-born José Antonio Fernandez de Trava, one of the Crescent City’s most prominent businessmen dealing with Latin America and the first professor of Spanish at Tulane, established the weekly Spanish-language newspaper *El Moro de Paz*. Along with the city’s other Spanish publications, such as *Revista Mercantil de Nueva Orleans* and *El Observador Ibero*, its goal of increasing the “commercial, agricultural, and manufacturing interests of Louisiana and Spanish America” echoed that of Burke’s newspaper and furthered the ties between New Orleans and the circum-Caribbean within Spanish-speaking communities. Fernandez de Trava shared Burke’s interests in other ways as well. He had been an active Louisiana lottery agent since its beginning in 1868, hired to take an active part within the city’s Hispanic community to curtail the influence of the Havana lottery.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Ballou, “Major Edward A. Burke,” 1, 3.

¹⁰² Rafael E. Delgadillo, “A ‘Spanish Element’ in the New South: The Hispanic Press and Community in Nineteenth Century New Orleans” (M. A. thesis: University of New Orleans, 2006), 2, 4-5, 16-17, translations by Delgadillo.

Chapter Three: The Crescent City on a Global Stage: The 1884 New Orleans World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition

December 16, 1884, dawned with bright skies and fervor. Fifty thousand people of all ages and color thronged the streets and peered out shop windows 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, the federal government, foreign dignitaries, military officers, and noted intellectuals was Major Edward A. Burke, Director General of 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. After arriving, Burke and the leading representatives from the federal government convened at his office in the Main Building. From there the director general led them to meet awaiting foreign dignitaries as they strode to Music Hall. The vast array of national flags and banners waving from archways and flying buttresses was the visual manifestation of the hope of global 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. An American band began the opening ceremonies with the "Grand Exposition March," dedicating it to the seminal force behind the creation and direction of the exposition, Director General Burke.¹ The bombastic major was at the height of his career as New South zealot.

¹ Herbert Fairall, *The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, New Orleans, 1884-1885* (Iowa City: Republican Publishing Company, 1885), 13, 14; B.H. Buckingham to G. Brown Goode, December 15, 1884,

When one thinks of the American South in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the traditional image of the region has been one of economic stagnation, xenophobia, and cultural isolation. The traditional view of Louisiana in the last decades of the nineteenth century is a state dominated by reactionary politics and mired in a malaise of sharecropping and extractive industries. While these images have been explored extensively by scholars, the postbellum U.S. South, and Louisiana specifically, also exhibited a vibrant mobility and cosmopolitanism characterized by pragmatic ambition.² A distinct, yet understudied, transnational New South vision of national unity and regional prosperity through increased commercial and political ties with Latin America buoyed the expectations of many leading politicians and ambitious entrepreneurs. From local chambers of commerce to governors and congressmen, southerners throughout the region were all too aware of the former Confederacy's subservient position to the more industrialized North.³ To counter the disadvantages of a persistent drought of capital, skilled labor, technology, and market outlets, more than a few postbellum southerners tethered their hopes for future prosperity to closer ties with Latin America. These vocal New South disciples, with Louisianans in the vanguard, saw in Latin America's vast markets for southern surpluses, untapped natural resources for southern capitalists, and the geographical crux for the dream of an isthmian canal bringing Atlantic and Pacific trading within reach of Gulf South

Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 19, Folder 5; Samuel C. Shepherd Jr, "A Glimmer of Hope: The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, New Orleans, 1884-1885," *Louisiana History* 26 (Summer 1985): 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 Travelers* (New Orleans: New Orleans News Co., 1885), 3; "Musical Programme," MSS 214, Folder 2, World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition Collection, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, Louisiana.

² Justin A. Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War: Race, Politics, and a New Birth of Freedom* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 29.

³ Joseph A. Fry, *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1789-1973* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 107.

ports. Fully exploring this strain of the New South creed adds a crucial outward looking element to our understanding of postbellum efforts for national reconciliation and industrialization.

The first world's fair in the former Confederacy, New Orleans' 1884 World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, serves to explore how a leading faction of New South zealots sought to realize their goal of refashioning the South's image from one as a region characterized by slavery and sectionalism to one as the natural nexus of trade and industry in the Americas. The fair's exhibits, architecture, civic functions, and ephemera functioned as visceral propaganda for the South's development and a dynamic role in the wider world. The New Orleans world's fair, in short, was a defining moment for southern industrialization, national reconciliation, and international ambitions wrapped in the pomp and circumstance of pan-American progress. As the second nationally sponsored international exhibition, the 1884 world's fair was also a seminal event in the proliferation of education and knowledge. Most notably, America's only national associated academic organization, the Smithsonian Institution, came into its modern form in no small part due to its participation in the New Orleans exposition.

In a state simultaneously defined as a gateway to the U.S. hinterland and the primary port of the Americas, the 1884 exposition was a seminal moment in Louisiana's long history of presenting the Crescent City as the metropole of the U.S. South. The New Orleans world's fair likewise expanded upon the significant reciprocal links between Louisiana and Latin America that had existed for centuries. Louisiana's New South trumpeters found a receptive audience among late nineteenth-century Latin American liberals, who endeavored to further national economic and social development by courting the capital and entrepreneurial spirit of industrialists. Leaders in Louisiana and Latin America, therefore, participated in the fair as a

means to shape the commercial, cultural, and political exchange on their own terms in defining a new era of globalization.

Finally, the 1884-5 New Orleans exposition was the high tide of power and prestige for Louisiana Democrats who had ousted Republicans from state control several years prior. Analyzing the New Orleans fair, then, also requires a reexamination of the exposition's director general and Louisiana's exemplar of a transnational New South zealot, Edward A. Burke. As a prominent New South spokesman, Burke wielded his position as director general to mold the exposition around his transnational vision.

As it happens, Burke was one of a diverse and motley crew of postbellum southerners who advocated for a dynamic role in the world. Henry Watterson was another Confederate veteran and late nineteenth-century New South apostle as the editor of the Louisville *Courier-Journal* who preached free trade and access to overseas markets as the path to southern salvation. Alabama senator John Tyler Morgan, one of the more prominent southerners at the national level, was a former fire-eater, Confederate general, and proponent of free trade as an outlet for southern cash crops furthered by an assertive modern navy and territorial expansion in the Caribbean basin. Historian Joseph Fry has dubbed Morgan "the New South's foremost expansionist and the 'father' of the isthmian waterway."⁴ Recent scholarship on such men has succeeded in furthering understanding of postbellum political and economic goals that has too often emphasized Georgia's Henry Grady as the era's "most celebrated proponent" of a New South.⁵

⁴ Joseph A. Fry, *John Tyler Morgan and the Search for Southern Autonomy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), xii.

⁵ Fry, *Dixie Looks Abroad*, 106.

Historians have universally highlighted Burke's moxie and political acumen as a prime example of the boldness so prevalent in the postbellum South. C. Vann Woodward called him a "cool-headed and daring gambler" with "splendid audacity." More recent scholars have given Burke the epithets of Louisiana's New South "mythmaker-in-chief," "Bourbon plunderer," and "dealmaker par excellence."⁶ Many contemporaries and later historians acknowledged his dynamism as well as his more devilish tendencies, but he has never been given his full due. Burke's quick rise to power and controversial career have distracted historians from properly placing this leading politician of postbellum Louisiana among other prominent southerners of the late nineteenth century. Yet numerous contemporary observers highlighted Burke's credentials as a New South spokesman and his instrumental part in molding the 1884 New Orleans world's fair.

International expositions in the nineteenth century may be likened to today's Olympic games, that is, international affairs that allowed nations to display their premier talents under the auspices of cooperation and goodwill. Both also saw their hosts crafting elaborate ceremonies and structures to legitimize political authority and celebrate cultural distinctiveness while also serving as proxies for geopolitics. A highly contagious world's fair fever began with London's 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition and ultimately yielded over one hundred expositions over the next one hundred years. With hundreds of millions of people attending fairs all over the globe, attendees gazed at myriad displays, ranging from such technological wonders as incandescent electricity, such engineering marvels as the Eiffel Tower, and such popular culture innovations as the player piano. World's fairs of the late nineteenth century were not only cathedrals of

⁶ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South: 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 71; Miki Pfeffer, *Southern Ladies and Suffragists: Julia Ward Howe and Women's Rights at the 1884 New Orleans World's Fair* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 3; Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 182.

cultural authority, they were also waypoints of change that affected people's daily lives and served to define modernity and perceptions of the world.⁷ Scholars of mass culture situate late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century world's fairs within larger trends of modernization. In this context, each international exposition was another innovation amidst the era's characteristic "industries of spectacle," from high-brow landscape art to the cross-class appeal of melodramatic panoramas and such elaborate stage productions as Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.⁸ All told, there were thirteen world's fairs authorized by the U.S. government between the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition and the 1916 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego. The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, therefore, built on the first federally-sponsored international exposition in Philadelphia and became a harbinger of the granddaddy of all American fairs, the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893. Such fairs represented the formal U.S. push into "competitive multinational trade networks," "beckoned the marriage of trade and global expansion," and "proclaimed the industrial revolution underway."

In so doing, American expositions were active in creating and spreading a novel American culture that exalted capitalism and consumerism as ethical and progressive. The exposition sites, from such natural environments as the row of Live Oaks on the New Orleans exposition grounds to steam engine behemoths and consumer goods, furthered this new American ethos through awe and spectacle. Presenting industrialization and commerce as amusements and attraction brought modernity into the popular culture and vernacular, while spreading the political, economic, and cultural authority of organizers and leaders.⁹

Yet each fair differed in strategies and emphasis as their "cultural landscapes tease[d] out

⁷ Robert Rydell, "The Literature of International Expositions," in *The Books of the Fairs: Materials about World's Fairs, 1834-1916, in the Smithsonian Institution Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1992), 2.

⁸ Susan Tenneriello, *Spectacle Culture and American Identity: 1815-1940* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 125, 156.

the changing aims of political economy” among competing regional differences.¹⁰ Set during Reconstruction, the 1876 Philadelphia centennial had decidedly Republican leadership. The president of the U.S. Centennial Commission that shaped the strategic message and contours of the Philadelphia fair was a leading New England Republican and Union veteran, former Connecticut governor, and editor of the Hartford *Evening Press*, General Joseph R. Hawley. As such, the fair was planned and operated by Republicans, manifested their goals on an international scale, and was meant to legitimize their rule. The exposition’s director general was a Cincinnati manufacturer, Alfred T. Goshorn, who managed all fair subcommittees and individual departments. While New Orleans would have only two years to execute and open its fair, planning began in Philadelphia on July 3, 1873. Despite revenues never surpassing much then half of the fair’s eight million dollar bill, it breathed new life into consumer spending and engendered corporations to end austerity measures induced by the Panic of 1873 in favor of renewed business expansion. A contemporary observer for *Century Magazine* credited the fair with helping stem the panic’s tide.¹¹

Characteristic of American world’s fairs in the era, the New Orleans exposition emerged from the idea to commemorate a particular occasion, in this case, the centennial of America’s first cotton export in 1784. However, like the later and better known 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, meant to memorialize Columbus’ discovery of the New World, the significance of the Crescent City exposition quickly grew beyond mere memorialization. Modest regional fairs in 1881 and 1883 in Atlanta and Louisville, respectively, spurred the idea for an exhibition in Louisiana when the president of the National Cotton Planters Association, Franklin C. Morehead of Vicksburg, proposed a fair in New Orleans to celebrate the cotton centennial. While its name

¹⁰ Ibid, 124.

¹¹ Ibid, 123, 135,

suggests otherwise, the National Cotton Planters Association (N.C.P.A.) strove not only to increase the efficiency and productivity of southern textile mills, but also to lessen the region's dependence on staple crops by fostering industrial manufacturing and development of natural resources. Based in Vicksburg and anchored in New Orleans, the N.C.P.A. held its 1882 meeting at Little Rock, the capital of another state with strong ties to the Mississippi Delta, where in October it adopted resolutions to sponsor a world's cotton centennial. President Morehead arrived in Washington a couple of months later to garner support from agricultural and industrial capitalists alike for a government sponsored international fair.

Morehead's most willing partner was Senator Augustus Hill Garland of Arkansas. Garland introduced a senate bill on January 23, 1883, that committed the government to an exposition "national and international in character" that would comprise "all arts, manufactures, and products of the soil and mine," rather than merely a show of the cotton industry.¹² Back in New Orleans, Burke threw the weight of the *Times-Democrat* behind the endeavor before the bill was even passed. Burke's paper published the comments of the renowned engineer James B. Eads, who confidentially predicted that the centennial would connect the Crescent City "to the trade of the civilized world."¹³ Garland insisted, however naively, that the New Orleans exposition ask for "no financial aid of the government . . . but merely recognition." Congress passed the bill within eighteen days. It partnered the federal government with the N.C.P.A. and established a board of directors that would go forward with the exposition if New Orleans would subscribed \$500,000.¹⁴ The fair was akin to others in the era "as a means toward interlocking

¹² U.S., Congress, Senate debates, 47th Cong., 2nd sess., January 23, 1883, *Congressional Record*, 14: 1457

¹³ As quoted in Thomas D. Watson, "Staging the 'Crowning Achievement of the Age': Major Edward A. Burke, New Orleans and the Cotton Centennial Exposition," *Louisiana History* 25 (Summer 1984): 236, 237.

¹⁴ As quoted in Watson, "Staging the 'Crowning Achievement of the Age,'" 236. 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

municipal and regional economies to catapult national resurgence.”¹⁵ In March, Burke 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 five thousand dollars.¹⁶

Given his positions as state treasurer and de facto Democratic party boss, combined with his editorship of the *Times-Democrat* and national network of connections, Burke was on the short list of possible exposition leaders. When the fair’s board of directors still suffered lackluster fundraising efforts through June, Burke seized the opportunity to claim his first role in the exposition as part of a small delegation of well-connected men with both experience in lobbying and the necessary boldness to secure substantial capital. The role enabled Burke to again court tangible ties between Louisiana and northern industrial capital. He led the delegation on a two-week July tour of the North, visiting New York, Chicago, and St. Louis, to meet with the likes of Jay Gould and George Pullman. The expansion of robber baron interests in the Gulf South and West gave Burke ammunition he needed to court these leading titans of industry. He likely stressed to railroad owners, in particular, how a successful international industrial exposition in New Orleans would provide not only increased traffic for the event, but also potentially provide opportunities for new capital and expansion. At the time of Burke’s meetings, Jay Gould was in the process of taking firm control of several southwestern railroads, including the New Orleans & Pacific and the Iron Mountain, which connected New Orleans to national markets.

After their return to New Orleans, Burke informed the board of directors that the

upon the recommendation of New Orleans subscribers. See Eugene V. Smalley, “In and Out of the New Orleans Exposition,” *Century Magazine* 30, (1885): 5.

¹⁵ Tenneriello, *Spectacle Culture and American Identity*, 140.

¹⁶ Smalley, “In and Out of the New Orleans Exposition,” 5.

persuasiveness of his delegation had secured \$203,000 towards the exposition.¹⁷ The board of directors then concluded that “an able, active and influential man” was needed to serve as director general and shoulder the responsibility for management, execution, construction, and fundraising. Given all of Burke’s aforementioned attributes and his obvious enthusiasm for the exposition, the search committee quickly offered him the position. Despite expressing, perhaps in a ploy of calculated false humility, initial concerns over his already extensive professional and political duties, Burke acquiesced when the committee stated that the leading alternative was a “Northern man.”¹⁸

By the end of the first week of August 1883, Burke had begun his tenure as director general of the World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial. Its administration, as he shaped it, mirrored that of postbellum political machines. The executive committees of both major parties during Gilded Age presidential elections consisted overwhelmingly of a wealthy merchant or titan of industry at their head with “the intense political work,” as historian Mark Wahlgren Summers has explained, “left to experienced politicians at a lower rank.”¹⁹ In this case, Franklin Morehead fulfilled the former role and Burke the latter. Everyone, from local residents to national officials, recognized Burke’s driving leadership of the exposition. Julia Ward Howe, author of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” whom Burke appointed director of the fair’s Woman’s Department, credited Burke’s “genius and comprehensive intellect” with shaping the fair as a truly international industrial exposition.²⁰ Writing for the premier northern journal on

¹⁷ Ibid, 5; Watson, “Staging the Crowning Achievement of the Age,” 243, 244; Theresa A. Case, *The Great Southwest Railroad Strike and Free Labor* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 30-31.

¹⁸ As quoted in Watson, “Staging the Crowning Achievement,” 244, 245.

¹⁹ Mark Wahlgren Summers, *Party Games: Getting, Keeping, and Using Power in Gilded Age Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 154.

²⁰ Julia Ward Howe, *Report and Catalogue of the Woman’s Department of the World’s Exposition, Held at New Orleans, 1884-1885* (Boston: Rand, Avery, and Company, 1885), 1.

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 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.²¹

Elsewhere, reactions to his appointment were mixed. Naturally, Burke's foes worried that the exposition was coming under his dominance. The prime antagonist was his stalwart political opponent, the *Daily Picayune*. Warning that the exposition would become a channel for Burke's ambition and Ring patronage, the *Picayune* 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 people saw merit in Burke's indefatigable nature. The New Orleans *Bee* praised the "indomitable and inventive energy" Burke would bring to the exposition, while the *German Gazette* proclaimed that his involvement had resurrected "an undertaking whose vitality [was] still in doubt by many." Even some previous critics of Burke begrudgingly conceded his "high qualifications."²² As a leading Gilded Age political historians asserts, in the postbellum South, "oratorical talent went every bit as far as a bankroll in bringing out a good vote . . . personal popularity or a war record went further still."

With his ties to the deep pockets of the Louisiana lottery, the exposition's single largest purchaser of stock, Burke had a royal flush. Using his salary to purchase stock in the exposition and donate the shares to Louisiana State University, however, was one way Burke undercut his

²¹ Smalley, "In and Out of the New Orleans Exposition," 5.

²² As quoted in Watson, "Staging the Crowning Achievement," 245.

critics' cries that his leadership in the fair was merely a ruse for personal and partisan advancement.²³ Upon receipt of the bonds, President James W. Nicholson expressed his gratitude and pledged "to assist in perpetuating . . . [Burke's] honored name and in making a lasting record" at the university.²⁴ Moreover, contracts to build the grounds and exhibits were not confined to businesses from the city or state, but open to national bids to stimulate competition and to ward off critiques of Ring graft.

Burke's tenure as director general is important for another reason. His use of the world's fair fit with the public pageantry and party atmosphere characteristic of Gilded Age politics. While colorful parades and booze-infused barbecues were a tradition from the Jacksonian Era, "the 1880s saw politics' own industrial revolution."²⁵ Just as expositions were a hallmark of postbellum America, so the resources required for expositions reflected the deepened pockets needed for political mobilization and policy. Steam engines were not the only machines growing in complexity during the late nineteenth century. Political parties were also employing more sophisticated methods, and everyone from business lobbyists and single-issue groups to labor organizations contributed to increasingly adroit use of mass-produced political materials and networks.

This context of an increasingly competitive political marketplace is central to providing a complete picture of the exposition's importance. The inherently non-partisan nature of expositions belies their equally inherent political significance. In the hands of such deft political partisans as Burke, fairs provided legitimacy and were innovative vehicles for expanding party influence, necessary, it was believed, in an era when "the mainstream parties' monopoly on

²³ Summers, *Party Games*, 160.

²⁴ J.W. Nicholson to E.A. Burke, June 16, 1884, Burke Papers: LSU; Smalley, "In and Out of the New Orleans Exposition," 5.

²⁵ Summers, *Party Games*, 160.

politics and policy . . . [had begun] to dim.”²⁶ World expositions, moreover, were more tangible in their political claims for making a global impact than were other Gilded Age crusades. As in political campaigning, the total cost of the New Orleans exposition is impossible to measure for records do not reflect how many services were given to the fair with lowered prices or *pro bono* but compensated for in other ways. After all, a favor granted was a favor earned. Moreover, Burke used the *Times-Democrat* to mobilize support for the fair and got people to the turnstiles much as his “partisan news mongering” got people to the ballot box. However, there was a major advantage Burke and others who attempted to use fairs for partisan purposes received. Parties, not public funds, paid all levels of political requirements, from poll watchers to the tickets themselves, while expositions drew legitimate funds from national, state, and local governments.²⁷

Records do not contain direct evidence of corruption between Louisiana’s Democratic party and the New Orleans exposition. Indeed, local and state exposition leaders, especially those serving in federally-appointed posts, included numerous Republicans and Democrats critical of the Ring political machine with which Burke was associated. One of Burke’s most bitter foes, Henry J. Hearsey, served on a committee of prominent New Orleans citizens that aided the fair’s efforts.²⁸ Nonetheless, circumstantial evidence and the political system of the time point to some element of patronage and strong-arm politics. As Mark Summers has explained, an assessment paid by officeholders was at the crux of the postbellum spoils system. Those who were appointed to an office or post, from jailhouse wardens on up, and those who were selected on a party ticket were expected to contribute to campaign funds. Incumbents were

²⁶ Ibid, 160.

²⁷ Ibid, 144.

²⁸ Watson, “Staging the Crowning Achievement,” 250; MSS 214, Folder 11, World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition Collection, Historic New Orleans Collection, Williams Research Center.

no exception. Indeed, current office holders and appointees were solicited most. The marble cake nature of American federalism had the unintended consequence by the late nineteenth century of ensuring multiple layers of political costs and hierarchies. While the Pendleton Civil Service Act of 1883 curtailed elements of federal assessments, it did not alleviate pressures at the state and local level. Assessments in the spoils system functioned as an “informal tax system to sustain the parties” and engendered a type of “trickle-down corruption” that left taxpayers ultimately paying the bill. If “winning elections did not necessarily mean a lasting influence,” expositions served as a stimulant for inducing political fruit.²⁹

Expositions in the age of imperialism and industrialization “were, above all, exercises in consolidating and perpetuating power.”³⁰ Yet Burke never was able to shake a significant amount of criticism. One of his most dogged opponents throughout the 1880s was the biting satirical New Orleans *Mascot* (see Appendix E). In 1882, one of its cartoons portrayed a crying Major Burke riding a wooden donkey inscribed with, “I want to go to the Senate.” On the wall of Burke’s office, moreover, the cartoon lampooned Burke’s *mottos operando* as: “Go lightly on hoodlums, ward-bummers, strikers, office-holders, or anyone that can help me. Sensational items on our friends must be suppressed. Slobber the fiscal agent . . . the public is easily pleased.”³¹

And Director General Burke sought to please. As the only federally-sponsored fair in the decade, the 1884 New Orleans exposition received a significant amount of government support to ensure it fostered the national interest. President Chester A. Arthur issued an executive order

²⁹ Summers, *Party Games*, 154, 155, 156.

³⁰ Robert Rydell, “The Literature of International Expositions,” 2.

³¹ “Our Press,” New Orleans *Mascot*, May 27, 1882. *The Mascot*’s habit of indiscriminately targeting all factions of politicians and businessmen led both Ring and Reformers to attempt to prosecute it for libel. In 1882, New Orleans Mayor Shakespeare ordered the newspaper shut down and its employees arrested for distributing libelous and scandalous material. *The Mascot* won the appeal in court, however, and remained in print.

in May 1884 to establish a board comprising a representative from each of the eight U.S. executive department participating in the exposition. The structure and function of the Board of United States Executive Departments (hereafter abbreviated to 'U.S. Board') mirrored that of the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. With different appointees, however, the board served to administer congressional appropriations. A secretary and paymaster aided appointed officials from all eight departments as well as the Bureau of Education and Smithsonian Institution. Each representative oversaw his respective appropriations and immediately began the massive undertaking of coordinating, collecting, packing, transporting, receiving, and displaying each department's exhibits and participation.

On the whole, analysis of the New Orleans world's fair intersects with a host of larger themes and questions. Burke's logistical strategy and fundraising efforts as director general leading up to its opening in December 1884 have received a fair amount of scholarly attention. In characteristic manner, Burke combined embellishments, back-room dealings, and consummate politicking on a national stage with his sheer audacity and will 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 have led such scholars as exposition historian D. Clive Hardy to find numerous faults in Burke's management and all but deny the fair any substantial historical significance. Burke's synonymous role with the Ring meant political opponents depicted him as a familiar Gilded Age type, "the money-bag bogeyman" who was at once financially negligent, corrupt, and greedy, often at the people's expense and to their embarrassment.³² That the New Orleans fair would eventually be overshadowed by later and

³² Shepherd, Jr., "A Glimmer of Hope," 274-278. 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 the exposition" because it raised cultural awareness of the city. See Hardy, "The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition," 7. Summers, *Party Games*, 142.

grander fairs, such as Chicago in 1893, has no doubt influenced historical scholarship on the New Orleans exposition, as has its association with Burke himself, largely understood to be one of the most notorious political bosses of the Gilded Age.

Ultimately, the New Orleans exposition also had an institutional legacy, as it set the standard for the federal government's organizational structure for future fairs. In particular, President Arthur issued a second executive order in July 1884 that retained the structure and personnel of the U.S. Board for the subsequent Cincinnati Industrial Exposition and the Southern Exhibition held in Louisville, Kentucky. Yet the federal government reduced its presence at Cincinnati and Louisville, reflective of the less grandiose scale of those fairs. No doubt, however, many of the same exhibits that were produced for New Orleans were used in Ohio and Kentucky.³³

Burke ventured again to Washington the same month that President Arthur initiated federal participation in order to coordinate with exposition leaders from across the country. Before the U.S. Board officially convened for the first time at noon on May 17, 1884, Burke held off-the-record meetings and "informal conferences" with groups of both U.S. state commissioners for the fair and the heads of the U.S. Board. One such meeting convened in the central parlor of the famous Willard Hotel on May 8. Burke no doubt fielded logistical questions about the exposition's facilities and transportation systems as well as the regulations for

³³ *Brief of the official report of the representative of the Department of State at the World's Industrial Centennial Exposition, New Orleans* (Washington, D.C.: Judd and Detweiler, 1890) in Smithsonian Libraries, Special Collections, World's Fair Collection, Reel 77, No. 9, 2. Departments participating in the exhibition required large staffs to oversee and execute exhibits from collecting and shipping to set-up and display. U.S. Governmental departments employed perhaps the deepest rosters. The Smithsonian employed thirty people, not including scientists dispatched on naturalist forays to collect specimens, to devote their energies exclusively to the fair. See Goode to Baird, June 24, 1884, Goode, George Brown, 1884-1885, Letterpress Book of His New Orleans Correspondence, MS Box 20, Folder 2, Exposition Records of the Smithsonian Institution and the United States National Museum, 1867-1940.

exposition contests.³⁴

As he had done during the compromise crisis of 1877, Burke also found himself in 1884 lobbying government officials in the interest of Louisiana. This time, he was asking Congress to pass a million dollar federal loan to support the exposition. The task required the utmost of Burke's vaunted politicking and charm. In no area was this more evident than in his dealings with one of Louisiana's most powerful Ring critics, Congressman E. John Ellis. The relationship between the Ring and Reformer Democrat was at an all-time low after Burke, in retaliation for Ellis' failed attempt to block Louis Wiltz's nomination for governor in 1879, unsuccessfully tried to replace Ellis with a machine candidate in the 1882 congressional elections. Now, in Washington, Burke used a Louisiana ally, Senator Benjamin F. Jonas, to set up a meeting with Ellis. Realizing it was imperative that Louisiana's congressional delegation put up a united front in support of federal aid for the fair, Burke set his pride aside and made the first move of reconciliation. "We fought, you won. Let us be friends," Burke bluntly stated, and told Ellis he hoped they could move on from any past "misunderstandings." This proved satisfactory to Ellis, who extended his hand to Burke while pledging to forget "all that was unpleasant." Ellis was true to his word and became instrumental in securing the loan's passage.³⁵

From businessmen and entrepreneurs to city boosters and government officials, an army of exposition participants mustered their forces in the summer of 1884 to shape the New Orleans exposition and advance their interests. Perhaps no two national departments seized on the fair as an opportunity more enthusiastically than the most inherently transnational organizations of the

³⁴ *Brief of the official report of the representative of the Department of State*, 1; E.A. Burke to G. Brown Goode, May 8, 1884, Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 19, Folder 5.

³⁵ E. John Ellis to Thomas C. W. Ellis, May 15, 1884, E. John Ellis Collection, Department of Archives and Manuscripts of Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, as quoted in Joy J. Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age: Politics and Urban Progress, 1880-1896*, Second Edition (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 147.

American government in the late nineteenth century, the Department of State and the Smithsonian Institution. For its part, postbellum world's fairs were the incubators of the Smithsonian as we know it today with an emphasis on research and museums. The lasting legacy of the Philadelphia centennial led an official history of the Smithsonian, published in 1896, to conclude that the 1876 exposition "was destined to have a more important effect upon the National Museum than any which had occurred since the founding of the Smithsonian Institution."³⁶ Smithsonian leaders ingeniously utilized the near annual regional, national, and world's fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a means of diversifying and expanding the Smithsonian's collections at low cost, the Smithsonian staff acquired displays from fair participants in both the private and government sectors. The Philadelphia fair produced such a windfall of holdings for the Smithsonian that it led directly to congressional approval for the first stand-alone Smithsonian museum building, the United States National Museum, for which construction began in 1879.

The Smithsonian's staff, having already participated in domestic and international expositions on both sides of the Atlantic, was equal to the most experienced expositionists in the world by the time of the New Orleans exposition. The institution had access to the finest museums and learned minds in Europe, which allowed George Brown Goode, the U.S. Board's representative for the Smithsonian and head of the U.S. National Museum, to attain an "invaluable knowledge of the most approved methods of installation of collection, labeling, and storage." Goode was a true titan of the Smithsonian's ascendancy as a standard bearer of American knowledge. The official history described Goode as "gifted with a philosophical

³⁶ George Brown Goode, ed., *Smithsonian institution, 1846-1896: The History of its First Half Century* (Washington: n.p., 1897), 325.

mind, a profound love of nature, a marvelously repetitive memory, and untiring energy [with] a range of knowledge and a grasp of affairs which astonished his associates.”³⁷

Goode and Spencer Fullerton Baird, the Secretary of the Smithsonian, had fulsome ambitions for the New Orleans exposition that almost outmatched those of Burke.³⁸ Smithsonian advocates were assuredly eager to use the New Orleans fair, the first nationally sponsored exposition since the U.S. National Museum’s opening in 1881, to draw attention to their expanding institution and fill the exhibit space of their new building on the National Mall. Indicative of this aim, Smithsonian officials lobbied Congress to nearly triple the \$72,000 appropriated for the previous Philadelphia fair in funding the New Orleans exposition. Smithsonian leaders made elaborate plans to use the New Orleans fair as a grand opportunity to advance scientific knowledge and the institution’s standing. The Smithsonian of the late nineteenth century specialized in natural history and animal science, its emphasis on fish and fisheries within the field of natural history dating back to 1871. In that year, Congress established the United States Fish Commission, and Baird was appointed its director. The Smithsonian Institution and U.S. Fish Commission formed a symbiotic relationship throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, ensuring that the institution was one of the leading repositories of marine life and aquatic animals. It aimed for nothing less than “a complete representation of

³⁷ Goode, *Smithsonian Institution: The History*, 330. For a detailed account of the Smithsonian during the formative leadership of Spencer Baird and G. Brown Goode, see Pamela Henson, “‘A Nursery of Living Thoughts’: G. Brown Goode’s Vision for a National Museum in the Late 19th Century United States,” in *Science Museums in Transition: Cultures of Display in Nineteenth Century Britain and America*, eds. C. Berkowitz and B. Lightman (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017): 165-187; Pamela Henson, “Spencer Baird’s Dream: A U.S. National Museum,” in *Cultures and Institutions of Natural History*, eds. M. T. Ghiselin and A. E. Leviton (San Francisco: California Academy of Science, 2000): 101-126; Pamela Henson, “A National Science and A National Museum,” in *Museums and Other Institutions of Natural History: Past, Present, and Future*, eds. A. E. Leviton and M. L. Aldrich (San Francisco: California Academy of Sciences, 2004): 34-57.

³⁸ A Pennsylvanian and internationally renowned naturalist, Baird was made the first curator of the National Museum in 1850 and was, at the time of the Philadelphia Centennial, the Assistant Director of the Smithsonian. He became the second head of the Smithsonian, which are officially referred to as Secretaries, in 1878 and served until an untimely death in 1887. For a concise biography and synopsis of his legacy at the Smithsonian, see <https://siarchives.si.edu/history/spencer-fullerton-baird>.

all the species of fishes known in North America” and “all the mammals north of the Isthmus of Panama,” coupled with a sizeable display of American birdlife, minerology, and outdoor industries.³⁹

The weeks following the U.S. Board’s formation in May were filled with ambitious planning mixed with anxiety over the extent that Congress would open the purse strings. Through the first weeks of June, Goode wrote to obtain exhibition plans from the representatives of the Smithsonian’s various divisions and advised proponents of the fair to “possess their souls in patience” while awaiting Congressional appropriations.⁴⁰ Goode was already aware of the time-sensitive nature and expressed anxiety that the effort to prepare exhibits for a December opening would “necessarily be a brief and busy one” that required “very rapid action” dependent upon appropriations from “the pleasure of Congress.”⁴¹

Participation in the New Orleans Exposition led Smithsonian officials to match the Southern focus of the fair by dispatching Smithsonian scientific expeditions to canvas the Gulf South and West, marking the first time the Institution conducted field reconnaissance and collections in both regions. A fisheries expert in Pensacola, Florida, Silas Sterns, helped shape the Smithsonian’s display of Gulf fisheries at New Orleans while a conchology team was sent to the Florida Keys to collect specimens of conchs, sponges, and mollusks.⁴² In July, Goode commissioned David S. Jordan, a professor at Indiana University, to collect fresh-water fishes

³⁹ S. F. Baird to S. A. Jonas, June 19, 1884, F. W. True to Baird, August 13, 1884, Goode to Worth, September 18, 1884, Goode, George Brown, 1884-1885, Letterpress Book of His New Orleans Correspondence, 1884-1885, MS Box 20, Folder 2, Exposition Records of the Smithsonian Institution and the United States National Museum, 1867-1940. See also letter from Tarleton H. Bean to Goode, September 26, 1884, in Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 19, Folder 5.

⁴⁰ Goode to W.O. Atwater, June 19, 1884, Goode, George Brown, 1884-1885, Letterpress Book of His New Orleans Correspondence, 1884-1885, MS Box 20, Folder 2, Exposition Records of the Smithsonian Institution and the United States National Museum, 1867-1940.

⁴¹ Goode to Colonel Marshall McDonald, *Ibid.*

⁴² Goode to Silas Sterns, June 19, 1884, Baird to Dr. Edward Palmer, June 24, 1884, *Ibid.*

south of Missouri and west of Arkansas. Given the title of curator, with a monthly salary of \$166.66, Jordan was to devote his time “entirely to the development of the collection without reference to publication,” although the Smithsonian did allow Jordan to retain duplicate specimens for his university. Another naturalist based in Indianapolis, C. H. Gilbert, accompanied him on the expedition.⁴³

Over the next several months, the Smithsonian examined and collected animals in Minnesota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Texas “while the weather [was] warm and the streams [were] low.” The latter two states, claimed Jordan, had never been explored at all by American scientists, while Texas had been inspected “only by the Mexican Boundary Survey.” While admitting a lack of some East Coast species, the Smithsonian considered the New Orleans exposition an “unusual opportunity . . . to explore more distant regions” in the South and West, which were “most likely to yield new species or species as yet unrepresented in the Museum.” Virginia and Carolina species, meanwhile, could be “done in time by the ordinary resources of the [U.S. National] Museum.”⁴⁴

After two months in the field, Jordan submitted a glowing report to Washington from the McKibben Hotel in Fort Smith, Arkansas. His expedition had discovered over thirty new species and over one-hundred-and-twenty known species that the Smithsonian had desired in order to improve the quantity and quality of its collection. But he was also out of money, the \$1,200 budgeted for the endeavor having been expended. In a series of telegrams, Jordan and Goode debated their position. Were they satisfied with the collection as it stood or should additional funds be provided? The latter option won out. The expedition was so successful and the

⁴³ Goode to David S. Jordan, July 10, 1884, *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ David S. Jordan to Baird, August 9, 1884, Jordan to Goode, July 14, 1884, in Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 19, Folder 16, R 1884-1885.

opportunity to ensure a full survey of far-flung Texas and Arkansas so enticing that Secretary Baird approved another \$175.⁴⁵ The decision proved a worthy investment. Jordan's team surveyed and collected from Texas streams in the basins of the Red, Trinity, Brazos, Colorado, Guadalupe, and Nueces rivers. In Arkansas, they canvased rivers and tributaries surrounding Fort Smith, Eureka Springs, and Little Rock. Ultimately, Jordan's expedition collected over six hundred specimens before it returned to Washington.

Southern leaders astutely recognized an opportunity to tap this increasing wealth of scientific knowledge. The commissioner for the state of Mississippi's exhibit at New Orleans, writing on behalf of Governor Robert Lawry, told the head of the Smithsonian that Mississippians were "anxious" to better understand and collect Mississippi fisheries "but have not the least conception of a plan." Having no doubt heard about the institution's field agents, Mississippi's commissioner insisted that the state "would be under ten thousand obligations" if the Smithsonian would send plaster casts of Mississippi fish in their collection. While the Smithsonian deemed this particular scheme unfeasible, the New Orleans exposition unquestionably functioned to educate Gulf South states about their own natural resources and spread environmental awareness and education.

The Crescent City's fair, therefore, not only enhanced the Smithsonian's collections from the American South and knowledge of the South's natural history and animal science, it also fundamentally advanced American higher education.⁴⁶ Smithsonian leaders, conscious of their expanding collections, sought to ensure that its participation in the fair, and the knowledge that

⁴⁵ Jordan to Goode, September 12, 1884, and September 22, 1884, in Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 19, Folder 14, I-L 1884-1885. For a further account of the Smithsonian's impact in the nineteenth century, see Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, "Place and Museum Space: The Smithsonian Institution, National Identity, and the American West, 1846-1896," in *Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Science*, eds. David N Livingstone and Charles W. J. Withers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 399-438.

⁴⁶ Jonas to Baird, June, 1884, Baird to Jonas, June 19, 1884, Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 19, Folder 14, I-L 1884-1885.

such participation engendered on the whole, was made widely known. As such, the head of the Smithsonian exhibits hired two additional printers and prodded the institution's printing office to "push forward rapidly the work in hand." Added personnel had stepped up production by the end of October, when a satisfied Goode stated that the Smithsonian was "printing accounts of the various special collections as fast as they can be prepared" to advertise its position as the nation's leading museum and repository of knowledge.⁴⁷

The Department of State likewise poured great effort into its display for the Government Building on the exposition grounds. Its official report highlighted the significant role the New Orleans exposition played in educating the public, encouraging domestic and international entrepreneurial enterprise, and fostering a sense of progress. The department's representative, Charles H. Hill, insisted that its exhibit "was not a mere display of articles" but "a technological school" that drew upon the commerce and manufactures of all countries that hosted U.S. consulates. Visitors to the fair would see the material culture meant to demonstrate New Orleans as an agent of U.S. industrialism, visible particularly in the Department of State's immersive globe, inlaid with prominent industrial and commercial developments of the late nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Newspapers from New Orleans to New York echoed the department's boasts in describing its prominent exhibit as "comprehensive" and "splendid," a "display [that] arrests the eye of everyone."

By all measures, the display accomplished several key goals of the exposition, being an attractive mix of novelty, exoticism, technological innovations, and industrial education. The State Department's display consisted of an immense glass globe with detailed topographical and

⁴⁷ Goode to Albert Curet, July 9, 1884, Goode to J.M. Hines, October 27, 1884, Goode, George Brown, 1884-1885, Letterpress Book of His New Orleans Correspondence. 1884-1885, MS Box 20, Folder 2, Exposition Records of the Smithsonian Institution and the United States National Museum, 1867-1940.

⁴⁸ *Brief of the official report of the representative of the Department of State*, 3-4.

national illustrations illuminated by electrical lighting. Yet what visitors admired most was the interior of the sphere, which allowed them to access and observe statistical synopses of exports and resources of each nation. The cultural “customs and handiworks of the various races” were also included. As a cartographical production, the interactive globe manifested for each visitor the exposition’s grand goal of positioning New Orleans firmly in the center of global commerce and progress. No wonder that Burke’s *Times-Democrat* extolled the sphere as “more artistic and wonderful in its revealings [sic] possibly than anything to be seen at the Exposition.”⁴⁹ The immersive globe was indicative of the New Orleans exposition as a platform for the production of “scenic spectacles” and “sensory media” that provided interactive attractions that shaped perceptions of modernity.⁵⁰

Before the exposition opened, however, the various executive departments of the U.S. Board had sobered to the reality that they had received less than the hoped for appropriations. The Smithsonian Institution’s representative, G. Brown Goode, regretted in mid-September that his original request for nearly \$200,000 “was cut down to 3/8 of the original estimate,” resulting in an “oblig[ation] to curtail our expenses in every direction.”⁵¹ The \$75,000 the Smithsonian ultimately received, three thousand dollars more than its Philadelphia centennial budget, led Goode to express anxiety soon thereafter over “getting towards the bottom of the New Orleans treasury bag.”⁵²

The head of the Department of State exhibit also bemoaned a “very meager sum appropriated by Congress.” Hill, one of the fairs enthusiastic supporters at the national level,

⁴⁹ “Lighting up the Glass Globe of the State Department,” *New York Herald*, Dec. 19, 1884; “The Department of State,” New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, Dec. 8, 1884.

⁵⁰ Tenneriello, *Spectacle Culture and American Identity*, 1, 2.

⁵¹ Goode to Worth, September 18, 1884, Goode, George Brown, 1884-1885, Letterpress Book of His New Orleans Correspondence. 1884-1885, MS Box 20, Folder 2, Exposition Records of the Smithsonian Institution and the United States National Museum, 1867-1940.

⁵² Goode to H.C. Larrow, September 18, 1884, *Ibid.*

recounted that he was motivated by “pride and ambition” to make an executive decision to advance nearly three thousand dollars “to render [the state department exhibit] a most instructive and worthy *object lesson* of the practical and important duties of the Department of State” [original emphasis]. Nor was Hill alone in his recognition of the exposition’s ability to advance American interests. He joined two members of the Congressional Appropriation Committee, Senator James Beck (D, KY) and Congressman Benjamin Butterworth (R, OH), to urge the Secretary of State Thomas F. Bayard to loosen the departmental purse strings still further. Much to the chagrin of an irate Hill, Bayard’s decision to direct more funds to the exposition occurred too late to affect the department’s participation. Likewise, representatives from each executive department bemoaned the lack of sufficient funds “to meet urgent expenses essential for the good of the Exhibition.”⁵³

On the whole, Hill criticized what he saw as a lack of both governmental support and appreciation for the value of world’s fairs. He insisted that his department’s exhibit “show[ed] the benefit of such Exhibits, and recognition of the industrial benefit in foreign countries of such symbolic representations and ‘object lessons’ for the purpose of educating the people and in developing commercial relations with other nations of the world.” More directly, he condemned the Arthur administration for causing a general sense of “discouragement from the manifested unappreciativeness [sic] and want of interest in the Exhibit by the administration.”⁵⁴

Hill’s laundry list of complaints for what he perceived as negligence by the government and state department bureaucracy in fully supporting what he considered a valuable endeavor is also significant for who he did not blame. Nowhere in Hill’s report did he find fault with Louisiana’s state apparatus or Burke’s leadership as director general. Instead, Hill’s glowing

⁵³ *Brief of the official report of the representative of the Department of State*, 6, 10.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 4.

enthusiasm for the fair was matched by his unfiltered condemnation for national bureaucrats who caused numerous “misrepresentations and great worry as well as demand upon my time without compensation or consideration.” Hill’s report demonstrates that a senior official within the state department recognized the viability of the New Orleans fair as an exceptional vehicle to highlight the work of the foreign service and significantly further U.S. interests abroad.⁵⁵

Time was another common obstacle encountered by the fair’s proponents. Even acquiring materials for a display of textile industries in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and New England incurred “far more expenditures of time than one would anticipate” due to “many delays finding the proper person and establishment.” Travel time, locating significant and willing lenders or sellers, and acquiring approval for purchases and acquisitions led to delays for exhibitors. Nonetheless, a Smithsonian agent scouting and collecting industrial displays considered the endeavor “of great value” and one that would “prove of the utmost value in the future.”⁵⁶

In the face of such obstacles, Smithsonian officials also grew increasingly sober and realistic as they recognized the possible restrictions on their exhibits. For instance, a fish commissioner from Iowa had wanted to display live fish, but realized that New Orleans water was too warm for trout. Burke, still doggedly promising to fulfill every request no matter how improbable, extended the possibility that exposition management could cool the water to forty degrees. Yet Smithsonian officials wisely decided to leave out displays of live fish, believing that it was “doubtful” whether the exposition could control water temperature “continually and

⁵⁵ Ibid, 7.

⁵⁶ Hitchcock to Goode, September 27, 1884, Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 19, Folder 13, F-H, 1884-1885.

satisfactorily.”⁵⁷

The most impressive exhibitors were astutely creative in the face of less than desirable circumstances. For example, the Smithsonian proved flexible when a New York City business raised the possibility of donating pieces to an exhibit as a means of soliciting potential customers from among visitors. While the Smithsonian “must exclude everything which has the appearance of an advertisement” from permanent display in the U.S. National Museum, Goode wrote, it was able to display materials from private businesses for their New Orleans display in part because “our policy in expositions is necessarily much more free than it can be in our permanent Museum work.”⁵⁸ Paying for the transportation, rather than outright purchasing of private or commercial items, was a way exhibitors often added to their displays. In addition to acquiring private displays from enterprising individuals and businesses, utilizing ties to auxiliary organizations was often an inexpensive means to enhance an exhibit. One such partnership arose when Burke acquiesced to Goode’s request in July that the Society of American Taxidermists take part in the exposition under the auspices of the Smithsonian. While it did not require much selling for Burke to agree to an additional exhibitor, Goode nonetheless assured him that the society was “coming into considerable prominence” due to its “very popular and strongly attended” previous displays in Boston and New York. “Nothing which we could take to New Orleans would be more attractive than this very display,” Goode assured, “which will in the main be repeated in permanent form” in the U.S. National Museum in Washington. Burke, ever ready to increase the reach and attraction of the exposition, subsequently adopted Goode’s

⁵⁷ Goode to A.A. Masher, October 28, 1884, Goode, George Brown, 1884-1885, Letterpress Book of His New Orleans Correspondence, 1884-1885, MS Box 20, Folder 2, Exposition Records of the Smithsonian Institution and the United States National Museum, 1867-1940.

⁵⁸ Goode to McKisson and Robbins Company, December 3, 1884, *Ibid.*

recommendation for rules and categories for a taxidermist competition on the grounds.⁵⁹ The exposition's board of management also issued "Awards of Merit" through the Department of State's representative, Charles Hill, to the appropriate consul recipient's nation and region.⁶⁰

Taxidermy was a noteworthy attraction for several reasons. While twenty-first century animal rights groups and environmentalists are concerned with over-hunting, animal cruelty, and ecological disruptions, late nineteenth-century taxidermy aided the public's interest in nature, appreciation for wildlife, and awareness of nature's beauty. It was likewise at the forefront in the development of animal science and thus served as a necessary prerequisite for later awareness of conservation and preservation. Moreover, taxidermy reflected the exposition's central motif as ordered space, where mankind displayed ever increasing technologies and knowledge to control the natural world. Animal displays also served as a cross-class attraction wherein people from all walks of life marveled at the exoticism of global progress. The Darwinist and evangelical, alike, could appreciate mankind's supremacy over beasts of the land, birds of the air, and creatures of the sea.

The arrival of the superintendent of the Smithsonian department, R. Edward Earll, on October 11, 1884, affords an excellent window into the inner-workings of the exposition apart from the rose-colored stereoscope of Burke and much of the New Orleans press. Earll noted in his first report that the Crescent City in October was "wild with delight" and bustling with the "craze" of the coming exposition. He found a city brimming with confident anticipation of showing off the cultural qualities of New Orleans, and eager to seize the opportunity to get rich in the process. Writing from his room in the St. Charles Hotel, the city's mix of hospitality,

⁵⁹ Goode to Burke, July 19, 1884, *Ibid*; Burke to Goode, August 8, 1884, in Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 19, Folder 5, B 1884-1885.

⁶⁰ *Brief of the official report of the representative of the Department of State*, 3

bluster, and zeal for profit immediately struck Earll. “It may be truly said of New Orleans ‘What a country and what a people,’” wrote the Smithsonian superintendent, “St. Paul, [Dwight L.] Moody, or Ben Butler would indeed find a rich field for missionary labors.” Earll relayed to officials back in Washington his acute impression that the much acknowledged genteel hospitality was a calculated posture “to embrace the opportunity to make a fortune in the next six months.”⁶¹

Few exhibitors were as fortunate as Julia Ward Howe and the ladies of the Woman’s Department, who enjoyed quarters at the comfortable Hotel Royal.⁶² As such, Earll’s first obstacle was to confront astronomical prices for accommodations. One prospective renter sought \$150 per month for a single spacious room without board. Another proposed to house fourteen Smithsonian personnel in three rooms at \$30 a month per person to attain a total rate of \$420 for three rooms. No doubt Earll’s charge to find suitable lodging for over a dozen Smithsonian staffers and officials lent itself to a niche market of well-furnished and situated accommodations. Nonetheless, he was left with the feeling that New Orleans homeowners and boarders, many of whom were women, sought to fleece the “bloated bondholders of the North.” Earll argued that exposition management, particularly the Department of Accommodations, actively “canvassed the city and educated the people to believe that they can put two to five people into every room.” The management’s official encouragement of lucrative lodging contracts assuredly garnered the exposition increased support for the fair from the city’s propertied sectors. Yet, in the face of such high costs, Earll considered making short term

⁶¹ R. Edwards Earll to Goode, October 11, 1884, Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 19, Folder 12, Earll, R. Edward, 1884-1885.

⁶² Howe, *Report and Catalogue of the Woman’s Department*, 5.

arrangements until the market price for lodging receded.⁶³

When not searching for accommodations for Smithsonian staff, Earll relayed to Washington his assessment of the fair's progress. He began his report by noting that Burke was "full of enthusiasm and confident of being ready in ample time." However, Earll's assessment of the grounds left some doubt about the director general's assurances. He had, for example, promised to complete construction of the Government Building in ten days, but workmen had only begun leveling the ground for the main floor, and that the majority of the building's roof was incomplete. Earll surmised that it would likely not open until November 20. Nor did Earll find many other areas of the exposition to be on schedule. While Horticulture Hall was finished and the Main Building was near completion, his pessimistic account of the progress on the river wharf, saw mills, and stock stables would have sobered exhibitors eager to set up shop. That said, the Smithsonian superintendent praised Burke's optimism and confidence and called him a "visionary."⁶⁴

To reduce expenses, salvaged iron from the Philadelphia exposition was used to construct several buildings. The Main Building's roof was largely built in Cincinnati. While admitting its impressive size, the *American Architect and Building News* scoffed that this central structure, looked like a "barn" and dismissed the designer as an "unknown Swedish immigrant."⁶⁵ Another legacy of fairs was to transform urban development and expand municipal boundaries. In the case of New Orleans, the fairgrounds expanded the city's development and reach into a former plantation that New Orleans had recently purchased in 1871. Guidebooks for fair visitors

⁶³ Earll to Goode, October 11, 1884, Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 19, Folder 12, Earll, R. Edward, 1884-1885.

⁶⁴ Earll to Goode, October 11, 1884, Ibid.

⁶⁵ Tenneriello, *Spectacle Culture and American Identity*, 150-151.

included city maps that highlighted opportunities for future development and investment on the part of entrepreneurs and real estate agents.⁶⁶

As Goode himself acknowledged, planning, coordinating, and running an exhibit for a world's fair created great pressure. Nonetheless, the Smithsonian representative remained confident of the impact his institution's collections would make when debuted in New Orleans. A few days before leaving to oversee the final weeks of installation before the fair opened, he drummed up press coverage from the *New York Times*. He encouraged a correspondent to "come on for a day or two, and see what we are doing for the New Orleans exposition before we ship." Goode claimed it would "be worthwhile" since the Smithsonian had "not yet given data to any newspaper yet, and there is material for three or four columns of striking new matter."⁶⁷

The official commencement of the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition on December 16, 1884, was stunningly grand. As Burke's foe-turned-ally Congressman E. John Ellis looked on, the president pressed an electric button in the White House to activate the imposing 6,500 horsepower Corliss steam engines in the exposition's Main Hall. At that moment, Burke's eleven-year-old son, Lindsay, hoisted a large portrait of Arthur to the immense applause of the crowd of 20,000.⁶⁸ An opening prayer was delivered by one of the nation's leading Christian orators and longtime newspaper editor, New York minister Thomas De Witt Talmage. The reverend prayed that the exposition would breathe life into "the folded sails of our paralyzed shipping," ignite "the silent factory wheels," drive plows in "deeper and richer

⁶⁶ Ibid, 128. Exposition Boulevard and Audubon Park are the fair's lasting imprints on the cityscape; see John Churchill Chase, *Frenchmen, Desire, Good Children, and Other Streets of New Orleans*, Third edition (New York: Collier Books, 1979), 131

⁶⁷ Goode to Barnett Phillips, November 12, 1884 Goode, George Brown, 1884-1885, Letterpress Book of His New Orleans Correspondence, 1884-1885, MS Box 20, Folder 2, Exposition Records of the Smithsonian Institution and the United States National Museum, 1867-1940.

⁶⁸ Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 147; Fairall, *The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition*, 17, 18; Smalley, "In and Out of the New Orleans Exposition," 8.

furrows” and illuminate “hidden treasures of coal and iron and precious metal.” He beseeched the Almighty to bless the exposition as a new “a process of Edenization.”⁶⁹ The opening day ceremonies did much to restore the morale of many exposition leaders. Julia Ward Howe expressed a sentiment no doubt held by exhibit heads who had become disheartened by delays and struggles. She recalled operating in a “weary, perfunctory manner” shortly before the opening and “hated” anything to do with the exposition. However, her attitude suddenly changed when she “stood with thousands of others in Music Hall, on [opening] day, and listened to the inspiring’ words and ringing voice of the man whom I must call the genius of the Exposition, Major E. A. Burke, that my enthusiasm was aroused, and my heart was really in my work.”⁷⁰

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 illustrate that the transnational New South vision for national reconciliation was a fundamental component of the fair from its inception. Burke was no doubt nodding in agreement as the minister prayed that the exposition would not only wash away “the last feeling of sectional discord” between North and South, but also bring about the “unification of North and South America” and “solve for us the agonizing question of supply and demand.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ Shepherd Jr., “A Glimmer of Hope,” 274; Fairall, *The World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition*, 14; Talmage was an editor of *Frank Leslie’s Sunday Magazine* at the time of the fair and was a close friend of Henry Grady, see “Sermon by T. De Witt Talmage,” in Joel Chandler Harris, ed., *Joel Chandler Harris’ life of Henry W. Grady including his writings and speeches. A memorial volume comp. by Mr. Henry W. Grady’s co-workers on “The Constitution” and ed. by Joel Chandler Harris* (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1890), 428-439.

⁷⁰ Howe, *Report and Catalogue of the Woman’s Department*, 231.

⁷¹ Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York: Knopf, 1970), 95; Fairall, *The World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition*, 14, 15.

A telegraph message from President Arthur 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 . . . at the gateway of the trade between the United States and Central and South America,” would promote “a profitable intercourse” between the nation and her southern neighbors. The pursuit of increased commercial ties with the Americas by like-minded businessmen from all regions of the country would prove the “motives for strengthening the bonds of brotherhood.” With the United States linked as never before by railroads and telegraph lines, Arthur looked to the exposition to engender “good will and peace” between all nations while advancing “the material welfare of all.”⁷²

Despite the festivities, the New Orleans exposition no doubt opened prematurely. Close observers of the director general saw the normally energetic Burke unable to mask the “care-worn countenance” produced by the “great mental strain” of events.⁷³ The occasion for the fair – to celebrate the centennial of America’s first cotton shipment – and the requirements of congressional funding mandated it open before 1885. Consequently, many exhibits had still not opened, and with the sluggish initial attendance, the debts began to mount. A week after opening day, the superintendent of the Smithsonian’s exhibit faced significant obstacles in completing his installation. Items that were documented by the Pennsylvania Southern railroad as received and delivered were in reality left at the train yard amid a sea of crates meant for numerous exhibits. Only a meeting with the company’s freight officer in New Orleans ameliorated some transportation woes and allowed the Smithsonian team to receive a few cars at the exposition grounds and install their contents. Nonetheless, mixed up shipments, missing packages, and damaged items routinely plagued exhibitors even when they had the good fortune to receive

⁷² Ibid, 17, 18; Smalley, “In and Out of the New Orleans Exposition,” 8.

⁷³ Howe, *Report and Catalogue of the Woman’s Department*, 6.

them. Despite logistical frustrations, Earll reported that most state exhibits in the Government Building were installed by Christmas. “The Main Building is filling up rapidly,” Earll reported, “and much of the space . . . is now fully occupied” and “partakes somewhat of the manner of a bazar.”⁷⁴

Receiving deliveries and installing exhibits, however, led to other problems. Empty crate boxes sat in the main aisle for extended periods of time when the railroad companies refused to transfer them until exposition management settled their outstanding debts. “As no money was at hand to settle accounts,” one executive department official remarked, “the boxes remain” with “not the slightest evidence that the management will ever move them.” Concerns over the multitude of public and private exhibitors raised additional fears that if the boxes were removed in the interest of tidiness the subsequent confusion of organizing boxes by exhibitor would raise still greater headaches. Ultimately, the executive departments pooled their resources to build a temporary 35’x100’ storage shed near their exhibits in the Government Building.⁷⁵

Events continued to spiral out of exposition leaders’ control. As if transportation issues and construction delays were not enough, torrents of continual rain added to the woes. Earll argued that the rain had a hand in sinking the exposition’s main mode of transportation, steamboats, and in bringing down one of “Burke’s ‘Iron Hotels.’” The downpour led him to address the location of a January 5, 1885, letter from New Orleans as “Mudville.” A leaky roof over the Government Building plagued exposition leaders throughout the rainy winter. Labor strife compounded difficulties. Earll informed Washington that shortly after Christmas New Orleans had “been at the mercy of 1,000 striking car drivers, who practically took the city

⁷⁴ Earll to Goode, December 23, 1884, Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 19, Folder 12, Earll, R. Edward, 1884-1885.

⁷⁵ Earll to Goode, December 30, 1884, Earll to Goode, January 20, 1885, Ibid.

government into their own hands, and the police [had] done nothing to control them.” As a result, officials in charge of executive department exhibits had to amend protocols that required an address for payment of services. There were also numerous “laborers and mechanics . . . from other places, picking up odd jobs at the Exposition, and whose abode [was] therefore uncertain.”⁷⁶

As exhibitors worked from sunup and well into the night to retrieve shipments, unpack boxes, and set up displays, circumstances grew more dire. Time and nature were continual impediments. Specimens needed ample time to be transported first to Washington for cataloguing and packing, because some animals required as much as four months to be stuffed and mounted. In addition, ants and other insects plagued shipments in route across country.⁷⁷ As early as December 29, Burke publically informed exhibitors that the fair was two-hundred thousand dollars short and that he “hoped to obtain it by private subscriptions, or, as a last resort, *from Congress*” (emphasis original). By the end of the first week of January, railroad companies serving New Orleans announced that none “would either build or equip a road to the grounds.” Burke and management then asked exhibitors to “shoulder the financial responsibility” of railroad service to the grounds and “seriously discussed” a second opening of the fair. When exposition leaders met on January 5, “strong suspicions were aroused regarding the ability of the Management to proceed further.” Some of them conducted their own investigations of the problems. Earll secured the efforts of a nighttime police officer to gain access to the official turn-stile index. He reported to Washington that barely 2,500 people paid daily admission to the

⁷⁶ Letter from Earll to Goode, December 30, 1884, Earll to Goode, January 5, 1885, Ibid; Earll to Cox, February 12, 1885, Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 21, Folder 5, Earll, R. Edward, 1884-1885; Edward to Annie, December 29, 1884 and January 11, 1885, MSS 214, World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Collection, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection.

⁷⁷ Robert Ridgway to E.W. Nelson, July 23, 1884, Goode, George Brown, 1884-1885, Letterpress Book of His New Orleans Correspondence, 1884-1885, MS Box 20, Folder 2, Exposition Records of the Smithsonian Institution and the United States National Museum, 1867-1940.

exhibition during an eight day period, including Christmas and New Years. He regrettably reported, “It actually begins to look as though [the exposition] is badly bankrupt.” The effects of the fair’s financial distress spread beyond railroads and transportation, however, as some aspects of the fair’s attractions closed shop. One of the exposition’s bands employed on a six month contract, Currier’s Band, performed for the last time on January 5 “owing to,” as Earll recounted, “the total inability of Burke to pay them.”⁷⁸

Early to mid-January of 1885 was unquestionably the nadir of the exposition. “The Management . . . is in bad shape financially, and are daily becoming more heavily involved,” Earll reported. The daily attendance of paid guests, he continued, was well below five thousand, while roughly ten thousand were needed to cover expenses. He “sincerely regret[ed]” the poor attendance and financial hole the exposition found itself in, yet he did not explicitly blame the management or Burke other than to marvel at their steadfast determination, if not blind optimism, to ensure the fair’s success. However, the New Orleans *Mascot* routinely parodied what it perceived as Burke’s shell game of financial reports. On the cover of one edition, it depicted Burke as a two-faced jester who used his position as owner-editor of the *Times-Democrat* to fluff his accounting reports as director general. With a Burke lackey depicted as a dog chewing a bone at his feet, a member of the board of management in the foreground assures an inquisitor that “Burke will fix us alright” (See Appendix F).⁷⁹

Nonetheless, the Smithsonian superintendent continued to see positives in the exposition. He considered it “a mammoth affair, unquestionably the finest exposition of America’s resources and industries that the World [had] ever seen.” Even acknowledging that the fair was still

⁷⁸ Earll to W.V. Cox, January 10, 1885, Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 21, Folder 5, Earll, R. Edward, 1884-1885; Earll to Goode, January 5, 1885, Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 19, Folder 12, Earll, R. Edward, 1884-1885.

⁷⁹ New Orleans *Mascot*, Feb. 28, 1885.

incomplete, Earll contended that the weeks since the New Year had “wrought a great change” in the exceptional quality of the exposition on the whole. Earll proudly reported that the Smithsonian’s exhibit, completed January 10, sustained the “reputation of the Smithsonian for eclipsing all competitors.” Moreover, he posited that all but the beautification plans of the grounds would be completed by mid-February if additional funds were secured. He conceded that lack of sufficient facilities for bringing people to the grounds remained a paramount obstacle to attracting the requisite number of paying visitors needed for financial solvency, ten thousand according to Earll. Yet he and others were optimistic about drawing many of the “thousands of strangers” who would “doubtless flock to the city” during Mardi Gras.

Yet, the torrential rains compounded transportation woes. “Transportation by carriage is out of the question, owing to the bad conditions of the roads, which are at present better suited for canal boats than horses,” reported Earll.⁸⁰ The deluge had not relented as February dawned. Maintaining his humor amid the seemingly endless financial and environmental difficulties, the Smithsonian Superintendent remarked, “We are having a little damp weather, here, the twenty-third consecutive day that we have been entirely free from dust. No danger of dust in this grand country!”⁸¹ While Earll acknowledged that attendance had improved to eclipse five thousand a day on occasion, he was skeptical of the unrealistic expectations of New Orleans papers of impending hordes of nearly seventy thousand paying visitors for Mardi Gras festivities. Instead, he delivered a witty barb that the truer number would divide the papers’ expectations “by

⁸⁰ Earll to Goode, January 20, 1885, Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 21, Folder 5, Earll, R. Edward, 1884-1885.

⁸¹ Earll to Cox, January 24, 1885, *Ibid.*

1,000 and extract the square root.”⁸²

Earll’s doubts were ultimately eased. The exposition began to turn the corner in February, which led the superintendent “to report a more favorable condition of affairs here than at any time since my arrival in New Orleans.” Perhaps most importantly, the weather seemed to have “satisfied its spits against the city,” and the sun was “again shining.” Exhibits in the Main and Government buildings had been mostly completed. As a result, Earll reported that the exhibition, as a whole, had “taken on a respectable appearance,” and that attendance was “considerably improved and daily increasing,” though it still averaged “considerably below ten thousand.” Earll’s objective analysis of the success and importance of the exposition, if flawed, led him to vent his frustration with what he perceived to be the local populace’s lackluster support for the exposition. “New Orleans and its people have done nothing to help the exposition except loan sixty thousand on condition that every cent be paid back within sixty days,” he said, which led the management to take out a thousand dollars per day from gate receipts.⁸³

The exposition was finally all but complete a couple weeks into February. The change of affairs led the ever candid Smithsonian superintendent to dub the exposition “a magnificent one,” with a “city . . . full of visitors from all parts of the country,” and everyone speaking “enthusiastically of the display in the Main and Government buildings.” Earll was optimistic that “the reports that they carry home with them will doubtless send thousands to New Orleans.” For instance, a vacation company in New England offered three separate sightseeing excursions from Boston to the exposition via railroad to Chicago and luxury steamships to the Crescent

⁸² Earll to Goode, January 20, 1885, Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 19, Folder 12, Earll, R. Edward, 1884-1885.

⁸³ Earll to Goode, February 3, 1885, *Ibid.*

City. In the midst of the continually increasing attendance, Earll was pleased to report that ticket revenues were “considerably more than paying the running expenses.” Unfortunately, additional congressional aid was needed as current profits were not enough to satisfy the half million dollar debt to creditors who were still threatening to foreclose on the exposition. While the Smithsonian superintendent noted that Burke would leave again for Washington to “help push the appropriation bill along,” he reported “a strong sentiment in favor of a change of Management in case of Congressional aid.” In addition, Earll’s favorable impressions of the fair and its importance did not stop his pragmatic assessment that President Arthur had made “a great mistake in recommending to Congress that authority be given to continue the Exposition through the winter of 1885-1886.”⁸⁴

Perhaps none spoke to Burke’s molding of the New Orleans exposition into a voice for a transnational New South 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. 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,” he observed, yet it had taken “strong hold of the manufactures of the North” by 1885. The New South tenet of courting northern capital combined with Burke’s New Orleans

⁸⁴ Earll to Goode, February 14, 1884, *Ibid*; W. Raymond, *Three Grand Excursions to New Orleans* (Boston: W. Raymond & I. A. Whitcomb, 1885), 1-5, 17-27, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection.

boosterism had convinced a large contingent of businessmen to send “their fabrics and machinery to New Orleans” because it was 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 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.⁸⁵

None other than noted political cartoonist Thomas Nast equated the New Orleans exposition with burying issues of national disunity. A few weeks before the exposition’s opening ceremonies, Whitelaw Reid of the *New York Tribune* and Murat Halstead of Ohio’s *Commercial Gazette*, two leading Republican newspaper editors, suggested that the return of a Democrat to the White House after the election of Grover Cleveland would revive southern attempts for slavery and secession. In the same *Harper’s Weekly* issue that included an image of Burke with other exposition leaders, Nast captured the absurdity of the statement as a “cock and bull story.” Nast’s cartoon depicted Halstead and Reid leading a foolhardy charge under a banner of “hate and malice” towards the New Orleans exposition building, topped with the American flag, as a pair of amiable southerners, one white and one black, watch with amusement (See Appendix G).⁸⁶

In order to court northern capitalists to aid southern-led commercial ventures, Burke and other exposition organizers first established their fervent support of American unity. As the first major southern world’s fair, the New Orleans exposition functioned as a workshop of national reconciliation, where exposition planners and exhibit directors took great pains to shape the

⁸⁵ Smalley had a favorable view of the New Orleans exposition in comparison to Philadelphia in 1876 and Paris in 1878. See Smalley, “In and Out of the New Orleans Exposition,” 3, 6-8.

⁸⁶ “Only a Cock and Bull Story (about the new rebellion),” *New York Harper’s Weekly*, Dec. 6, 1884, 807.

perception of the former Confederacy as a region that had renounced slavery and secession. The iconography of American nationalism was ubiquitous. U.S. flags covered the exposition grounds and draped its buildings nearly as thickly as the Louisiana humidity. While the exposition reflected a vision of the South's future, it also extolled the national unity of its Revolutionary past. A seminal symbol of American patriotism before today's pantheon of monuments in the National Mall was the Liberty Bell. Exposition organizers put special emphasis on successfully inducing Pennsylvania to loan the famous bell to the fair, marking the first time it had left the City of Brotherly Love.⁸⁷ The Washington Artillery, a unit that had recently fought to break up the Union, and had been a highly popular component of the exposition's opening ceremony, escorted the bell to the exposition grounds. The U.S. Government Building's exhibits from individual states and territories, all but Alaska and Utah being represented, also functioned as visible evidence of national unity, a place where visitors strolled booths from South Carolina and Massachusetts under one roof. That an aura of reconciliation pervaded the exposition was noteworthy considering frequent rumors before the fair that southerners would use the occasion to foment dissension. Distrustful Pennsylvanians, for example, had expressed concern that if Louisianans gained temporary control of the Liberty Bell they would melt it down to cast a statue of Jefferson Davis, or that the Louisiana lottery would steal the bell and offer it as a gambling prize.⁸⁸

Exposition management devoted particular days to individual exhibits that they believed might operate as public displays of civic boosterism and national unity. Georgia Day was typical of such events. A procession of prominent state dignitaries, politicians, and businessmen paraded

⁸⁷ Gary Nash, "Liberty Bell," in *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 2; Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 73.

⁸⁸ Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 146.

down Canal Street, accompanied by the ever-present Washington Artillery, to a waiting paddle-wheel river steamer that transported the group down the Mississippi to the exposition grounds amid elaborate fanfare. Southern commissioners and state representatives routinely espoused national unity, as did a Georgian who professed no “heartier gratification than to see the States of this Union meet . . . beneath this ample roof.”⁸⁹ A Georgia Democratic senator received raucous applause when he patriotically predicted, “[The] exposition may be the means of binding with closer ties the people of . . . this great Union . . . united by a common and glorious flag, no North, no South, no West, no East, but one land, one country, one nation, now and forever.” The Liberty Bell served as tangible proof of regional reconciliation as the Georgia delegation, federal representatives, and members of the fair’s management ended the festivities by posing for a photograph in its shadow.⁹⁰

Burke’s decisions in regards to race also reflected goals of reconciliation and maintenance of Democratic control. The major’s choice to establish 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 [their] progress . . . in the arts and sciences.” Burke not only broke with the example set by the Philadelphia fair of 1876, which excluded black exhibitors, but he 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, declared, “[It] was so unexpected, so marvelous, so Utopian, that we could scarcely believe it was true . . . All honor, I say, to Director General

⁸⁹ Fairall, *The World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition*, 87.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 90.

Burke.” The inclusion of such a department was no doubt an attempt to find common ground with black elites and thus reflected the shallow but frequent overtures Democrats made to blacks before Jim Crow disfranchisement. Interestingly, nearly a decade later, Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells led a massive protest when leaders of the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair refused make similar provisions for African Americans.⁹¹

New South leaders such as Burke used the Colored Department to underscore the important, yet largely subservient, role of African Americans as laborers in the south’s network of global trade. Like other New South spokesmen, Burke realized that the prosperity of the South depended upon both white and black Southerners. He believed in the capacity of African Americans – under the watchful, paternalistic eye of the white elite - and saw blacks as a potentially large pool of workers whose labor would aid in the industrial flourishing of a 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.⁹²

The near daily structured festivities did more than draw attendance and further the fair’s message of modernization and reconciliation; it also functioned to expand Burke’s power and influence. Since Burke organized the festivities, he gave the final approval to the speaking arrangements of various public functions. Moreover, each exhibit’s “opening day” ceremony culminated with exhibit officials formally turning over the display to Burke as director general. This gave Burke the nearly daily opportunity to do what he loved most, to speak in front of a crowd. Whether off the cuff or with prepared remarks, Burke’s oratory left an impression. As

⁹¹ Ibid, 379; as quoted in Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*, 80; Ida B. Wells, Frederick Douglass, . . . [et al.], *The Reason Why the Colored American is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition*, ed. Robert Rydell (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 2.

⁹² Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*, 74, 76, 82; Gaston, *The New South Creed*, 126.

head of the Woman's Department, and so obliged to attend formal ceremonies, Julia Ward Howe gave an honest assessment:

We passed weary hours in endeavoring to hear the addresses of distinguished individuals whose voices contended with the din of the machinery by which the mechanical exhibits of the Main Building were run. The most practiced speakers only were audible; and among these we must mention Major Burke, whose clear voice was always heard, and whose manner of address was very graceful and popular.⁹³

Nor were rhetorical and visual outpourings of national magnanimity confined to former Confederates. One of the fair's largest audiences filled the Music Hall of the Main Building for Philadelphia Day ceremonies and speeches from a diverse crew of state and national leaders along with the wildly popular Mexican Eighth Cavalry Band. Many a patriotic heart was touched as dignitaries touted the exposition's theme "that sectional hate and discord" had "passed away" in the shadows of "the revered and sacred old Bell of Liberty." "The confidence and love manifested in permitting this holy and time-honored herald of freedom to come amongst our people," proclaimed one official, "has paced us under a lasting obligation." The audience burst into applause when the Mexican Band ended the Philadelphia Day ceremonies with a stirring rendition of "Dixie."⁹⁴

The exposition also was a significant moment for northerners and southerners to mingle socially. Leading lights, from Julia Ward Howe to Jefferson Davis, visited the fair. Moreover, the exposition was a significant step in the growing popularity of Civil War veteran reunions, as aging Union and Confederate veterans participated in a thousand-man march for Veteran's Day and a Connecticut regiment returned a captured battle flag to its former Mississippi foes.⁹⁵

While the Philadelphia exposition also possessed a missionary zeal for national reconciliation in

⁹³ Howe, *Report and Catalogue of the Woman's Department*, 10.

⁹⁴ Fairall, *The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition*, 253.

⁹⁵ Jefferson Davis to David Pell Secor, January 15, 1885, MSS 236.2, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection; Shepherd Jr., "A Glimmer of Hope," 284.

the midst of Reconstruction, former Confederate states participated little. As both the first major fair hosted by a former Confederate state and the first federally-sponsored fair after Reconstruction, the New Orleans exposition was unquestionably a watershed for reconciliation.

Such frequent displays of national reconciliation went hand in hand with efforts to draw northern capital as a means of furthering two of the exposition's major goals, industrialization and the expansion of the South's share in commercial markets abroad. Burke hastily relegated King Cotton to a secondary position in favor of the more progressive commercial pursuits of industry, technology, manufacturing, and natural resources. Intentionally expanding upon New Orleans' defining French influence, the exposition management modeled the Main Building's architecture after the Louvre's imposing towers and elegant arches.⁹⁶ Leading southerners established their fidelity to an indivisible United States to then proclaim the unique advantages the former Confederacy held in shaping American foreign policy. The Edison Electric Light Company provided the fifteen thousand incandescent electric lights in the Main Building to illuminate the thirty-three acres under its roof, touted as the largest building in the world as measured by its covered area. Such displays did much to link the New South with tangible manifestations of industrialization and progress. Occurring amidst stagnant crop prices, racial tensions, and lingering feelings of defeat that characterized life below the Mason-Dixon, southerners fashioned ordered rows of abundant natural resources and the latest technologies to present a sense of control and authority to the public.⁹⁷ Many of the one million total visitors to

⁹⁶ Miki Pfeffer, "Ghosts of the 1884 Cotton Centennial Exposition," *New Orleans Historical*, <http://www.neworleanshistorical.org/items/show/196> (accessed January 26, 2016).

⁹⁷ Fairall, *The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition*, 167, 416; Pfeffer, *Southern Ladies and Suffragists*, 3.

the grounds remarked on the constant “hum and roar” of the massive Corliss steam engine as they gazed at the thousands of manufactured goods and technological innovations on display.⁹⁸

Most southern state exhibits, it is true, were still dominated by displays of raw materials and natural resources, but from the U.S. Navy exploding a torpedo in the exposition’s lake to mark noon each day – initiated by an electric signal from the Capitol - to the first use of elevators at a world’s fair, the countless visual displays of technology and industrialization were an excellent way to assess what the South hoped to become.⁹⁹ As a diorama on the grandest of scales, Burke guided the exposition as an immersive landscape that sought to further the image of New Orleans at the center of global commerce and culture. Yet the fair’s supporters did not see the work as a zero sum game. Their rhetoric and aim were to increase the wealth and prestige of the United States as a whole in a “rising tide lifts all boats” mentality.

Burke’s ambitious goal for the exposition was more than just the inevitable faith in southern progress characteristic of New South boosters; New Orleans in the mid 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 to be realized. The rail connection to the West did 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 equal the antebellum bumper crop

⁹⁸ Fairall, *The World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition*, 48.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 167 & 416; Pfeffer, *Southern Ladies and Suffragists*, 3.

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 the 1880s. While Burke directed the exposition, the depots of the Crescent City saw 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 all products between 1880 and 1896.¹⁰⁰

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 facilities 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.¹⁰¹

Compounding these problems, the exposition opened amidst a short, but significant, nationwide panic that persisted 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.

Southern emphasis on material progress and industrial technologies also mirrored the

¹⁰⁰ Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 5, 208, 209, 211, 214, 215.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 213, 5, 6. 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. See Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 6.

emphasis Latin American liberals placed on tangible manifestations of progress to legitimize their authority.¹⁰² Just as southerners felt an acute need to stage an event that could change perceptions of disloyalty and backwardness, so Latin American nations saw participation in the New Orleans fair as a watershed moment “to construct the image of the modern nation at all levels” and to change perceptions of Latin America as “violent and uncivilized.”¹⁰³

A third aim of the Crescent City exposition was its concerted effort to increase the international stature and commerce of the New South, with New Orleans explicitly leading the charge. The transnational element of the fair was most salient in regards to Latin America. Historians of the antebellum South have demonstrated that southerners had a proclivity for pinning regional and individual economic hopes on Latin America, from Spanish Florida and Mexico to filibustering efforts in Cuba and Nicaragua. The New Orleans world’s fair demonstrates that the South continued this tradition but shifted the style to rhetoric of Pan-American progress and its substance to the trade of manufactured goods, cash crops, and capitalist development. Burke’s remarks during the fair’s Louisiana Day demonstrates how national reconciliation coupled with a proclamation of southern industrial and commercial advancement was used as justification for Louisiana to lead the drive for heightened ties with Latin America:

Sitting at the foot of the [Mississippi] valley . . . she stands ready to uphold the banner of American commerce . . . to the friendly shores of our neglected neighbors southward . . . ready to extend a hospitable welcome to the people of all the world, and to prepare for [her] proud destiny . . . as mistress of the American Mediterranean, and sharer in the commerce of the Orient.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Richard Weiner, *Race, Nation, and Market: Economic Culture in Porfirian Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004), 5.

¹⁰³ Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World’s Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 38.

¹⁰⁴ Fairall, *The World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition*, 154.

Of the seventeen foreign countries and colonies represented in New Orleans, six were from Latin America. Their participation in the exposition was yet another example that New Orleans was as much the northernmost city of the circum-Caribbean as it was the largest southern city in the United States. From migrants to aspiring businessmen and exiled leaders, Latin Americans had long been on familiar terms with the wharves and streets of the Crescent City.¹⁰⁵ In particular, Mexico's role in the fair was by far the largest of all foreign nations. With the aim to disseminate commercial information, draw foreign capital with displays of natural resources and political stability, favorably shape perceptions of Mexican culture, and legitimize the regime of Porfirio Díaz, Mexico formed a centrally controlled bureaucracy, the Department of *Fomento*, dedicated to effective participation in international expositions.¹⁰⁶ The department represented the foreign policy arm of a leading Latin America nation that was increasingly adopting economic liberalism, with Díaz approving all exhibits and financial procedures.

Indeed, Mexico offers an apt case study for ongoing debates over the best path to progress amongst national leaders in Latin America. A significant element among Hispanic elites in the 1880s held the United States and Western European nations aloft as models of economic development and viewed any form of their influence as beneficial. Yet others saw the Northern

¹⁰⁵ The most noteworthy Latin American exile to New Orleans was Benito Juárez, who was forced to flee in 1853 as an opponent of Antonio López de Santa Anna. Juárez lived in the French Quarter and Mexico gifted New Orleans a bronze statue of Juárez that was installed in the 1960s near his residency, on the corner of Basin Street and Conti Street. See Ralph Roeder, *Juárez and His Mexico: A Biographical History*, 2 Vol. (New York: Viking Press, 1947). One of the earliest works on Juárez in English, Roeder is noteworthy for his assertion that Juárez's exile in New Orleans where he met other Mexican expatriates was formative for his radical liberalism. For other work on Latin American exiles in New Orleans, see C. A. Hutchinson, "Valentín Gómez Farías and the 'Secret Pact of New Orleans'" *Hispanic American Historical Review* 36 (February 1956): 471-89; Robert Ryal Miller, "Matias Romero: Mexican Minister to the United States during the Juárez-Maximilian Era," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 45 (May 1965): 228-45; David Fitzgerald, "150 Years of Transborder Politics: Mexico and Mexicans Abroad," in *A Century of Transnationalism: Immigrants and Their Homeland Connections*, Nancy L. Green and Roger Waldinger, eds., (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 106-31; Dalia Antonia Muller, *Cuban Émigrés and Independence in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 15-42.

¹⁰⁶ Gene Yeager, "Porfirian Commercial Propaganda: Mexico in the World Industrial Expositions," *The Americas* 34 (October 1977): 230, 232.

Colossus as a multi-headed hydra, whose legal, economic, and cultural influences were liable to permeate domestic institutions and values, thereby weakening Latin America's distinctive array of cultures.¹⁰⁷ On balance, however, Latin American participation in U.S. world's fairs fostered expanded commercial networks, wherein the United States constructed a commercial sphere of influence to guard against further European imperialism.¹⁰⁸

Ultimately, Mexico fashioned a renowned presence at world's fairs into the twentieth century, yet the New Orleans exposition set the standard and was "without question . . . the first major effort to portray itself as a modern nation on the world stage."¹⁰⁹ Two Mexican buildings were constructed on the grounds, which, coupled with additional displays in the Main Building, provided visitors with seventy-six acres dedicated to the country.¹¹⁰ Mexican architects built an impressive octagonal building, dubbed the Mexican Alhambra, to house mineralogical exhibits that blended Spanish and Aztec designs with steel and glasswork to create an exotically elegant incorporation of light and color.¹¹¹ Díaz himself courted southern capitalists when the general and his new wife visited the New Orleans exposition, a key stop on their grand tour of the United States following his recent reelection.¹¹² The Department of *Fomento* also dispatched the aforementioned Mexican Eighth Cavalry Band as cultural ambassadors. They were so wildly

¹⁰⁷ Charles A. Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 253.

¹⁰⁸ Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs*, 38-43.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹¹⁰ Yeager, "Porfirian Commercial Propaganda," 237. The Mexican exhibits' acreage alone dwarfed the nineteen and forty-five acres that previous Southern fairs in Atlanta and Louisville, respectively, occupied in their entirety. See John E. Findling, "Opening the Door to the World: International Expositions in the South, 1881-1907," *Studies in Popular Culture*, 19 (October 1996): 31.

¹¹¹ After the exposition, Díaz had the pavilion reassembled in a wealthy neighborhood in Mexico City as a show of nationalism and progress. See "Pabellón marisco en la 'Alameda de Santa María', La ribera," Fototeca Nacional, Dirección del Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Ciudad de México.

¹¹² William Schell Jr., *Integral Outsiders: The American Colony in Mexico City, 1876-1911* (Washington D.C.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 2. The importance Mexico placed in the fair is reflected in the records they maintained, including an image of Burke. See "Burke, Director general de la exposición de Nueva Orleans," SINAFO- Fototeca Nacional del INAH. Casasola S/N, Exconvento de San Francisco, Col. Centro C.P.42050 Pachuca, Hgo. México.

popular as to participate in nearly every ceremony during the exposition, where they were simply known as the “Mexican Band,” and drew large crowds for their spirited musical renditions. Such displays of cultural nationalism reflected how exposition participants not only competed for commercial benefits, but also engaged in creative attempts to control “the intellectual, social, and cultural authority and influence that shaped societal conduct.”¹¹³

Both visually and audibly, therefore, the New Orleans fair furthered viable connections between the South and the wider world. Moreover, adhering to the dogma of industrialization and capitalism writ large meant holding aloft the doctrine that “material production offered the answer to societal problems.”¹¹⁴ This was one point upon which leading southerners and Latin Americans, each anxious over race relations, legacies of defeat, and perceptions of underdevelopment, both acutely believed. The hierarchical nature of the New Orleans exposition and the strategies of southern Democratic governments as a whole were similar in many ways to late nineteenth-century Latin American emphasis on “developmental liberalism.” While such earlier liberals as Benito Juárez sought economic equality in a nation of small property holders espousing civil liberties and anticlericalism, Díaz and many of his Hispanic contemporaries coupled political stability through state control and a racial hierarchy with material progress that “stressed the creation of wealth as opposed to the distribution of riches.” The fair made such an impression on Hispanic residents in New Orleans that several years after the exposition closed the city’s leading Spanish-language newspaper, *El Moro de Paz*, called for a permanent exhibition to house changing displays of Latin American products and culture as a means to

¹¹³ Lester D. Langley and Thomas Schoonover, *The Banana Men: American Mercenaries and Entrepreneurs in Central America, 1880-1930* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 8.

¹¹⁴ Langley and Schoonover, *The Banana Men*, 8.

develop the region.¹¹⁵

The New Orleans exposition likewise functioned as a primary opportunity for Central American governments to promote their liberal policies and attract international attention. Guatemala was among Central American governments that used the fair to avoid monocultural dependence on coffee by encouraging a wide range of agricultural production. As the region's first liberal leader, President Justo Rufino Barrios displayed over one thousand varieties of Guatemalan produce at the exposition.¹¹⁶ With a motto of "*Paz, Progreso, i Caminos*" (Peace, Progress, and Roads), President Luis Bográn marshaled Honduran energy and resources toward a prominent place in the New Orleans exposition in order to attract capitalists to a modernizing nation. As in Louisiana, 1876 marked a significant shift in Honduran politics, when the election of Marco Aurelio Soto (1876-1883) inaugurated a liberal era. As part of his liberal reforms, Bográn's predecessor modernized the country's mining code in 1880 to court large-scale foreign mining corporations while also allowing for significant "prudent discretion of the executive branch" to grant generous concessions and arrangements.¹¹⁷ Soto and Bográn were representative of a dogmatic liberal faith that Latin American leaders need only open the floodgates of foreign capital, science, and entrepreneurial energy to marshal, as Soto described, a "wave of progress and civilization."¹¹⁸ The New Orleans exposition was formative in increasing Central American liberalism. Bográn seized on the exposition as an opportunity Soto did not

¹¹⁵ Weiner, *Race, Nation, and Market*, 22; Rafael E. Delgadillo, "A 'Spanish Element' in the New South: The Hispanic Press and Community in Nineteenth Century New Orleans" (M. A. thesis: University of New Orleans, 2006), 18.

¹¹⁶ Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided*, Third Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 159.

¹¹⁷ Marvin Barahona, *Honduras en el Siglo XX: Una Síntesis Histórica* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 2005), 27; "Codigo de mineria de la Republica de Honduras. Reformado por el Congreso Nacional, en Decreto de 19 de marzo de 1885" (Tegucigalpa: Tipografía Nacional, 1886), p. iii-v as quoted in Kenneth V. Finney "Precious Metal Mining and the Modernization of Honduras: In Quest of El Dorado, 1880-1900," (Ph.D. diss. Tulane University, 1973), 21, 30.

¹¹⁸ Tegucigalpa *La Gaceta*, March 2, 1883, 1 as quoted in Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 29.

enjoy, the ability to announce to the world the arrive of a new, developmental focus with generous economic terms to foreign capital. The fair reflected and furthered a time in which liberalism provided such a windfall of concessions in Honduras that dispensing them became an industry in itself. Bográn's presidency, from 1883 to 1891, was the height of Honduran mining concessions with the number of companies more than doubling while as many as thirty-eight zoning rights were granted to mining corporations each year.¹¹⁹

Bográn dispatched Dr. Reinholt Fritzgartner as superintendent of the national display. As a well-connected German with a degree from the world's oldest metallurgical university, Freiberg University of Mining and Technology in Saxony, as well as being educated at universities in Württemberg and Stuttgart, Fritzgartner was a man of *wanderlust* who embodied the European or American industrial-minded men Honduran leaders hoped to attract. A leading assayer of ores throughout the country, Fritzgartner ambitiously called upon all mine owners to provide a comprehensive account of their businesses and to send numerous specimens, only stipulating that none should be under five pounds. When Honduran industrialists understandably balked at Fritzgartner's request, *La República*, the official government organ, chided them by saying that failure to "favorably impress" the attendees of "the important and glorious event" in New Orleans risked missing a major opportunity to lure American skilled labor and capital.¹²⁰ While Fritzgartner's ambitions were excessive, the Tegucigalpa newspaper proved correct in the ability of the New Orleans exposition to boost the Honduran economy. At least one Honduran landowner, Miguel Luis Aguilera, used exhibit materials to sell mineral rights to four American

¹¹⁹ Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 39, 44. This period was highly speculative, as many mining companies were organized and folded without much or any work done. Nonetheless, fifty-four companies were in operation in 1889, up from only nine in 1883. See Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 49.

¹²⁰ *Reports of the Scientific Commission of the Republic of France on the Guayape and Jalan River Concessions and on Six Mineral Zones, Also Statement of ex-Inspector General of Mines* (Tegucigalpa: National Printing Office, 1897), 23; Finney, *Precious Metal Mining*, 34-35.

entrepreneurs. The Aguan Navigation and Improvement Company emerged a couple years after the fair's closing, yet could not remain in operation after two superintendents died of yellow fever in 1888.¹²¹

The extent to which such transnational New South zealots as Burke saw the possibilities of tapping into the potentially rich commercial, agricultural, industrial, and mineral veins of Latin America was likewise evident in the personal attention paid to Hispanic exhibits. When the Honduran official charged by Bográn to direct his country's displays proposed a striking, but costly, one-hundred-thousand-square feet panoramic national map, Burke personally contributed a decisive amount of funds to create it. As an occasion to bring capitalists from around the globe together, personal networks that began at the fair were fundamental to transnational links. Burke began formative relationships with skilled laborers in addition to those with such foreign government officials as Fritzgartner. For example, Burke employed Englishman Stanley Rees in the construction of the exposition and later hired Rees as an engineer to scout and survey his subsequent Honduran mineral zones.¹²²

The exposition was also an opportunity for American businesses to make contacts with foreign educational leaders. The Smithsonian Institution, for instance, formed a connection with the Mexican government's delegation. The director of the National Museum of Mexico, Dr. Jesús Sánchez, attended the fair and initiated a reciprocal agreement. Mexico's National Museum would loan displays, particularly of Mexican antiquities, to its American counterpart and tour the U.S. National Museum in Washington in May before returning to Mexico. A

¹²¹ Ibid, 37

¹²² Ibid, 33; State of Honduras, *Guayape River Concessions with Honduras; also Reports and Statements* (Tegucigalpa: National Printing Office, 1897),13, The Latin American Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana. Burke was not the only member of his family to personally contribute to the exposition. His wife, Susan, made a folding-screen that was among the display of feminine handicraft within the Woman's Work of Louisiana Exhibit. See Howe, *Report and Catalogue of the Woman's Department*, 159.

Mexican naturalist from the Guatemalan and Mexican Boundary Survey, Rafael Montes de Oca, also initiated an exchange in which he sent Mexican bird skins and mammal specimens to the Smithsonian for a collection of native birds of the United States. Mexican officials and other foreign nations actively exchanged, and even donated, materials to the Smithsonian, in part to avoid the hassle and fees of re-packing and transporting collections back home.¹²³

When the Smithsonian did not permanently accept specimens, duplicates for instance, curators at the U.S. National Museum distributed them to colleges and museums throughout the nation. The Smithsonian's resources and reputation made it a desirable repository for foreign governments wishing to expand their respective countries' international awareness, appreciation, and prestige. For all the rhetoric and tangible relationships the fair fostered between capitalists from the American South and Latin America, Mexico also preferred the Smithsonian because it could ensure that their displays did not languish underappreciated after "being gobbled up by the smaller institutions of the South." The Smithsonian also received collections from the majority of states that exhibited at the fair.¹²⁴ By the end of June, the superintendent of the Smithsonian reported to Washington that donations were "coming in with a rush." Mexico donated a large part of its displays, including "an enormous amount of ores . . . entire collections of medicinal herbs . . . a large collection of Indian basket work . . . and several fine sombreros." All told, the Smithsonian appropriated displays from Mexico, Japan, France, Belgium, Jamaica, Venezuela, and Russia as well as "the entire Siamese collection."¹²⁵

The Smithsonian Institution saw the exposition as a unique opportunity to add international items to the National Museum. One clever tactic was to have the secretary of the treasury

¹²³ Earll to Goode, March 10, 1885, Earll to Goode, May 19, 1885, in Smithsonian Archives, RU 70, Exposition Records, 1867-1939, Box 19, Folder 12, Earll, R. Edward, 1884-1885.

¹²⁴ Earll to Goode, June 17, 1885, *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Earll to Goode, June 22, 1885, *Ibid.*

authorize the New Orleans customs house to declare all foreign articles donated or purchased by the Smithsonian duty free. Such a plan saved “much annoyance to commissioners from foreign governments and . . . a great savings in the cost of articles to be purchased.”¹²⁶ The Smithsonian’s freight tonnage was so significant that it arranged with the Pennsylvania Railroad to ship at no cost on its rails in exchange for the first 20,000 pounds. The Smithsonian ultimately sent over a dozen railroad cars carrying roughly 1,500 packages. After months of constant trials for labor and management, the Smithsonian superintendent left New Orleans in mid-July.¹²⁷

Despite reflecting nascent American imperialism and its fundamental role in Burke’s transnational New South vision, the World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition was not a financial success. The national economic downturn, reluctance by railroads to offer discounted rates, the city’s relative isolation, and consistently bad weather was too much to turn a profit. Burke opportunistically resigned as director general a month before the exposition was forced to close. 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.¹²⁸

It could be said that attempts at commercial expansion abroad after the Civil War often ran afoul of white southerners’ partisan disputes with Republicans, fears over aggrandizing federal power, hostility toward racial contact with Hispanics, and fiscal conservatism.¹²⁹ Yet the New Orleans exposition spurred six more world’s fairs held in the South that, in the aggregate, helped

¹²⁶ Earll to Goode, May 1, 1885, Ibid.

¹²⁷ Earll to Goode, June 22, 1885, Earll to Goode, July 4, 1885, Ibid.

¹²⁸ Shepherd Jr., “A Glimmer of Hope,” 274-277; New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, May 14, 1885.

¹²⁹ Fry, *Dixie Looks Abroad*, 131-133.

to foster significant advancement of southern industry and commerce. Southern world fairs in the late nineteenth century were a formative experience for millions of Americans that surely increased white southern support for U.S. involvement abroad, particularly in the Spanish-American War, and the creation of an isthmian canal in Central America. As such, Burke's direction over the exposition reflected how fairs were crafted as material manifestations of national, regional, and local booster attempts to fashion a version of industrialism, modernity, and regional development according to their own geopolitical circumstances and social goals.¹³⁰

While some scholars have interpreted international expositions in the age of imperialism as hyperbolic hot-air, the novelty, spectacle and hopefulness of the New Orleans fair was a significant means of legitimizing a transnational New South vision and shaping both the way southerners viewed the world and how people outside its boundaries perceived the region. The fair's vast exhibits, grandiose architecture, and lavish civic functions served as visceral propaganda to shape the Crescent City as the metropole of the New South and leader of the region's hoped-for dynamic role in the wider world. The exposition represented a significant moment of self-consciousness amongst southerners as they grappled with their role and place in the world while demonstrating the ways in which local and individual experiences rooted in geography and place fueled outward looking goals. Thus, we get a picture of a broad and unfixed world view of southerners in the late nineteenth century that functions as a necessary antidote to the dominant view of a backward and isolated region.

In the broadest sense, the string of fairs in the former Confederacy is evidence that the South had myriad webs of vibrant and dynamic ties with the rest of the world as a result of the global flow of commodities, people, capital, culture, and ideas that continued throughout the nineteenth

¹³⁰ Tenneriello, *Spectacle Culture and American Identity*, 13 & 124.

century and into the twentieth. Moreover, New Orleans is not so much an exception to the rule as it is proof that a vigorously contested fraternal fight existed among southerners for the future of their region, as well as for who should lead it. Indeed, Atlanta's much acknowledged New South vision conceptualized itself as modern and progressive due to its own geopolitical history. New Orleans, meanwhile, sought its own path, creatively molding its vibrant geopolitical history with the Americas writ large.¹³¹

¹³¹ Joseph A. Fry, *John Tyler Morgan and the Search for Southern Autonomy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 5; Daniel S. Margolies, *Henry Watterson and the New South: The Politics of Empire, Free Trade, and Globalization* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 8.

Chapter Four: “Un Eminente Caballero:” Major Edward A. Burke in Latin America, 1886-1896.

Among the waving palm trees and whitewashed buildings of San Pedro Sula, Honduras, an elderly American strolled down the city’s main street of Avenida Presidente Wilson in 1926. With a flowing white mustache, Stetson hat, and a cut-away coat, he made an immediate impression on a correspondent with the *Atlantic Monthly* as a “Southerner of the old order.” “Major E. A. Burke, suh, at your service. I see you’re new to our country,” the eighty-seven year old said with a smile and a handshake. “Permit me the honor of asking you to a toast, suh, to the grandest country in the world - the United States.” After sharing several drinks and stories, the journalist left their encounter with a seminal observation: “No story of Honduras is complete without mention of the Major.”¹

On September 20, 1886, Burke made his first visit to Honduras. The major’s reputation preceded him in no small part due to the network of established personal connections with a cadre of Americans, Europeans, and Latinos operating in Honduras. Prominent among them was E. A. Lever, a former colonel under Benito Juárez whom Burke had made head of the *Times-Democrat*’s Latin American department in 1881. By 1883, Lever was working closely with Central American consulate offices in New Orleans, and Burke had promoted him to associate editor. Lever used the connections his posts at the *Times-Democrat* provided to promote contracts for southern-led development projects in Latin America. He partnered with a Knoxville, Tennessee, railroad firm to secure a construction contract in Guatemala. Other contacts included the former Confederate general John B. Gordon. Two years before Burke’s trip to Honduras, Lever had even served as a brigadier general in the Honduran army, for which Bográn granted Lever a concession on the Guayape River. While still based in New Orleans and

¹ Alfred Batson, *Vagabonds Paradise* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1931), 82, 86-90.

working for Burke's newspaper, Lever published an 1885 travelogue full of hyperbolic prose about the rich potential of Central America.²

It was no surprise, then, when the official government organ in Tegucigalpa, *La República*, published a detailed article to coincide with Burke's visit in 1886. Negotiations for a mineral zone concession were evidently in progress, as Bográn granted Burke concessions on the Jalan and Guayape rivers two days after the publication of *La República* article. Therefore, the piece on Burke preemptively sold the public on his merits as an "*eminente caballero*," "a strong defender" of Honduras, and well-deserving of a generous grant of land. In addition, the article illuminated how Honduran leaders perceived Burke and his transnational New South vision.³

The newspaper highlighted two of Burke's initiatives as being specifically noteworthy for Hondurans interested in developing the country: his oversight of the *Times-Democrat* and the New Orleans exposition. *La República* presented Burke's newspaper as influential in "public business" and a leading "thermometer of all public opinion" in the United States. Despite the tendency of many Latin Americans to label all citizens of the United States as *yanquis* or *norteamericanos* from *el Norte*, the newspaper acknowledged Burke's vision as distinctly regional. Burke was extolled as the founder of the "*grande é importante órgano del Sur*," whose "large influence" was obtained through its interest in the development of the natural resources of

² "The *Times-Democrat* in Mexico," New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, Dec. 7, 1881; Soards' *New Orleans City Directory*, 1883 (New Orleans: L. Soards & Co., 1883), 473; Lester D. Langley and Thomas Schoonover, *The Banana Men: American Mercenaries and Entrepreneurs in Central America, 1880-1930* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 74; Kenneth V. Finney "Precious Metal Mining and the Modernization of Honduras: In Quest of El Dorado, 1880-1900," (Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1973), 160; E. A. Lever, *Central America; or, The Land of the Quiches and Chontales* (E. A. Brandao & Co.: New Orleans, 1885), 100-101, 105. Governor McEnery gave Burke a thirty-day leave of absence before he departed for Honduras. See Samuel McEnery Executive Authorization, August 13, 1886, E.A. Burke Papers, Mss. 547, 620, 641, 893, 1226, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge, hereafter cited as, "Burke Papers: LSU."

³ "Sea Bien Venido," Tegucigalpa *La República*, Sept. 25, 1886, Edward Austin Burke Papers: Tegucigalpa, New Orleans, etc., 1883-1936," BANC MSS Z-C 200, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Hereafter cited as "Burke Papers, Berkeley."

“*los Estados del Sur, de la América del Norte, México, y de las Repúblicas de Centro América.*”

This verified Burke’s claims to his readers in New Orleans that the *Times-Democrat* was an active source of news for Latin Americans.⁴

The paper argued that Burke’s acknowledged role as a proponent of southern and circum-Caribbean ties led to his formidable leadership in the New Orleans world’s fair. In reviewing Burke’s position as director general, *La República* implicitly demonstrated that Honduran leaders gave southerners equal weight in possessing the so-called distinctive entrepreneurial drive and grit of men from the northern U.S. and Europe. Burke possessed the degree of “skill and intelligence,” “patience and perseverance,” and “will and energy” to overcome the difficulties of staging an international exposition that would have “discouraged a man of inferior aptitudes and a less energetic character.” For its part, “Honduras figured with honor” in the “largest exhibition ever seen in the world.” The purpose of Burke’s visit, according to the organ of Bográn’s administration, was to meet with Honduran public officials and visit the country’s leading mineral areas in order to determine zones for prospective development. An experienced civil engineer and mining practitioner, Edward P. Mayes, accompanied Burke and collected reports on their thousand-plus mile trip.⁵

Reflecting in 1890 on this first visit to Honduras, Burke recounted being struck by the longstanding custom of local women to sift gold nuggets in traditional *bateas*, conical-shaped pans developed by Mayans, from the banks of the Guayape. Observing the fruits of this common female work was undoubtedly the formative experience for his preference for a concession centered on the Guayape and Jalan rivers. Scouting mineral zones outside the crowded center of concessions for the hard rock silver mining areas near Tegucigalpa was also a forward-thinking

⁴ Ibid; William V. Wells, *Explorations and Adventures in Honduras* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857), 286.

⁵ “Sea Bien Venido,” Tegucigalpa *La República*, Sept. 25, 1886, Burke Papers: Berkeley.

tactical decision, as the rush for these virgin zones would not occur for several years. During Burke's extensive tour, he visited numerous mineral works that were being developed or were in operation, including Abelardo Zelaya's El Crucero Mining Company and the Zelaya Company in San Juancito, formed with New York and Chicago capital. Burke toured several zones comprising companies with ties to the Crescent City that were also active in the Pacific and Caribbean portions of Honduras in 1886, most notably the New Orleans and Curarén Mining Company and the New Orleans and Honduras Mining Company.⁶

The dominant position of the Ring in Louisiana politics played a direct role in Burke's concessions. Burke was financially stable and well-connected enough to pay twelve thousand pesos, representing twelve years' worth of annual payments, in advance. Burke was granted his concession on September 27, 1886, immediately following the delivery of the advanced payment to the consul general of Honduras in New York City, Jacob Baiz. While perhaps such a payment required a full consulate, rather than the vice-consul based in New Orleans, use of New York points to the silent partnership of a Burke ally and co-owner of the Louisiana State Lottery Company, John A. Morris. Morris, who had grown to prominence in New York, retained strong business ties to the city even after he became a founder of the Louisiana lottery and moved to New Orleans.⁷ The likelihood of Morris fronting part or all of the advanced payment is lent further credence by Burke formally transferring ownership of his holdings to Morris when the deed to the concession was finalized several years later. Had Morris and Ring Democrats doubted their ability to continue the lottery, a central source of funds and muscle, they would

⁶ Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 38-42, 47.

⁷ Matthew Sweeney, *The Lottery Wars: Long Odds, Fast Money, and the Battle Over an American Institution* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009), 55-56; "Death of John A. Morris: The Founder and Chief Owner of the Louisiana Lottery," *New York Times*, May 27, 1895.

have perhaps been unwilling to diversify into Central American mining.⁸

Burke's concession granted by Bográn on September 27, 1886, provided the exact perimeters, protections, privileges, and obligations that went beyond the country's mining laws. Burke also secured an adjoining concession that same year for mineral rights on the Guayape River. According to the American Institute of Mining Engineers, Burke's concessions were "without doubt, one of the largest tracts of mineral land ever conveyed to one individual." Burke held claim to all mineral and metals from the subsoil to the waters and banks that encompassed six hundred *varas*, or roughly five-hundred-and-fifty yards, on each side of the Jalan and Guayape rivers. The contract applied to national lands, leaving intact the rights of private property holders and the communal land of municipalities. He had a loose exemption from all import taxes, which were substantially high at the time, on any goods necessary for his enterprises, and he was exempt from any current or future taxes on the exports of any products in his concession. Since tariffs made up more than half of government income, these stipulations were noteworthy. Burke could also transfer, lease, or sublease any part of his holdings. If any transfer or lease failed, the property would return to Burke and not another partner of the lease. In addition, the government held Burke accountable for annual payments of one thousand pesos toward an Industrial School, which Bográn hoped to begin building in 1887. The contract also stipulated that two-and-a-half percent of the concession's annual net profits would be paid to the government for the operating expenses of the school, although this payment would fall due only after a successful return on the company's capital, operating expenses, and ten percent of shareholder dividends.⁹

⁸ State of Honduras, *Jalan River Concession and Contract, Official Reports, Engineers Reports, also Statements with Descriptive Maps* (Tegucigalpa: National Printing Office, 1897), 3.

⁹ W. A. Thacher, "Mining in Honduras," in American Institute of Mining Engineers, *Transactions of the American Institute of Mining Engineers*, 20 (Philadelphia: Sherman & Co. Printers, 1892), 405; Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr.,

The government stipulated that Burke's concession not only aid an aspiring class of skilled laborers through the establishment of education initiatives, but that it would also protect traditional practices of rural Hondurans. The indigenous people were given special guarantees for their gold washing customs as long as they used traditional *bateas* and stayed beyond five hundred *varas*, roughly four hundred-sixty yards, from where Burke was "actually working." Washing for gold in this fashion was protected because the government considered it part of indigenous *patrimonio* (heritage). Mestizo Hondurans were granted more expansive protections, as they were able to use sluice boxes or machinery outside Burke's working areas. However, akin to the stipulations about school payments, the contract provided legal flexibility. Burke and his agents could curtail local argonauts if they could prove that such freelance workers violated the contract's tool or distance stipulations. Moreover, the concession gave Burke the wherewithal to expel locals by "working" an area they previously used. These stipulations mirrored the more informal agreement between *batea* workers and Honduran landowners, who often restricted local access or demanded a share of the results.¹⁰

President Bográn's requirement that Burke contribute funds to an industrial school reflected his administration's priority in the mining sector. That government oversight of mining concerns was housed in the east wing of the National Palace was just one illustration of Bográn's emphasis on mineralogical extraction. Bográn's reelection bid centered on development of the Honduran economy, and mining was his main issue. The concession to Burke was likely a central piece of evidence Bográn used as proof of his efforts to spur development. The same month that the Honduran congress approved his concession to Burke, February 1887, Bográn

Central America: A Nation Divided, Third Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 164; *Jalan River Concession*, 4-7; Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 160.

¹⁰ *Jalan River Concession*, 4-7, 22; Wells, *Explorations and Adventures in Honduras*, 280-281.

defeated his presidential challenger Céleo Arias for reelection. He saw a vibrant mining industry as a national panacea, not just economically, but socially as well. A government newspaper after Bográn's successful reelection argued that mining benefited "all those sectors . . . related to it, such as commerce, agriculture, [and] transportation routes."¹¹

Bográn took his reelection in 1887 as a mandate for his mining initiatives. His reelection reassured investor confidence in the stability of Honduras and the protections foreign companies and industrial concessions could come to expect. The first two years of Bográn's second term saw dozens of new corporations formed and the highest number of annual mining concessions at thirty-eight for both years.¹² To aid this effort, he established the Honduras Mining Bureau within the Department of Fomento. Reinholt Fritzgartner, who supervised the Honduran exhibit in New Orleans, became the nation's mining czar. He streamlined the government assay office within the new bureaucracy and modeled the bureau after similar American agencies in California and Colorado.

The decision to model the bureau after these two U.S. states was not accidental. If London, Paris, and northern U.S. cities were the urban capitals of finance, California, Colorado, Australia, and India were the locales for the practical side of the industry. Numerous engineers, mine superintendents, assayers, and import companies in Honduras had extensive ties to California and Colorado. Several active members of the American Institute of Mining Engineers that made thorough mining visits to Honduras were based in Colorado.¹³ Machinery and mining

¹¹ Tegucigalpa *La Gaceta*, Sept. 26, 1888, as quoted in Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 55; Thacher, "Mining in Honduras," 405; William S. Stokes, *Honduras: An Area Study in Government* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1950), 44.

¹² Kenneth V. Finney, "Our Man in Honduras: Washington S. Valentine," *Studies in Social Sciences* 17 (June 1978): 13-14; Thomas H. Leggett, "Notes on the Rosario Mine at San Juancito, Honduras," *Transactions of the American Institute of Mining Engineers* 17 (May 1888 to February 1889): 433; Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 44-47.

¹³ Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 50. For two such examples of Colorado miners, see Leggett, "Notes on the Rosario Mine," 432-449, and Thacher, "Mining in Honduras," 394.

experts from California swarmed over Honduras, in part because many of the canyons and gulches resembled well-known mineral zones in the Golden State. An early engineer for Burke's concessions, Henry Woolcock, was from Grass Valley, California. Yet the mining links between Latin America and the United States were reciprocal, if uneven, as Chilenos and Sonoreños had used variations of the *batea* to first exploit the California gold rush in the late 1840s.¹⁴

Bográn also ordered Fritzgartner to publish mining articles in English to spur American interest. This directive ultimately led to the formation of the *Honduras Progress* in 1888. Fritzgartner devoted his pen to mining to such an extent that the title of the bi-weekly paper was soon changed to the more accurately titled *Honduras Mining Journal*. The Prussian mineralogist continued Bográn's favorite theme by extolling mining enterprises that brought "heavy capital" to ensure employment and growth in overlapping and auxiliary commercial sectors. In addition, foreign-led mining industry would "naturally bring with it wealth and industry, intelligence and social progress, upon which the future prosperity of Honduras . . . [could be] based." Such Latin American positivists believed an emphasis on productivity and exports would generate revenue and raise the standard of living, thereby facilitating auxiliary industries amid a wider industrial revolution. The reach of the Tegucigalpa press was significant, because Honduran leaders would frequently mail copies of *La Gaceta* or Fritzgartner's publication to prospective foreign investors.¹⁵

Modernizing the country's telegraph services was an overlapping initiative of Honduran liberalism. In addition to a national telegraphy school, established in 1877, that graduated

¹⁴ Wells, *Explorations and adventures in Honduras*, 279, 281; *Jalan River Concession*, 29.

¹⁵ Tegucigalpa *Honduras Progress*, Oct. 18, 1888, as quoted in Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 56-57; Woodward, Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided*, 163; Bonilla to W. J. Rhyder, August 7, 1894, Policarpo Bonilla Documentos, Carpeta 1894, Archivo Nacional de Honduras, Antigua Casa Presidencial de Honduras, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

twenty students a year, Bográn recruited two “intelligent youths from established families” to apprentice at each telegraph office throughout the country. State-sponsored means of improving commerce via communication had long been a cause Bográn championed, having served as a Honduran delegate to the Universal Postal Convention in Paris before his presidency. Links between the Honduras government and the American South were strengthened further in 1888, when Bográn recruited an Arkansan, Bertie Cecil, to operate the national telegraph system. Ultimately commissioned as both the Director General of Telegraphs and Postmaster General, Cecil merged both administrations and markedly increased the country’s communication network through a series of reforms in line maintenance and office coordination between telegraphers and postmasters. He oversaw more than two thousand miles of telegraph lines and fifty-eight post offices with over three hundred workers in each division. To improve efficiency, Cecil helped enact strident police measures to clamp down on the habit of *campesinos* to cut telegraph wires for fencing and to use lines to hang clothes. Cecil also aided a Bográn directive that required departmental politicians to pay for the repair of frequently damaged lines out of their own salaries.¹⁶

In addition to initiatives to spur communication developments, Congress approved Bográn’s concession to Burke on February 10, 1887, and plans were laid to begin surveys of the zone, which had to be government-approved before a final title was issued. Bográn commissioned Don José Esteban Lazo two years later as the government-sanctioned engineer to survey the exact boundaries of Burke’s concession. Following over a month of field work that spring, the government was sufficiently satisfied with the survey to issue final title to the

¹⁶ Gene Sheldon Yeager, “Honduran Transportation and Communication Development: The Rise of Tegucigalpa, 1876-1900” (M.A. thesis: Tulane University, 1972), 20-23, 25, 38; Thacher, “Mining in Honduras,” 407-408.

concession on June 18, 1890.¹⁷ During this intervening period, Burke and his allies utilized a legal sleight of hand to provide financial stability for the company and increase the number of important men who had an interest in its success. Burke and John A. Morris appeared before the Orleans Parish notary public on June 15, 1888, for the major to sell the “right, title, and interest of every nature and kind whatsoever” of his Honduran concessions to Morris.¹⁸ The selling price of ten thousand dollars gave Burke much needed cash reserves and was a negligible amount for Morris, whose Morris Park horse-racing track in New York alone was assessed at two million dollars, and whose wealth was already estimated to be in the tens of millions.¹⁹ Equally important, a couple months after the Ring’s electoral defeat in 1888, Morris appointed Burke as his “Agent and Attorney.” Burke now had the power to make, sign, and execute sales, purchases, and contracts in Morris’s name. On January 30, 1889, in New Orleans, the Honduran vice-consul and the British consul approved Burke’s appointment.²⁰

As with so many men in state and national Gilded Age politics, Burke was optimistic that his recent defeat in the 1888 elections would turn out to be a temporary setback in his political career. His strategy was to make use of his mining concessions while simultaneously remaining active in Louisiana and national affairs. He was among the scores of Regular Democrats who lost state and local positions in 1888, but Burke and the New Orleans machine retained influence with Senator James B. Eustis, who had been elected on the 1884 Democratic ticket. In the summer of 1889, Eustis successfully lobbied Republican President Benjamin Harrison to consider Burke for an appointment as a delegate to that fall’s Pan-American Conference.

¹⁷ *Jalan River Concession*, 9-10.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 7-9.

¹⁹ “Death of John A. Morris: The Founder and Chief Owner of the Louisiana Lottery,” *New York Times*, May 27, 1895.

²⁰ Burke’s secretary, A. W. Cockerton, and Morris’s son, David Hennen Morris, also officially witnessed the deed. See *Jalan River Concession*, 7-9, 10-12; Tegucigalpa *La Gaceta*, Dec. 17, 1888.

Harrison wrote James G. Blaine from the White House in August mulling over patronage positions. Since Democrats in control of the previous Congress and presidential administration of Grover Cleveland had passed legislation authorizing the conference, Republicans on Capitol Hill were debating how best to deploy their political capital.²¹

Having already selected a New York merchant and banker, Charles F. Flint, as one of the delegates, Harrison thought he would appease senators from the Democracy by adding Burke or Henry G. Davis. Burke had the influential support of the Department of State's executive agent in charge of planning the conference, William Eleroy Curtis. Curtis achieved that position due to a journalistic career in Chicago and Washington D.C. that had made him one of the nation's leading authorities on Latin America. He opined so often on the need for stronger commercial and political ties with Latin America that he acquired the moniker "the Patagonian."²²

Yet Burke's candidacy was more than a show of bipartisanship. Harrison emphasized Burke's ability to speak Spanish, and pointed out that he possessed "a good deal of knowledge of South American affairs." Burke's leadership in the New Orleans exposition and personal relationships with such Latin American leaders as Porfirio Díaz and Bográn no doubt aided the major's cause. Burke also was more aligned with Republican economic and foreign policies than many Democrats. His support of a federal tariff for Louisiana sugar and of federal subsidies for steamship lines made him palpable to Republicans. The latter position reflected a common Hispanic goal of closer ties with the United States. The Chilean newspaper *El Ferrocarril* voiced a common opinion of Latin American leaders in pressuring American politicians to

²¹ James F. Vivian, "The South American Commission and the Three Americas Movement: The Politics of Pan Americanism, 1884-1890" (Ph.D. diss., American University, 1971), 217-219.

²² Curtis later became the inaugural director of the Bureau of American Republics, in 1891, and director of the World's Columbian Exposition's Latin American Department. See Vivian, "The South American Commission and the Three Americas Movement," 35-37.

mirror Europe's successful strategy of subsidized shipping as an "indispensable first step" for heightened commerce.²³

Unfortunately, Harrison had considered Davis a "personal friend" from the time when Davis, a Democrat from West Virginia, served with Harrison in the Senate. Davis also owned substantial shares in railroad and coal companies. It would have been quite unusual in Gilded Age politics for friendships and wealth not to be decisive in issues of patronage. Davis received the position; Burke did not. Although, as things turned out, it is unlikely that Burke would have been able to serve as a delegate in any case. The New Orleans press broke the story that Burke had misappropriated state funds as treasurer less than a month later, in September of 1889.²⁴ In terms of the amount of money stolen, Burke's dealings as state treasurer remains the single largest political corruption scandal in Louisiana history.²⁵

Burke arrived in Honduras in December of 1889, and President Bográn personally welcomed him to Tegucigalpa. Despite a standing \$10,000 reward offered by the state of Louisiana for his return, Burke's arrival in 1889 began a thirty-eight year residency in Honduras. The *Chicago Tribune* astutely predicted that such a well-connected and gregarious politico would "play an important part in Central America, like [Henry] Meiggs in South America." While the luxurious and carefree life the *New York Tribune* imagined for Burke did not come to pass, that newspaper was prophetic when it foresaw Burke's ability to avoid the "indictments awaiting his presence in Louisiana" amid a "life of official favor and patronage" in Honduras.²⁶

²³ Albert T. Volwiler, ed., *Correspondence between Benjamin Harrison and James G. Blaine, 1882-1893* (Philadelphia: np, 1940), 74-75; as quoted in Vivian, "The South American Commission and the Three Americas Movement," 216.

²⁴ Volwiler, *Correspondence between Harrison and Blaine, 74-75*; Vivian, "The South American Commission and the Three Americas Movement," 216-19.

²⁵ Terry L. Jones, *The Louisiana Journey* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2007), 266.

²⁶ James F. Vivian, "Major E. A. Burke: The Honduras Exile, 1889-1928," *Louisiana History* 15 (Spring 1974): 183; "Hiding in Honduras," *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 25, 1889, as quoted in Katherine Unterman, *Uncle Sam's Policemen: The Pursuit of Fugitives Across Borders* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 107; "Major Burke in

As it happened, Burke would have left the United States in any case since his Olancho Exploration Company had also been formed in 1889. Not that he had anticipated falling victim to scandal that year, any more than he had initiated his mining concerns in anticipation of his political defeat in 1888. Burke was among many in Honduras during the 1880s who experienced a natural lag of several years from the granting of a concession by the executive, its formal congressional approval, and issuance of a final title after the completion of a government-approved survey. More paperwork followed once a corporation was formed.²⁷

Indeed, in 1888 and before public revelations of his alleged embezzlement, Burke had made formal plans to take charge of three companies based in England: the Honduras Gold Placer Mining Company, the Guayape Placer Mining Company, and the Comayagua Mining Company. Records indicate that only the Honduras Gold Placer Mining Company was fully incorporated. Burke likewise made unavailing attempts to form a company using his ties to U.S. railroad owners. The late 1880s and early 1890s was a highly speculative period, when as many or more companies failed or never advanced beyond preliminary incorporation as were successfully formed.²⁸ The appearance of a company based in the department of Comayagua indicates that Burke had taken steps to act as an agent or manager of another mineral zone, as Burke himself never held concessions in that department.

Thus, Burke was an individual player in a wider global era of British investment. English capitalists invested in no less than one-hundred-and-thirty-two new mining schemes in Latin America between 1880 and 1890, providing roughly twenty million pounds of British funds to

Clover," *New York Tribune*, Apr. 6, 1890, as quoted in Unterman, *Uncle Sam's Policemen*, 107; Burke's wife accompanied him to Honduras, yet bouts of ill health prompted Burke to send her to relatives in Texas for temporary visits. See Burke to William E. Hawkins, October 1, 1896, E.A. Burke Papers, 1837-1919, Louisiana Research Collection, Manuscripts Collection 680, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana. Hereafter cited as "Burke Papers, Tulane."

²⁷Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 44; *Jalan River Concession*, 10.

²⁸ Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 47, 161.

the region. One-hundred-and-four companies were formed between the years 1886 and 1890, with 1889, the year Burke organized the Olancho Exploration Company, being the peak of the boom. While new technological and industrial demands for copper were one impetus to investment, speculation in precious metals was the driving force. Neither before nor since has Latin American mining experienced an “influx of British capital of such size and velocity.” The Honduran gold rush vied with the copper and nitrate prospects of Chile to attract the fourth largest amount of British capital behind Mexico, Venezuela, and Colombia.²⁹ Burke’s efforts were largely focused on gold mining, but engineers and surveyors also reported that his concessions contained traces of silver, lead, coal, wild cocoa, copper, platinum, tellurium, diamonds, and “precious woods of various kinds.”³⁰

In early 1890, Burke’s plans for developing his holdings advanced when Bográn ordered detailed reports from the governors of state-level departments that contained portions of his concession. These reports reveal how interactions with local Hondurans in villages, towns, and rural areas, as well municipal leaders and departmental governors, set the trajectory for Burke’s endeavors. The Honduras Burke found had a population of 300,000 mostly rural residents in subsistence economies. Living on small cattle ranches scattered along the riverbanks, in such nearby towns as Guaimaca, or in smaller villages, Honduran women were especially central to his plans. Reports of auriferous *quebradas* (creeks) were based on knowledge gained from local women. Sand and gravel river bars below the Jalan at *El Chorro Cañón* were indicative of many areas within Burke’s concessions “known as having been washed by women.” The custom of

²⁹ J. Fred Rippy, “British Investments in Latin America, 1822-1949” in *The Evolution of International Business, 1800-1945*, ed. Mark Casson, Vol I (London: Routledge, 1959), 46-48; Peter E. Austin, *Baring Brothers and the Birth of Modern Finance* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 191.

³⁰ *Reports of the Scientific Commission of the Republic of France on the Guayape and Jalan River Concessions and on Six Mineral Zones, Also Statement of ex-Inspector General of Mines* (Tegucigalpa: National Printing Office, 1897), 9; *Jalan River Concession*, 21, 24, 25.

gold-washing often arose from women who worked as *lavadoras* (laundresses). Government reports described the success of local women on several *quebradas* whose skilled use of *bateas* netted them from \$.50 to \$1 a day by selling *chispas* (sparks) to local *tienderos* (shop-keepers). According to an 1880 Honduran census, three-hundred-and-thirty-three women in the department of Olancho listed their occupation as *lavadoras de oro* (gold washers).³¹

Records indicate that at least one gold washing site, Sarah, was named for a woman who worked it. Other sites, such as the *Barranca Rica*, were long associated with rich deposits yet remained untapped. In these instances, long and difficult travel from the nearest town coupled with the fear of tigers left significant stretches of Olancho rivers underdeveloped. The threat of tigers to cattle and people led the Olancho departmental government at times to offer a bounty for killing them. The experience of such local women as Rosa Rodríguez and others who lived near creek mouths and gave approximate measurements for width and depth also informed subsequent surveyors and engineers of the topographical dimensions of gold sites.³² Despite describing the *bateas* women used as “rude” in an interview with Fritzgartner for the *Honduras Progress*, Burke ultimately placed faith in their ability to locate profitable gold mining operations.³³

The most common way for the women to separate fine gold from sand and gravel was a process known in America as panning, but some local gold hunters mined with more involved and dangerous methods. Near an isolated section of the river with deep water rapids too dangerous for *pitpans* (canoes), some women worked an area known as *Cajón del Oro Menudo*,

³¹ Marvin Barahona, *Honduras en el siglo XX: Una Síntesis Histórica* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 2005), 32; *Jalan River Concession*, 15, 17, 18; Wells, *Explorations and adventures in Honduras*, 282; Tegucigalpa *La Gaceta*, Jan. 10, 1883, as quoted in Finney, “Precious Metal Mining,” 159.

³² *Jalan River Concession*, 16, 27; Wells, *Explorations and adventures in Honduras*, 140, 280.

³³ Tegucigalpa *Honduras Progress*, Mar. 14, 1890, as quoted in Finney, “Precious Metal Mining,” 39.

or Box of Gold Soup, by diving to the river's bedrock for nuggets of coarse gold commonly as heavy as an ounce or more.³⁴ Burke and other aspiring gold miners used these collective reports from women to construct a zone for placer mining. These often involved installing dams and flumes to direct auriferous gravel into sluice boxes that would ensure that the tailings of lighter gravel carried through the box while gold dropped to the bottom of the box, where riffles would trap it for collection. Burke also mentioned the mining technique of amalgamating fine gold with mercury to produce a better product.

Some women in Olancho even held claim to mineral veins of quartz gold. What locals dubbed *Nana Julia* was one such quartz mine, "worked by an old woman named Julia," where "coarse gold [had] been taken for many years in abundance." Burke made prospecting this mine, which he called the "Old Lady's Mine," a top priority. The major verified that it contained a good outcrop, described as a "rich soft streak," and a nearby stream. Regardless of whether Julia or other Hondurans still worked the mine, Burke's contract gave him supreme mineral rights and the ability to supersede and expel local claims. Accordingly, Burke reported sometime in 1890 that he had "marked" it on his list. Despite Burke's liberal contract disadvantaging rank-and-file Hondurans, departmental governors echoed the national leadership in favoring foreign-led development. The governor of El Paraiso, a vocal supporter of Burke's concession, argued that the "land in its greatest part" was "wild."³⁵ Burke was also aware that the Guaimaca section contained a number of mounds, thought to be pre-Columbian in origin, which held ancient pottery remains and suggested the possible location of a Mayan city.³⁶

³⁴ *Jalan River Concession*, 27, 30; State of Honduras, *Concession of a Mineral Zone of Four Sections, Situated Between the Guayape and Jalan Rivers, Made by the Government of Honduras to E. A. Burke* (Tegucigalpa: National Printing Office, 1897), 15.

³⁵ *Jalan River Concession*, 15, 20, 22

³⁶ *Ibid*, 20.

Locally based leaders were apt to point out areas of Burke's concession that were owned by private individuals and thus outside his control. This was especially the case near the town of Teupasenti, whose mayor, Ramón Moncada, made sure to inform government authorities how much land he personally owned. Local and state-level reports emphasizing the boundaries of private and municipal property made a significant impact on Burke's operations. While surveys estimated that he could command just over one hundred miles in the Jalan concession, Burke preferred to "keep on the safe side" and target seventy-five to ninety miles for development.³⁷

Local conditions were central to Burke's own survey team, headed by Edward Mayes. Despite having brought tools and camping equipment, Mayes relied on a local male guide, used a *batea* to pan for gold, and navigated the Jalan in a dugout, flat-bottomed canoe used by locals called a *pitpan*. While not on the scale of other efforts to recruit Americans to Honduras, Mayes envisioned a colony south of Juticalpa, some dozen miles up the Jalan from where it joins the Guayape. He concluded that machinery and materials for the mining outpost could be transported on the river with more ease than on most of Burke's Guayape concessions. The Jalan was worthy of its indigenous name for "beautiful" in Mayes's eyes on his December and January scouting expeditions. The landscape had plenty of valuable forests, alluvial soil, abundant fish in the river, and a "most delightful climate." Its primary occupants at the time were "tigers, deer, tapirs, monkeys, peccaries, wild boars, wild turkey, and other game."³⁸

A colony of workers, or more aptly a mining camp, was needed because Mayes suggested a sixty-mile stretch up the Jalan from where it joined the Guayape, not only because he found gold deposits there, but also because of its isolation from local gold washers, who were

³⁷ Ibid, 23-24, 22.

³⁸ Ibid, 7, 25, 28; The American Honduras Company, *Honduras and the Perry Land Grant: A New Field for the Farmer, Stockman, Lumberman and Laborer* (Chicago: Donohue & Henneberry, 1888), 5-7.

prominent farther up river near Teupasenti and Guaimaca. “Fear of snakes and tigers,” as well as a particularly difficult and isolated portion of forested terrain, had “kept back the *batea* workers” from this rich area. Yet isolation had drawbacks as well. Mayes contended that labor for much of the Olancho section of the Jalan was “both scarce and costly.” Local Hondurans, more than likely many who had provided information on the area to municipal and regional political leaders, knew of Burke’s recent concession and were possibly holding out for higher wages. Mayes, who had experience overseeing Honduran workers at the aptly named locale of *Minas de Oro* (Gold Mines) near Comayagua, reckoned that labor near much of the Jalan was “double what it used to be.”³⁹

Ultimately, Mayes suggested targeting the end of *Cajón del Oro Menudo* for immediate works. He sent Burke the results of two *bateas* that netted roughly three hundred “colours to the pan,” which no doubt verified the traditions of local Hondurans who dived the area for gold nuggets. While its inaccessibility, long distance from a nearby town, and fear of the wildlife had kept the *Cajón del Oro Menudo*’s gold supply from being drained, Burke was warned that hundreds of *batea* workers would “flock” to work once a mining outpost began. Plans were made to take a census of employed local workers to “prevent others pretending” to be from the region and freelancing Burke’s deposits.⁴⁰

Eighteen-ninety was a mercurial year for Burke and his family. The Burkes gained a measure of stability early in the year, when Assistant Secretary of State John Bassett Moore finished his influential *A Treatise on Extradition and Interstate Rendition*. It encapsulated Gilded Age foreign policy concerning fugitives as a simple act of reciprocity. Since the United States required an extradition treaty to remove a fugitive from American soil, it only demanded

³⁹ *Jalan River Concession*, 26-28

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 26-28.

extradition from foreign governments with which the United States had an extradition treaty. Moore applied the principle to Burke in 1890. His decision not to pressure Honduras for Burke's return was foundational to establishing the policy precedent. Maintaining friendly relations with Latin American governments was the only guarantee of safety for such fugitives from the law as Burke. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Ker v. Illinois* (1886) effectively gave American bounty hunters broad tactical discretion when capturing fugitives abroad, regardless of diplomatic relations with the United States or permission from the host country. For example, just months after Moore formally ended government efforts for Burke's extradition, the American Exchange Bank in New York paid famed detective Robert Pinkerton to capture and return Edward Sturgis Crawford, who had absconded to Honduras with over forty thousand dollars of stolen funds. Back in New Orleans, shortly after news of Pinkerton's high-stakes chase, Burke's old newspaper rival, the *Picayune*, spoke for Louisianans who still sought to bring the major to justice when it opined, "Why not Burke?"⁴¹

That same year, Burke's son Lindsay sought to attend the University of Freiburg in southwestern Germany. While records do not indicate Lindsay's wishes or family discussions, Burke's recent scandals likely trumped previous donations to Louisiana State University and ties to notable figures throughout the country, and so prompted the Burkes to seek Lindsay's higher education outside the United States. It is quite possible that Burke's association with Rienholdt Fritzgartner, who held degrees from several universities in the state of Baden-Wurttemberg, aided the young Burke's prospects. In any event, the seventeen-year-old Lindsay was denied entry due to his youth. Whether Lindsay attempted to attend a university at a later date is

⁴¹ Unterman, *Uncle Sam's Policemen*, 62-63; John Bassett Moore, *A Treatise on Extradition and Interstate Rendition*, Vol I (Boston: Boston Book Company, 1891), 40; "Why Not Burke?," *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, May 7, 1890.

unknown, but he ultimately aided his father's business interests in Honduras for the next several years.⁴²

Burke's efforts to survey and prospect his mineral zones so extensively demonstrated a degree of prudence lacking in the mining endeavors of others. According to Fritzgartner, the allocation of capital without thorough reports from experienced engineers was a common pitfall of most mining companies. Once the locale was prospected, assayed, and surveyed, the next step for a functioning mine required a cadre of skilled laborers, including a mining engineer, an operator of the works, and a superintendent. Recruiting and employing these crucial laborers was no easy task. Honduran officials bemoaned the country's relative remoteness from the "main currents of the world's travel," which meant that many potential workers resisted taking the lengthy trip to a country where they perceived the "language and customs [were] strange." Working in most mines and placers meant living in isolated mining camps, which necessarily resulted in the wife and children of most skilled laborers remaining at home abroad rather than live separated in Tegucigalpa, Guaimaca, or Juticalpa. Providing a sufficient salary to lure engineers and superintendents to Honduras when they could find similar employment in Europe or North America was difficult. When the task proved insurmountable, mine owners were left to hire men without experience or training. Owners could also demand too much of a skilled laborer they were fortunate enough to employ, such as placing the duties of a mill man on an overly stretched superintendent. As Hondurans liberals such as Fritzgartner could attest, immigration laws meant to court large numbers of the working class to Central America instead induced smaller numbers of entrepreneurs who exploited the country.⁴³

⁴² Vivian, "Major E. A. Burke: The Honduras Exile," 183.

⁴³ Fritzgartner to Alfonso L. Pinart, September 7, 1896, in *Reports of the Scientific Commission of the Republic of France on the Guayape and Jalan River Concessions and on Six Mineral Zones, Also Statement of ex-Inspector*

Once skilled laborers and local workers were employed and the construction of a mining outpost completed, life in a mining camp often presented its own obstacles to a successful mining operation. The loneliness of camp life and freedom from absentee overseers meant that more than a few men “drifted into habits of dissipation and vice.”⁴⁴ While *lavadoras de oro* were central to locating gold sites, gender norms dictated that men were employed not just for the sake of discipline and productivity, but also to police moral behavior and, in the eyes of men, protect women. Operating a rocker box or sluice required workers to move a large amount of earth. Likewise, the construction and maintenance of mining outposts required hard physical labor.⁴⁵ If vice and idleness did not infect workers, isolation meant that nearly all of them experienced “a most awful monotony.” The most conscientious superintendents mitigated these factors with evening musical entertainments and refreshments. Too often, however, superintendents were either absent or insisted upon unbroken strings of long workdays.

One American scholar of Latin America, Cecil Charles, noted while touring Honduras in 1890 that the cultural ignorance of imported American skilled labor was a significant detriment to worker productivity. Inexperienced or stubborn superintendents often made the mistake of enforcing American habits on local Hondurans. Charles argued that it was a “far truer economy to avoid such radical changes” of Honduran customs, such as mustering for “breakfast at five A.M, lunch at noon, and dinner at six P.M.” Instead, he contended that Americans should respect the habits of their workers to “have their coffee on rising, their breakfast at ten,” a midday *siesta*, and “their dinner at four or five.” Charles also posited that superintendents should not interfere with the occasional “game of ball,” likely meaning *fútbol*, and allow workers

General of Mines (Tegucigalpa: National Printing Office, 1897), 20-21; Woodward, Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided*, 165.

⁴⁴ Fritzgartner to Alfonso L. Pinart, September 7, 1896, in *Reports of the Scientific Commission*, 21

⁴⁵ Wells, *Explorations and adventures in Honduras*, 286; *Jalan River Concession*, 29.

to attend traveling *maromero* (acrobat) shows that came near the camp. However, for all his adroit cultural sensitivity, even Charles could be obtuse, particularly when he was perplexed that “tennis [had] never taken hold” among Hondurans.⁴⁶

It was in similar circumstances that Burke began building works and camps at his concessions in 1890. During the fallout from his embezzlement scandal the previous year, Burke had left for London to promote partnerships with his Honduras Gold Placer Mining Company on the Guayape and to court investments for a corporation to exploit his holdings on the Jalan. The Olancho Exploration Company, Limited, was the successful result of the latter endeavor. Acting as an agent for Morris, who had a home and horseracing facility in England, and was among the many elite Gilded Age Americans who cultivated European social ties, likely provided Burke with a network of connections in an era of what British historians P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins have called “gentlemanly capitalism.”⁴⁷ Ultimately, John Taylor’s Sons, a firm that held the Mysore Gold Fields in India and the South African Exploration and Mining Company, partnered with Burke for preliminary works on the Jalan and Guayape. On the Guayape, Burke hired Douglas L. V. Browne as superintendent to begin works near an area known as El Retiro. Rather than focus on *quebradas* that *lavadoras de oro* had already exploited, Brown began an ambitious scheme to construct a dam across the Guayape that would channel the river into a thousand foot long spill flume and expose the auriferous riverbed.⁴⁸

The Louisiana public actively followed Burke’s endeavors in Honduras. Despite barely a year having elapsed from the public revelation of his scandal, the major received positive press

⁴⁶ Cecil Charles, *Honduras: The Land of Great Depths* (Chicago: Rand, McNally and Company, 1890), 71, 72-74, 76.

⁴⁷ “Death of John A. Morris: The Founder and Chief Owner of the Louisiana Lottery,” *New York Times*, May 27, 1895; A. G. Hopkins and P. J. Cain, *British Imperialism: 1688-2000*, Second Edition (New York: Routledge University Press, 2013), 135.

⁴⁸ Finney, “Precious Metal Mining,” 161-163; *Jalan River Concession*, 29.

in Louisiana newspapers in 1890, one of which described Burke as “Louisiana’s wandering son, who has such a yearning for home.” Even newspapers in north Louisiana were among a host of Democratic organs that remained fond of Burke’s tenure in the state. Such newspapers widely reprinted a *Times-Democrat* interview with an Associated Press correspondent, Frederick W. White, who had recently visited Honduras and spent time with Burke. White considered Burke a “busy man in a lifeless country,” for while Honduras was “a land of peppers and petticoats” Burke found “no time for *dolce far niente* (pleasant idleness).” The major “breathed into the republic a spirit of American restlessness,” White contended. According to press reports, Burke’s personality and ambitions “gained the good will and profound admiration of the people, resident and foreign, throughout Honduras.” “If all of New Orleans went down [to Tegucigalpa] and denounced the Major,” the *Homer Guardian* argued, “it would not influence the public mind one iota against him.”⁴⁹

Yet Burke experienced problems from the outset. First, transportation woes caused delays in the shipment of construction supplies. When the ninety-odd tons of supplies arrived, negotiations broke down with local laborers to deliver the cargo. Browne then bought one-hundred-and-sixty mules to help with the arduous task, but dozens either died or were lost or stolen. In the face of early difficulties, Burke’s partners hired Grass Valley California native Henry Woolcock, who had been supervising Peruvian mines, to serve as an engineer and provide an independent assessment. Woolcock wired Taylor’s Sons in London from Burke’s Camp Buenavista, near El Retiro, in February 1890 after inspecting and assaying several areas of Burke’s concessions to confirm that the region was, indeed, of “great value.” With Browne

⁴⁹ “Ex-Treasurer Burke: A Sketch of Him as he Appears in Tegucigalpa,” *Homer, La. Homer Guardian*, Feb. 28, 1890; “Gold from Honduras,” *Ibid*, Mar. 28, 1890.

developing the Guayape portion, Burke took advantage of Woolcock's arrival to hire him as superintendent of his Jalan works.⁵⁰

The early spring provided a measure of success that was as tantalizing as it was fleeting. The dam at Camp Buenavista was completed in March with hired laborers working the gold-inlaid bedrock. Meanwhile, progress on the Jalan was catching up to the initially delayed works on the Guayape. Woolcock ordered derricks and supplies from California and constructed a mining camp adjacent to a dam and flume built in April for the sluicing of top gravel. Tests from an independent assayer certified good results of free milling gold ores with negligible sulphurets. By this time, John Taylor's Sons had authorized the Honduras Syndicate of London, with Burke's Honduras Gold Placer Mining Company and Olancho Exploration Company constituting two of the sixteen prospective companies for mining in central Honduras. The camp offices operated out of a four room cedar building known as "the Syndicate house."⁵¹

According to Burke, he then ran into the same problems mine owners frequently encountered. Woolcock was "conscientious" but "frequently absent." Hondurans only agreed to labor if given what Burke considered "excessive salaries." Woolcock's chronic absences no doubt fueled another problem at the Jalan works, where Burke complained that much "coarse nugget gold was appropriated by employees." The major estimated that Taylor's Sons did not receive more than one half of the true products' claims.⁵²

Whether or not Burke exaggerated problems with his employees, environmental factors definitely undercut his prospects. Spring rains caused a flash flood on the Guayape in late March 1890 that left the dam at Camp Buenavista standing but significantly weakened. Despite dam

⁵⁰ *Concession of a Mineral Zone of Four Sections*, 22; Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 161-163; *Jalan River Concession*, 29.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 29-30; *Concession of a Mineral Zone of Four Sections*, 24-26.

⁵² *Jalan River Concession*, 30.

repairs and an additional flume, Taylor's Sons abandoned the Guayape project in June. Their decision was due in part to equally unfortunate circumstances farther south on the Jalan, where the same spring rains carried a tree into Woolcock's flume. According to Burke, the absentee superintendent erroneously cabled London that the dam and flume were entirely destroyed, which prompted Taylor's Sons to withdraw from the Jalan works, too.⁵³

Burke's indomitable spirit refused to accept defeat. The ubiquitous reports of untold riches waiting along the rivers fueled his drive. Continuous encouragement by the Honduran government and press fueled his ego. Burke devised a bold scheme to take responsibility for renewing operations on both the Jalan and Guayape works. He secured a loan from Honduras's leading female capitalist, Doña Victorina Berlioz, to reconstruct the works at El Retiro. Berlioz was a French emigre who amassed an independent fortune in Honduras before marrying the British consul to the country. She was among the top two dozen importers in Honduras and a major commercial lender based in Comayagua. Burke had used Berlioz's resources for financial transactions since his Honduran interests began in 1886. The new arrangement between them centered on the purchase of machinery, tools, and materials from French firms looking to offload their goods after abandoning a project begun in 1878 to build a canal through Panama. Burke used Berlioz as a middle woman to meet his needs at ten percent of their original cost.⁵⁴

⁵³ Ibid, 29; Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 163-164.

⁵⁴ *Jalan River Concession*, 29-30; Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 164-165; Kenneth V. Finney, "Merchants, Miners, and Monetary Structures: The Revival of the Honduran Import Trade, 1880-1900," *SECOLAS Annales* 12 (March 1981), 35; "Honorable Tribunal de Arbitradores: Origin de las Cuentas, Arregladas Exclusivamente por el Contrato de 20 de Agosto del año de 1895," *Burke Papers*: Berkeley; Woodward, Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided*, 162. For a brief biography on Berlioz, see Maria Soltera, *A Lady's Ride across Spanish Honduras* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1964), xxx-xxxii. In the interconnected and fascinating world of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Central America, Berlioz's great grandson, José Reina Valenzuela, became an historian and wrote a biography on Burke's body servant and chauffeur, Lisandro Garay, who in turn became a famous aviator known as the "Honduran Lindbergh."

Even when he found himself “at the point of death” in Tegucigalpa, Burke still pressed on. When Taylor’s Sons accepted Burke’s telegraphed proposal to lease the property at Jalan with the promise of a royalty or share of the profits, he upgraded Camp Buenavista with a system of water wheels, elevators, and pumps. A saw mill, hydraulic piping system, and even electrical power were put in place by August. Just as the camp was running consistently above operating expenses with profitable sluicing, disaster struck. An even more violent *creciente* totally destroyed the upgraded dam system and sluices on the Guayape on August 25. The next day, Burke received another telegraph that the same flood had swept away the Jalan flume for good. Burke recovered his health, but lost a fortune. Surveying the damages sometime later, he reported that his works at El Retiro had been swept away without a trace, even though, as Burke poetically lamented, “The patient *batea* washers [were] on the bars and banks scarcely touched by this stupendous and fated effort.”⁵⁵

Burke’s economic misfortunes coincided with equally disruptive events in his political circle. The motto with which Bográn sought to govern Honduras, “*paz y progreso*” (peace and progress), was increasingly undermined in the early 1890s. General Longino Sánchez, governor of the department of Tegucigalpa and the city’s *comandante de armas*, initiated a coup in the capital in November, 1890. The element of surprise forced Bográn’s government out of the city to nearby Villa de Concepción, where it regrouped. In the chaos of the coup, Director of Telegraphs Bertie Cecil had the wherewithal to remove telegraph equipment from the national palace, pass through Sánchez’s pickets, and allow Bográn to wire for reinforcements. Acting quickly to dispel what Hondurans called “*La Traición* (The Betrayal),” Bográn’s governors in

⁵⁵ *Jalan River Concession*, 29-30; Finney, “Precious Metal Mining,” 164-165.

surrounding departments heeded the call and sent a thousand soldiers to Concepción within a few days.⁵⁶

When Bográn's forces re-entered the city three days after the coup began, civilian and military leaders loyal to the government rang the bell from Tegucigalpa's *cabildo* to signal a counter attack against Sánchez. Southerners were instrumental in returning Bográn to power. Burke, apparently sufficiently recovered from his illness, was among the three hundred citizens who took up arms and answered the call. Meanwhile, Sánchez's forces occupied the strategic high ground of the city, known as *La Leona*, and attempted to repulse loyal forces from the commanding plateau. Unlike Burke's role in his last street battle, the Battle of Liberty Place, he would not serve as an aide, but he did take part in the attack. He commanded a group of "norteamericanos" within an "escuadra de soldados" (squad of soldiers) that stormed up Tegucigalpa's central streets in a three-pronged attack. New Orleans was also represented by Colonel C. D. Beyer, whom Bográn had previously made *jefe de policía* for Tegucigalpa. The assault was successful after three days of intense street fighting, and Sánchez's coup lasted less than a week. The unified action of most Honduran leaders in the face of Sánchez's *traición* was likewise short-lived. The uprising was the opening tremor of violent political earthquakes that would rock Honduras intermittently for the next three and a half years.⁵⁷

The increasingly divisive political environment proved deadly for at least one prominent Southerner and Bográn supporter. Cecil's heavy-handed communication reforms and role in government no doubt earned him many enemies, as did his overindulgence of alcohol. After a

⁵⁶ Stokes, *Honduras: An Area Study in Government*, 44-45. Yet Stokes makes a significant error in stating Bográn died on May 28, 1890. Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 30; Yeager, "Honduran Transportation and Communication Development," 54-55.

⁵⁷ Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 30; Rómulo E. Durón, ed., *Policarpo Bonilla: Colección de Escritos* (Tegucigalpa: Tipografía Nacional, 1899), 181, 188; Thacher, "Mining in Honduras," 408.

particularly raucous Christmas bender in 1891, Cecil was killed in a gun fight at Tegucigalpa's International Hotel.⁵⁸

Occurring simultaneously and furthering political instability, the Latin American investment bubble burst. What London papers dubbed the "Baring smash" originated in the collapse of Baring Brothers holdings in Argentina, which sent tectonic shifts as far away as Australia. With the "keystone of English commercial credit" gone, and the political stability of Honduras in grave doubt, Burke lamented that it had become "impossible to float any Honduras mining enterprise in London."⁵⁹

Honduran politics grew more fractured amid a bid to replace Bográn at the end of his second term. In preparation for the upcoming presidential election, two main parties formed in 1891. The Progressive Party nominated the government-supported candidate, Ponciano Leiva, while a rival Liberal Party advanced a prominent intellectual, lawyer, and businessman, Dr. Policarpo Bonilla. The latter took an active part in the defeat of Sánchez, and Bográn, despite a growing rivalry with Bonilla, made the doctor Tegucigalpa's new *comandante de armas*. Bonilla was also Burke's lawyer, notary public, and active agent for Burke's various legal needs in Tegucigalpa, which prompted Burke to claim him as a "personal friend" (See Appendix F). Nonetheless, Leiva won the presidency, declared the opposing Liberal party illegal, and sent most of its prominent members into exile. Chaos ensued, and amid several anti-government uprisings within Honduras, and the coalescing strength of liberals aligned with Bonilla across the border in Nicaragua, General Domingo Vásquez assumed the presidency on September 14, 1893.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Yeager, "Honduran Transportation and Communication Development," 22.

⁵⁹ As quoted in Austin, *Baring Brothers and the Birth of Modern Finance*, 192-193; *Jalan River Concession*, 30.

⁶⁰ Barahona, *Honduras en el siglo XX*, 30, 331; Stokes, *Honduras: An Area Study in Government*, 44-45; Burke to George Hoadley [sic], April 8, 1897, Fondo Policarpo Bonilla, Marzo-Mayo, 1897, Archivo Nacional de Honduras;

An armed struggle for control of the government between Vásquez and Bonilla soon followed. Lawlessness increased at the local level in the early 1890s, with rural bandits emboldened to disrupt trade and even mail service. With political polarization at high levels, especially in the capital, Burke took an active part in Vásquez's attempts to hold power. The decision rested on Vásquez's status as the government candidate who still held the loyalty of former key Bográn men. The most successful American capitalist in Honduras, Washington S. Valentine, also sided with Vásquez. Another factor likely influencing Burke's preference for Vásquez was that he, as the incumbent, was more apt to maintain the stipulations of Burke's contract. Most important in such times of unrest was a stipulation that exempted Burke's employees from military service, an obligation that had crippled previous mining enterprises. Reflecting several years later on his pivotal choice to back Vásquez, Burke made his decision after Bonilla countenanced a foreign invasion. "When [Bonilla] came in with Nicaragua against Honduras," Burke recalled, "I defended the country." While he acknowledged that Bonilla was "hurt for a while" over the major's support of Vásquez, the ever gregarious Burke quipped "it wasn't much of an offense to shoot at one's own lawyer."⁶¹

Among influential Bográn men in the Vásquez camp was Herbert Jeffries, who arrived on the border between El Salvador and Honduras in 1887. A man of martial proclivities, Jeffries soon received a commission from Bográn in the Honduran army. By 1893, Jeffries was known as General Heriberto and commanded a squad of Americans loyal to Vásquez. Thus, a few dozen Americans lent their military services to Vásquez as aspiring soldiers of fortune,

Burke to Policarpo Bonilla, July 6, 1891, Burke to Bonilla, November 29, 1891, Policarpo Bonilla Documentos, Carpeta 1896, Archivo Nacional de Honduras; Bonilla to Burke, April 23, 1892, in Burke Papers: LSU.

⁶¹ Yeager, "Honduran Transportation and Communication Development," 36; *Jalan River Concession*, 5; Finney, "Precious Metal Mining," 272-273; Burke to George Hoadley [sic], April 8, 1897, Fondo Policarpo Bonilla, Marzo-Mayo, 1897, Archivo Nacional de Honduras.

though whether they did so from a spirit of romantic adventure or for political and economic gain is hard to say. Yet one characteristic united most of them: they were Civil War veterans, often ex-Confederates. Civil War veterans in Central America clung to their former military ranks as a badge of honor in the region's *machismo* culture. Hondurans accepted this affectation and routinely referred to them by their ranks. In recounting those who were instrumental in defeating the Sánchez uprising, Bonilla referred to Burke as "*Mayor*."⁶²

In addition to Burke, two of the more prominent Americans in Vázquez's corner were brothers Frank M. and Jacob P. Imboden, the younger siblings of Confederate general John D. Imboden. Frank M. Imboden served the Confederacy as a mounted ranger until he was captured at the battle of Roanoke Island in early 1862. After the war, the Imboden family embodied the mobility of former Confederates who either journeyed to the North for economic opportunity or lived in Latin America. Frank and Jacob Imboden did both by moving to Central America after aiding their brother John's northern-based business. "*Capitán*" Frank M. Imboden and Jacob P. Imboden mirrored Burke in becoming capitalists with diversified holdings in Honduras. Frank was a founding member of the *Banco Nacional Hondureño* in 1888 and became the only foreigner on the *Junta Directiva* (Board of Directors). The Imbodens also partnered with Burke on several occasions by selling the major control of their Monserrat Mining Company and leasing from Burke's Olancho concessions rights to operate the Imboden Placer Company. The small world of the Honduran political economy also meant that Bonilla took the Imboden's support of Vázquez personally, since he, Bonilla, had been their lawyer and agent, as he had for

⁶² Langley and Schoonover, *The Banana Men*, 43; Stokes, *Honduras: An Area Study in Government*, 45; J. D. Imboden to Jefferson Davis, May 8, 1862, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records*, Series II, Vol. III (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), 869; Daniel E. Sutherland, *The Confederate Carpetbaggers* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 174-175.

Burke.⁶³

Burke, as one of Vásquez's "main advisors," was in league with Imboden and Jeffries as part of a group of Americans known to counsel Vásquez on military matters when Bonilla and his Nicaraguan allies won increasing victories in the fall of 1893. While sacking the crucial southern city of Choluteca on January 15, 1894, Bonilla's supporters also seized on Honduras' ties with New Orleans by forcibly taking over Crescent City steamers to carry out military campaigns against such key north coast port cities as Trujillo. Nor was the powerful Pacific Mail Steamship Company immune. When Bonilla's forces preceded their capture of Choluteca with advances on Ampala in December 1893, the company's steamer *Costa Rica* was caught in the crossfire. The affair was serious enough for Collis P. Huntington to complain to the Department of State that Hondurans loyal to Vásquez and Bonilla, who had proclaimed himself provisional president, were both commandeering Pacific Mail property and asserting that they harbored political opponents that they deemed criminals.⁶⁴

Whatever advice and aid Burke and other allies of Vásquez offered him failed to turn the tide. Bonilla's Nicaraguan supporters, who provided disciplined and well-supplied troops, proved decisive. His forces controlled all major departments and laid siege to the capital by the end of January. Bonilla's revolutionists and the Nicaraguan army's combined force of roughly three thousand soldiers steadily gained the heights surrounding Tegucigalpa, where they shelled the city. Burke, the Imboden brothers, and other Americans who had cast their lot with Vásquez

⁶³ Durón, *Policarpo Bonilla*, 188; Tegucigalpa *La Gaceta*, Dec. 24, 1888, and June 3, 1900; Finney "Precious Metal Mining," 114, 119, 125, 96. Frank M. Imboden's nephew, Frank H. Imboden, was also a former Confederate who lived in Central America after the Civil War. See "Famous Pennsylvania Germans: General John D. Imboden," *The Pennsylvania-German* 5 (January 1904), 3-5.

⁶⁴ "Burke May Be Surrendered," *New York Times*, Mar. 22, 1894; Langley and Thomas Schoonover, *The Banana Men*, 43; Thomas M. Leonard, *The History of Honduras* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood, 2011), 51; Yeager, "Honduran Transportation and Communication Development," 59-61; C. P. Huntington to W. Q. Gresham, December 13, 1893, United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, with the Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress, December 3, 1894*, 296.

found plenty of time to worry about their fate as Bonilla's noose tightened. U.S. Department of State officials in Central America considered the situation "desperate" and "very serious" for the number of Americans who, they worried, "would undoubtedly be shot" if they became prisoners of war.⁶⁵

The tense crisis over the fate of Americans in supporting the legitimate government of Honduras against Bonilla revealed how southerners in Latin America and both U.S. and Honduran leaders sought to shape political realities on the ground. Frank M. Imboden, invoking what he regarded as a gentlemanly code of ethics, told U.S. consular agents that Americans serving with Vásquez were "men of character and good position, commercially and socially," not mercenary rogues or adventures. The former Confederate also employed an ironic use of Civil War-era diplomacy by contending that men such as himself and Burke had as much right to support the constitutional government of Honduras and the "amenities of civilized warfare" as any "Englishman or German who [had] joined the American Army in 1861." The political history and culture of Latin America gave Bonilla a different perspective. The provisional president considered men who had fought with Vásquez as so-called "sharpshooters and volunteers" to have been nothing more than guerrillas. Since Burke and most other foreigners in Vásquez's forces, with the notable exception of Herbert Jeffries, fit that category, Bonilla initially informed U.S. officials that they would be tried as guerrillas by a Honduran military tribunal.⁶⁶

Bonilla's hardline policies were further revealed when his forces attempted to impress American citizens working in Honduras into armed service. With "cannonading and musketry

⁶⁵ U.S. Consul James J. Peterson to U.S. Minister Pierce M. B. Young, February 19, 1894, *Ibid*, 306; Chargé d' Affaires D. Lynch Pringle to Secretary of State Walter Q. Gresham, February 9, 1894, *Ibid*, 298.

⁶⁶ F. M. Imboden to D. Lynch Pringle, February 8, 1894, *Ibid*, 299; James J. Peterson to D. Lynch Pringle, March 22, 1894, *Ibid*, 304.

heard at all hours of the day and night,” Vásquez’s roughly fifteen hundred man force in Tegucigalpa was consistently depleted by food shortages as the siege extended well into February. On the thirty-first day of the siege, Vásquez and his core group of supporters thought to capitulate. However, with Burke and other foreigners joining them, they decided on a bold plan of escape rather than running up the white flag of surrender. According to his own account, Burke “fought and fell with Vásquez” and was among three hundred of the government’s last remaining armed forces to “cut” their way out of Tegucigalpa in a night assault through the heavy resistance of Bonilla’s army to reach El Salvador. On February 23, 1894, the day after Vásquez fled, Bonilla rode triumphantly through the capital’s Plaza de Francisco Morazán. Meanwhile, Burke, Bonilla’s former employer, business partner, and friend, was facing poverty, expulsion, imprisonment, or death. Nearly three decades after Kirby Smith’s surrender, Burke was on another losing side in a civil war.⁶⁷

Burke’s political and economic activities in Central America had been a frequent source of gossip in the American press. His attempts to aid Vásquez and subsequent retreat to El Salvador were widely covered episodes. After Burke had been in exile for a month, the *New York Times* expressed “every reason to believe” that the major’s Honduran scheme was over. President Ezeta of El Salvador, the *Times* predicted, would surrender Burke to the United States. However, knowledge of Burke’s wiles made Louisiana authorities less certain.⁶⁸

The ultimate ability of Burke and other foreigners who had supported Vásquez to reconcile with Bonilla and return to Honduras rested on American foreign policy, personal

⁶⁷ Statement of Henry J. Stibbs, February 27, 1894, *Ibid*, 310-311; Peterson to Young, February 19, 1894, *Ibid*, 306; Burke to George Hoadley [sic], April 8, 1897, in Fondo Policarpo Bonilla, Marzo-Mayo, 1897, Archivo Nacional de Honduras; Pringle to Gresham, March 1, 1894, in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, with the Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress, December 3, 1894*, 299-300.

⁶⁸ “Burke May Be Surrendered,” *New York Times*, Mar. 22, 1894.

networks, and overall constraints and opportunities of the Honduran political economy that Bonilla inherited as president. The Department of State acted immediately to protect Burke and other American citizens “against any exceptional or unduly harsh treatment.” In a show of strength that foreshadowed twentieth-century gunboat diplomacy, the Department of State arranged for representatives of Vásquez, Bonilla, and Zelaya to settle on terms of peace aboard the U. S. S. *Ranger* in Amapala’s harbor. On March 3, 1894, Vásquez relinquished his claim to power and Bonilla guaranteed the safety of Vásquez’s commissioned soldiers and property but insisted on separate treatment for foreigners.⁶⁹

Bonilla was astute enough to back away from his initial threats to execute as guerrillas foreigners who had supported Vásquez. Instead, he proposed using a military tribunal to expel all foreigners loyal to the previous president. Foreigners such as Burke could avoid this fate only if they submitted to an “amicable arrangement” to “settle up business” in Honduras before leaving the country. Bonilla also took great pains to emphasize that the dormant property of foreign capitalists had not been plundered. However, hardliners in his camp pressured him to maintain a tough stance against foreign opponents, perhaps seeking to benefit financially if the government controlled or auctioned the property of outside capitalists. Meanwhile, the U.S. consul in Tegucigalpa, James J. Peterson, and the foreign ministers of Britain, Spain, Italy, and Germany used soft power to induce more liberal policies for the reconciliation of their citizens and the Honduran government. U.S. Chargé d’ Affaires D. Lynch Pringle told officials in Washington that to return the *Ranger* off the Honduran coast would have a substantial “moral

⁶⁹ Acting Secretary of State Edwin F. Uhl to U.S. Minister to Central America P. M. B. Young, May 16, 1894, in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, with the Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress, December 3, 1894*, 301; Pringle to Gresham, March 13, 1894, in *Ibid*, 300-301.

effect” on Bonilla by demonstrating that the United States was serious about promoting the “welfare of American citizens in Honduras.”⁷⁰

With connections throughout Central America, the United States, and Europe, Burke was no doubt aware that diplomatic pressure and economic realities were softening Bonilla’s position. The major also knew that Washington S. Valentine, the leading American titan of industry in the country, as owner of the most successful Honduran mining operation, had already “flopped” to Bonilla. As Bonilla was cementing his power and deciding his policies for foreign capitalists, Burke returned to Tegucigalpa sometime in mid-April 1894. Having fought in the Civil War, multiple street battles, duels, and the recent Battle of Tegucigalpa, Burke did not lack boldness. According to his own account, he went to Bonilla “with my life in my hands” and offered his old friend a simple choice. “Shoot me or order me out of the country, and that will square my accounts, otherwise I must go to work,” Burke told Bonilla. Pleading further, he declared, “I owe \$75,000 to your people [so] I had to come back and respond for my obligations.” In the interconnected networks of foreign capitalists in Central America, Burke was also a partner in a New York-based corporation that had encouraged him to meet with Bonilla in order to retain their contracted concessions for a railroad centered at Puerto Cortés. Nonetheless, Bonilla recognized Burke’s political prowess when he allowed the major to return on one condition: Burke must pledge to refrain from actively influencing Honduran political affairs.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Peterson to Pringle, March 22, 1894, *Ibid*, 304; Pringle to Gresham, April 24, 1894, *Ibid*, 302; Pringle to Gresham, March 30, 1894, *Ibid*, 304.

⁷¹ Burke to George Hoadley [sic], April 8, 1897, Fondo Policarpo Bonilla, Marzo-Mayo, 1897, Archivo Nacional de Honduras; Bonilla to Barnhart, April 19, 1894, Bonilla to Burke, July 9, 1894, Jacob R. Shipherd to Burke, undated, Policarpo Bonilla Documentos, Carpeta 1894, Archivo Nacional de Honduras; Bonilla to Barnhart, April 19, 1894, Burke Papers: LSU; *Guayape River Concessions*, 28; Burke to Bonilla, April 15, 1897, Fondo Policarpo Bonilla, Marzo-Mayo, 1897, Archivo Nacional de Honduras.

Another way Burke was able to remain in Latin America was by adroitly turning to old allies: John A. Morris and the Louisiana State Lottery Company. The defeat of the Ring in 1888 was the watershed moment for the lottery's fate. Coupled with ever increasing pressure from a wide swath of the Louisiana public and politicians, anti-lottery initiatives were central to growing national reform movements in the Gilded Age. Not only had pro-lottery Democrats lost in Louisiana, but the return of Republican control of the White House and Congress following the 1888 election was decisive. Congress and President Benjamin Harrison ended the lax lottery policies of the Cleveland administration in 1890 and gave the post office sweeping powers to enforce a ban on any lottery's ability to use the postal service. Two years later, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the law in a suit filed by Morris and the Louisiana State Lottery Company. At the end of 1893, the Louisiana legislature voted overwhelmingly not to renew the lottery's expiring charter.⁷²

Yet Morris and his cronies did not concede defeat. Lottery executives turned to a scheme that exploited reciprocal transnational links between the American South and the wider world. Amid the increasing threat of American annexation, Hawaii's Queen Liliuokalani entertained preliminary talks with the exiled Louisiana gambling enterprise. In return for an annual payment of five-hundred-thousand dollars, she promised to support a telegraph cable connecting Honolulu to California.⁷³ Ultimately, lottery agents bargained for a much more lucrative deal with Honduras: a twenty-five year charter to operate in that country under the newly named *La Compañía Nacional de Lotería de Honduras* (The Honduras National Lottery Company) in

⁷² P. C. Kemeny, *The New England Watch and Ward Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 134; Wayne E. Fuller, *Morality and the Mail in Nineteenth-Century America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 208-209; Unterman, *Uncle Sam's Policemen*, 111.

⁷³ William Adam Russ, Jr., *The Hawaiian Revolution* (Selinsgrove, Pa.: Susquehanna University Press, 1992), 63.

exchange for annual payments of twenty thousand dollars and twenty percent of the profits.⁷⁴ Compared to Hawaii, Central America also benefited from more established and well-connected steamship and telegraph services to the United States. The Honduran congress had approved the lottery in August of 1893, when Vasquez still held power and was searching for ways to hold back Bonilla's growing insurgence. Finding himself in power, Bonilla made a choice similar to that of Burke and machine Democrats in Louisiana in the 1870s. Rather than end a source of power and funds created by a political enemy, Bonilla appropriated the lottery for his own power network within months of taking the reins of government. Burke and Bonilla came to an arrangement during the same time that the new president was debating the lottery question. These facts indicate that Burke's return and Bonilla's continuation of the Honduras National Lottery were not coincidences. It would be highly unlikely if Burke had not acted as a crucial middleman and agent yet again for John A. Morris and his lottery's operations in Honduras, which continued to provide Bonilla's administration with a significant source of revenue.⁷⁵

The politics of late nineteenth-century Central America also points to how Burke and Bonilla reached an agreement. Politics in the era were immensely fluid, often determined by one's social connections and economic calculations. Burke's choice to support Vásquez reflected how both of the aforementioned concerns often favored the incumbent. In an ever-shifting political environment, recently victorious partisans were often willing to forgive those who backed their former opponents, particularly if they were wealthy, connected, invested in the national economy, and from America or Europe. Ever the gambler, Burke possessed a four of a kind. Coupled with his connections to Morris and the lottery, this proved enough of a winning hand for Bonilla to allow Burke's return. One Honduran involved in the political realignments

⁷⁴ Unterman, *Uncle Sam's Policemen*, 111.

⁷⁵ August 1, 1894, Carpeta No. 27, Copiadores de 1880-1900, Archivo Nacional de Honduras.

after Bonilla established his authority summed up the situation: “The parties are personal, they are *isms*, so that it is not unusual to see someone, now in one group, now in another, without violence, without the need for explanations . . . it’s a question of economics, or better yet, of the stomach.” In other words, Honduran politics were factional, not ideological.⁷⁶

This situation was entrenched further by the replacement of Conservative oligarchies, which dominated from the colonial era through the mid-nineteenth century, with Liberal oligarchies. Marco Aurelio Soto, the first liberal president of Honduras, and his successor Luis Bográn were Honduran liberals oriented towards Guatemala. Indeed, both were considered protégés of Justo Rufino Barrios, whom Burke had dined with during the Barrios’ visit to New Orleans in 1882. Moreover, Bográn was from the western department of Santa Barbara, and his hacienda, *Mongoy*, was on the Guatemalan border. Bonilla, meanwhile, seized upon Nicaragua’s ambitions to increase its stature within Central America and aligned with that country’s newly inaugurated José Santos Zelaya.⁷⁷ Firm political and ideological dividing lines between Honduran leaders were difficult to distinguish amongst the country’s various liberal factions. In Honduras, which was the poorest region of Central American well into the late-nineteenth century, the relative historical absence of a landed planter aristocracy blurred distinctions beyond *personalismo* among politicians more than any other republic in the region. The fratricide amongst liberals created an oligarchy that became as “inbred and aristocratic as their Conservative predecessors.”⁷⁸ This was at times more than metaphorical in Honduras, because Vásquez was Bonilla’s uncle.

⁷⁶Robert H. Holden, *Armies without Nations: Public Violence and State Formation in Central America, 1821-1960* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2004), 35-36.

⁷⁷Yeager, “Honduran Transportation and Communication Development,” 50; Woodward, Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided*, 166, 321.

⁷⁸Ibid, 166-168.

In addition, liberalism in Central America, or in Mexico during the Porfiriato for that matter, was defined and practiced as an overwhelmingly economic endeavor. Electioneering and fraud were as common in Honduras as they were in Louisiana. Supporters of the government were known to employ conscription laws to suppress the returns. They would force opposition voters to labor on public works projects on election day until after the polls had closed. “Only in Costa Rica,” one Central American historian asserts, “did elections mean anything.” Throughout the rest of the region, Bográn and Bonilla established “republican dictatorships” that operated through political machines.⁷⁹

In addition, Bonilla’s administration was typical of most Central American republics at the time in that it depended on foreign support. The new president also made an immediate priority of continuing Bográn’s efforts to modernize the Honduran economy and political institutions. Shortly after Bonilla’s ascension to the presidency, one American capitalist informed Burke, “What the government wants now is help, and such help as only men who are both wise and rich can give.”⁸⁰ Bonilla himself assured the managing director of the Central American Commercial Company in the summer of 1894 that foreign interests were “respected, even [the property] of Americans who took arms against the Liberal Party now in power.” Likely alluding to Burke, Valentine, and Imboden, Bonilla observed that his former opponents from America had “resumed their works and remain in the country unmolested.” With Honduran debt to Britain alone at roughly ten million pounds, national leaders could not afford to risk alienating foreign capital.⁸¹ How far Bonilla evolved from his initial threats of hostility

⁷⁹ Yeager, “Honduran Transportation and Communication Development,” 58; Tegucigalpa *Honduras Progress*, June 23, 1893; Woodward, Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided*, 166-167.

⁸⁰ Stokes, *Honduras: An Area Study in Government*, 45; Jacob R. Shipherd to Burke, undated, Policarpo Bonilla Documentos, Carpeta 1894, Archivo Nacional de Honduras.

⁸¹ Bonilla to W. J. Rhyder, August 7, 1894, *Ibid*.

toward foreigners was evident in the Honduran Constitution of 1894, Bonilla's ultimate act of cementing his legitimacy. Signed in October of that year, it ensured that the country would be a "sacred asylum for all persons who take refuge" within its borders, even for fugitives from the law.⁸²

Acting U.S. Secretary of State Edwin F. Uhl astutely reflected in May of 1894 on the reasons for Bonilla's ultimate welcoming of foreign capitalists who had supported his opponent. "The vicissitudes of government in [Central America], and the benefits accruing to the State through the invited influx of foreign capital and enterprise," Uhl wrote from Washington, "counsel the avoidance of repellant treatment whereby such aids to national development may be discouraged for the future."⁸³ Thus, American economic, diplomatic, and military pressure significantly influenced Central American politics well before the administration of William Howard Taft promoted "dollar diplomacy."

In May 1894, American newspaper reports indicated that Burke, newly reconciled with the Honduran government, was actively involved in establishing the lottery's operations between Honduras and the Gulf South. The *New York Times* reported that the major had arrived in Tampa, Florida, aboard the Honduras National Lottery Company's main steamer, the *Clear Water*, from Puerto Cortés with "two prominent New Orleans men."⁸⁴ Indeed, despite the new charter and new location, the owners and leadership remained the same. Paul Conrad, who replaced Charles T. Howard and Dupree after their deaths, remained the company's president. The lottery held its monthly drawings at its chartered headquarters in Puerto Cortés but sold tickets throughout the Gulf South. Since Florida's lottery ban did not include foreign enterprises,

⁸² Stokes, *Honduras: An Area Study in Government*, 45; As quoted in Unterman, *Uncle Sam's Policemen*, 106. For an in-depth analysis of the Constitution of 1894, see Stokes, *Honduras: An Area Study in Government*, 81-83.

⁸³ Unterman, *Uncle Sam's Policemen*, 107.

⁸⁴ "Defaulter Burke in Florida," *New York Times*, May 14, 1894.

Morris and his associates established a de facto headquarters in Tampa, where they received payments through express services, not the U.S. post office. Taking advantage of the fluidity of the circum-Caribbean, the lottery also funneled business and communications through New Orleans and Mobile. The lottery's presence in Puerto Cortés was particularly imposing. Richard Harding Davis, who went to Honduras to investigate the "Golden Octopus" for *Harper's Weekly*, regarded it as "large mansion with broad verandas" and a "magnificent exterior" set in a lush tropical garden that contained poles flying the Honduran and American flags.⁸⁵

As it had in Louisiana, the lottery continued its strategy of ubiquitous advertisements after its relocation to Central America. Programs in several of the most popular theatres in the United States contained advertisements for the Honduras lottery. Lottery agents told prospective Honduran customers in newspaper advertisements that the company was "reputed for twenty-five years of integrity in its drawing and prompt payment of prizes" during its "prosperous operations in the state of Louisiana" as the previously known *La Compañía de Lotería del Estado de la Luisiana*. According to advertisements, the transfer to Honduras was a welcomed opportunity, not a forced relocation, which would add an "international character . . . instead of being previously confined to America." While tickets prices were in U.S. dollars, meaning Latino customers suffered from an unfavorable exchange rate, winnings were paid in gold or U.S. dollars. Presidents from the leading banks in New Orleans also vouched for lottery payments. Lottery leaders undoubtedly thought Jubal Early was a well-known figure in Central America, because advertisements frequently included his testimonial that the company was run with "honesty and fidelity." The former Confederate general also expressed regret that he could not move with the lottery to Honduras since it "would not be prudent" to move to a "tropical

⁸⁵ Tegucigalpa *La Regeneración*, Jan. 10, 1895; as quoted in Richard Harding Davis, *Three Gringos in Venezuela and Central America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1896), 39-40; Fuller, *Morality and the Mail*, 213.

region” given his “advanced age.” However, there was a deep pool of available Confederate veterans willing to lend their name for an easy paycheck. General William Lewis Cabell, who rose to prominence as an Arkansas lawyer and mayor of Dallas after the war, and Colonel C. J. Villere, a Louisiana native who was Pierre G. T. Beauregard’s brother-in-law, presided over the drawings in Puerto Cortés.⁸⁶

Floridians expressed enough concern over the notorious lottery’s pernicious influence for Democrat Wilkinson Call, a U.S. senator from the Sunshine State, to propose the creation of a special committee to investigate the extent of the lottery’s operations in Florida and whether it was attempting to “control the elections . . . legislature . . . members of Congress and the executive officers of the State of Florida.” According to Call’s fellow senators, the proposed special committee marked the first time in U.S. history that Congress debated investigating the possible corruption of a state legislature or governor.⁸⁷ Louisianans also attempted to pressure the U. S. government against lottery operations in Central America. Veteran Reform Democrats Francis T. Nicholls and Joseph Shakespeare led a petition signed by people who had “felt the heavy hand of the corrupt and tyrannical corporation.” Evangelical reformers joined the chorus of lottery critics. One religious newspaper called on national officials to use the country’s claimed right as police power of the Americas to legislate morality abroad. They considered it a “national duty to prevent . . . citizens from being plundered beyond . . . [U.S.] borders” and insisted that the American government stop Honduras from “harboring criminals [who] openly

⁸⁶ Davis, *Three Gringos in Venezuela and Central America*, 29-30; Berthold C. Alwes, “The History of the Louisiana State Lottery Company.” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 27 (October 1944): 1099; Tegucigalpa *La Regeneración*, Jan. 10, 1895; Wilmer L. Jones, *Generals in Blue and Gray: Davis’s Generals*, vol. 2 (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2004), 45.

⁸⁷ *Congressional Record Containing the Proceedings and Debates of the Fifty-Third Congress, Third Session*, 27 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895), 1899, 1933. The Senate ultimately voted down the resolution, claiming it was unconstitutional and too trivial a matter, see *Debates of the Fifty-Third Congress, Third Session* 27:2154-2155; “Defaulter Burke in Florida,” *New York Times*, May 14, 1894.

engage[d] in the violation of . . . [U.S.] laws.” Such petitions met with some success in the attempt to employ American diplomacy against the lottery. Longtime Assistant Secretary of State Alvey A. Adee directed Chargé d’ Affaires Pringle to alert Honduras that the United States was displeased with its decision to harbor the old Louisiana State Lottery Company. Yet the Honduran government did not amend its relationship with the lottery.⁸⁸

Burke’s reconciliation with Bonilla was necessary in the summer of 1895, when John A. Morris died unexpectedly. Morris’s death in May 1895 of a stroke at the age of sixty-five at his Texas ranch put Burke in a precarious position.⁸⁹ For him to gain full title to concessions that were legally held by Morris, he needed special governmental dispensations. In the months following Morris’s death, Burke petitioned the Honduran government for legal recognition of his power of attorney for Morris and thus of his rightful claim to the Olancho concessions. To help his case, Burke ensured that both the foreign relations secretary and attorney general of Honduras approved the paperwork. Even so, to get the Honduran government to reissue a concession was not an easy task. National leaders had previously revoked mining concessions when companies failed to carry out their obligations. To combat this, it was not uncommon for foreign capitalists to pay cash for legislators to approve contracts through a special session of Congress. Burke was much relieved then when, three months after Morris’s death, President Bonilla recognized him as the ultimate director of the Jalan and Guayape concessions.⁹⁰ A few

⁸⁸ Unterman, *Uncle Sam’s Policemen*, 111-112; “Lottery in Honduras,” United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, with the Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress, December 3, 1894*, 315-316.

⁸⁹ “Morris Stricken with Paralysis: The Well-Known Horseman & Louisiana Lottery Manager,” *New York Times*, May 26, 1895; “Death of John A. Morris: The Founder & Chief Owner of the Louisiana Lottery,” *Ibid*, May 27, 1895.

⁹⁰ Companies often became the sole possession of an individual on the occasion that a co-founder died, but Burke’s situation was different, see Finney, “Precious Metal Mining,” 42; *Jalan River Concession*, 13-14; Finney, “Precious Metal Mining,” 41; Jacob R. Shipherd to Burke, undated, Policarpo Bonilla Documentos, Carpeta 1894, Archivo Nacional de Honduras.

years later, Burke made Bonilla a trustee in the execution of donations made in memory of his “deceased friend, Mr. Morris, and in behalf of the Youth of Honduras.” Burke stipulated that industrial schools in Olancho, Yuscuran, and Tegucigalpa would each receive five thousand dollars in gold and fifty thousand dollars in capital shares in his various mining holdings. Burke hoped his generosity would allow Honduras to “participate directly as well as indirectly” in the results of his “aspirations.”⁹¹

Despite a successful return to Honduras, Burke never regained the level of success and support of international capital he had achieved in his first six years in the country, but his experience was the rule, not the exception. The rise and fall of speculative mining investments made even Fritzgartner grow more sober by the fall of 1896. “More is necessary to command success in mining,” experience had taught him, “besides a sample of rock, a rich assay, a glowing prospectus and a pocketful of shares.” Promoters with “roseate schemes,” “multitude[s] of ignorant Directors who never saw a mine or mill,” and managers who were either inexperienced or “content with any situation, so long as salary was forthcoming” were the primary culprits of unprofitable enterprises. Successful prospecting often made managers impetuously purchase, transport, and install equipment before ensuring it was appropriate for the precise topography and ore at hand.⁹² Another common pitfall was the false assurance of profit caused by company script and paper stock without hard cash for operating expenses. According to Fritzgartner, the “promoting and speculative stages” that occurred in the mining boom of the previous fifteen years had “left their scars in foreign capitalistic circles, and strewn the Republic

⁹¹ Burke to Bonilla, January 1, 1897, Fondo Privado de Policarpo Bonilla, Enero-Febrero, 1897, Archivo Nacional de Honduras; Burke to Bonilla, January 1, 1897, in Burke Papers, Berkeley.

⁹² Fritzgartner to Alfonso L. Pinart, September 7, 1896, in *Reports of the Scientific Commission*, 20.

with the wrecks of ill formed and badly managed companies.”⁹³

The speculative bubble that fed on Bográn’s policies caused a significant shift in Policarpo Bonilla’s industrial policies. Bonilla lamented that concessions had previously been “promiscuously” given to foreigners without “sufficient guarantee of good faith” and who subsequently “did not make proper use of them.” While continuing to attract foreign capital and extend expansive legal protections and privileges to foreign investors, the Bonilla administration pledged to cease “indiscriminate grants,” require vetted guarantees on the part of foreign industrialists, and stridently enforce contractual obligations. Such a policy was meant to stabilize the Honduran economy, raise international confidence in Honduran claims, and ensure that faulty mineral zones would “cease to be footballs of speculation and deception in foreign markets.”⁹⁴

The occasion for Fritzgartner’s remarks was a formal French tour and inspection of Central American mines. In October of 1896, the French ministers of commerce and foreign affairs subsidized a scientific commission to explore the Central American mineral districts in Honduras and Nicaragua. The French had previously organized a syndicate to work Honduran mines, particularly on the Pacific coast.⁹⁵ Manuel Lemus and Henry G. Bourgeois spent thirty-six days in Burke’s concessions to view the works and collect over one hundred samples of ore from his mines, outcroppings, and placers. Burke no doubt professed a familiarity with French culture to his guests, based on his southern Louisiana political career. President Bonilla placed enough importance on the French mission to grant the commissioners free expedited mail and

⁹³ Fritzgartner to Alfonso L. Pinart, September 7, 1896, *Ibid*, 21; Woodward, Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided*, 160.

⁹⁴ Bonilla to W. J. Rhyder, August 7, 1894, Policarpo Bonilla Documentos, Carpeta 1894, Archivo Nacional de Honduras; Fritzgartner to Alfonso L. Pinart, September 7, 1896, in *Reports of the Scientific Commission*, 22.

⁹⁵ James J. Peterson, “Mining Companies in Honduras,” U.S. Consulate, Tegucigalpa, May 26, 1891, *Reports from the Consuls of the United States*, vol. 38 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1892), 31-32.

telegraph services. French mineralogists echoed the orthodox opinion of Hondurans and Burke's previous surveyors, going so far as to exclaim that the Guayape and Jalan had the potential to overcome the silver veins near Tegucigalpa as the richest region in the country and provide enough profits to "liquidate the public debt of France." However, the commission's mission to "secure the attention of financial people . . . , scientists, and . . . the Government of Honduras" was self-serving. Its president, Alfred L. Pinart, was a shareholder in Honduran mines. The commission was interested in Burke's properties because the major was considering selling portions of them to a French syndicate. The prospect was serious enough that Burke considered a trip to France, even asking his nephews in Dallas, Texas, to update his will in the event of an accident on the voyage.⁹⁶

The French commission took special care to quell "the erroneous idea of the disastrous effects of revolutions in Honduras and of the insecurity of the mining enterprises." Lemus and Bourgeois argued not only that the number of uprisings was grossly exaggerated and that foreign enterprises had experienced only negligible effects, but also that foreign works had "the sympathies of revolutionists and Government troops." The French geologists offered a long list of reasons that the mineral wealth of Honduras had not been realized. Political instability played a major role, they said, which explained, in turn, Burke's want of "competent and honest men" to manage the mines. French engineers believed that Burke's relatively "small or ill success" stemmed from neglect and ignorance mixed with "the lack of aptitude . . . honesty and good faith." Inefficient and immoral policies the Spanish practiced on the indigenous population was also a common refrain. The so-called "Black Legend" of Spanish colonialism persisted into the nineteenth century, as the French cited "vicious proceedings" and "cruelties committed on the

⁹⁶ *Reports of the Scientific Commission*, 4, 16, 5, 3, 7; Burke to William E. Hawkins, October 1, 1896, Burke Papers: Tulane.

natives” that “rendered labor odious” and left Honduran precious metals dormant. The commission’s report cited another longstanding view of the sociological effects of tropical weather. The land and climate were so fruitful that Hondurans had a natural “indolence.” More optimistically, the commission predicted that appropriate supervision and instruction from American or European managers would correct the issue because local inhabitants sought mining work and wished to “help the laborious and enterprising foreigner.”⁹⁷

French boosters also optimistically echoed Fritzgartner’s views and pointed to the dawning of a “new era” of progress in which Burke could be “proud of having been one of the pioneers in the accomplishment.”⁹⁸ French newspapers covered Alfred Pinart’s presentation of its findings to the French Geographical Society in Paris, which also allowed society members to examine gold samples from Burke’s holdings among those collected throughout Honduras and Nicaragua. Lemus and Bourgeois compiled their reports into a brief pamphlet, which included Burke among a list of eight individuals from the government and private sector who were the country’s leading authorities on mines. As Burke was coming to realize, paper promises and lofty rhetoric did not translate to profits. The “new era” of progress soon to come would be fueled by a yellow Honduran product other than gold: bananas.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *Reports of the Scientific Commission*, 14-15, 8.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 8; Fritzgartner to Alfonso L. Pinart, September 7, 1896, *Ibid*, 23.

⁹⁹ *Reports of the Scientific Commission*, 16; Henry G. Bourgeois and Manuel Lemus, *Breve noticia sobre Honduras: Datos Geográficos, Estadísticos e Informaciones Prácticas* (Tegucigalpa: Tipografía Nacional, 1897), 43.

Epilogue

Unsurprisingly, the stipulation Bonilla's government imposed on Burke that he no longer interfere in the country's political affairs did not last long. In April, 1897, three years after Bonilla had taken power from Vásquez, Enrique Soto threatened to overthrow Bonilla. The doctor found himself in a precarious position when Soto's revolutionaries simultaneously attacked La Esperanza in the southwest and Puerto Cortés in the northwest. With his presidency in the balance, Bonilla abandoned concerns about the origin of his allies. Burke's unwavering support for Bonilla in the midst of defections to Enrique Soto did much to cement their personal and political reconciliation following the dramatic schism during the civil war earlier in the decade. During the attempted Soto coup, Burke considered Bonilla a "good friend" and surmised, "[Bonilla] knows I am square and likes me better than the sneaks and turncoats."¹

With General Terencio Sierra leading the government's military effort to turn back the invaders, Burke offered his support. Burke argued that his economic interests and personal life were inextricably bound to Honduras. As such, he claimed that it was "difficult to view matters," such as "the invasion of the state by armed bodies," with "indifference that affect the interests of the country so gravely." The major expressed a sense of duty to defend the constitutional government, while not in 1861, as he had against the Sanchez revolt in 1890 and against Bonilla's Nicaraguan-supported revolutionists in 1894. Ever the pragmatist, Burke adroitly navigated the shoals of Honduran politics. In offering whatever aid Bonilla saw fit, Burke told the president that he had a "great personal sympathy" for him and that Bonilla had

¹ William S. Stokes, *Honduras: An Area Study in Government* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1950), 46; Burke to George Hoadley [sic], April 8, 1897, Fondo Policarpo Bonilla, Marzo-Mayo, 1897, Archivo Nacional de Honduras, Antigua Casa Presidencial de Honduras, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

served Honduras with “fidelity” as a guardian of “law, order, and the state.”² The precise nature of Burke’s role in suppressing the Soto coup is unknown, but Bonilla successfully retained power. Burke and Bonilla’s friendship also grew. Bonilla gave Burke a copy of his photograph in 1899, and the major was a guest at the wedding of Bonilla’s daughter in 1900.³

The dramatic environmental setbacks, risks of political instability, and a decline of foreign investment in Central American mining made Burke retreat from his previous overly ambitious efforts to exploit his holdings. The major increasingly rented out portions of his mineral zones, including to the Imboden Placer Company, as a means of mitigating his risk and capital outlay. “By leasing the placers on a royalty,” Burke explained to Bonilla, “my titles remain safe. If the companies fail, I recover my property.”⁴ While maintaining his mining interests in this way, Burke diversified and also invested in infrastructure projects, such as Honduran railroads and real estate, including at least two homes on Boulevard Francisco Morazán, Tegucigalpa’s central thoroughfare. He was also one of many Americans and Europeans in Latin America who had investments in hotels, even serving at one time as manager of the Hotel Palma in Puerto Cortés. Moreover, Burke continued his valuable role in service to the Honduran economy by recruiting and advising prospective American investors. Honduran presidents used Burke as a middleman and at time explicitly directed him to facilitate foreign investment. Burke also continued his position as a central player in the tight-knit American colony of investors, at one point suggesting the establishment of a society for American

² Stokes, *Honduras: An Area Study in Government*, 46; Burke to Policarpo Bonilla, April 15, 1897, Fondo Policarpo Bonilla, Marzo-Mayo, 1897, Archivo Nacional de Honduras.

³ Picture of Bonilla to Burke, April 11, 1899 and wedding invitation to Burke from Raquel L. de Gutiérrez, September 22, 1900, E.A. Burke Papers, Mss. 547, 620, 641, 893, 1226, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, hereafter cited as, “Burke Papers: LSU.”

⁴ As quoted in Kenneth V. Finney, “Precious Metal Mining and the Modernization of Honduras: In Quest of El Dorado, 1880-1900,” (Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1973), 96; James F. Vivian, “Major E. A. Burke: The Honduras Exile, 1889-1928,” *Louisiana History* 15 (Spring 1974): 191.

capitalists. When conflicts arose, Burke often mediated disputes between American investors and the Honduran government. At one point writing to Bonilla that “a satisfactory settlement can be arrived at between the government and [American] bondholders by a little diplomacy.” Similarly, Honduran leaders often sought Burke’s knowledge of the American press when concerned with unfavorable Central American coverage.⁵

As he had in the Vásquez administration, Burke also played a host of formal and informal political roles in several Honduran administrations. Burke’s role in Honduran affairs was strengthened when he gained sufficient command of the native language to begin corresponding in Spanish by 1899. In 1903, for example, he played an active role in overseeing and advising President Terencio Sierra in constructing a forty-five kilometer public highway connecting Sabana Grande to Tegucigalpa. The major admitted that it would require hard work and skilled engineering to incorporate the necessary system of sewers and drains, but he was optimistic that for “Hondurans nothing [was] impossible” when “the people devote their intelligence and energies to the labors of public utility.”⁶ However, Burke’s influence also fomented resentment and animosity among people who sought inclusion in, or the overthrow of, a particular administration. In 1911, for instance prospective revolutionaries described Burke as a *canalla* (scoundrel) and an obstacle to their planned coup.⁷

⁵ “Council of Foreign Bondholders Annual Report,” January 2, 1904, Edward Austin Burke Papers: Tegucigalpa, New Orleans, etc., 1883-1936,” BANC MSS Z-C 200, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, hereafter cited as “Burke Papers, Berkeley;” Katherine Unterman, *Uncle Sam’s Policemen: The Pursuit of Fugitives Across Borders* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 108; Real Estate Contract between Burke and Benito Fernandez, February 1, 1903, Burke Papers: Berkeley; Tegucigalpa *Los Sucesos*, May 17, 1922; Bonilla to Burke, undated 1898, Burke Papers: LSU; Burke to F. M. Imboden, May 4, 1899, Fondo Policarpo Bonilla, Año 1899, Caja 1, Archivo Nacional de Honduras; Tegucigalpa *El Diario Periodico Industrial y Noticoso*, Feb. 28, 1899; Burke to Bonilla, April 13, 1897, Fondo Policarpo Bonilla, Marzo-Mayo, 1897, Archivo Nacional de Honduras; President Manuel Bonilla to Burke, February 18, 1904, Burke Papers: Berkeley.

⁶ Burke to Terencio Sierra, January 13, 1903, Sierra to Burke, January 17, 1903, Burke Papers: Berkeley; Sierra to Burke, January 15, 1903, Burke Papers: LSU. The first known correspondence of Burke in Spanish is a letter to Porfirio Díaz in 1899. See Burke to Díaz, January 17, 1899, Burke Papers: Berkeley.

⁷ L. E. Cuevas to General Don Manuel Bonilla, July 29, 1911, Fondo Policarpo Bonilla, Caja Año 1911, Archivo Nacional de Honduras.

Burke's advisory and administrative role within Honduran politics mirrored his determination to, if not directly influence American affairs, keep abreast of developments. This included utilizing former political ties, as when he tried to enlist the aid of former Democratic governor of Ohio, George Hoadly, in settling a dispute over a mining title with another American capitalist.⁸ The major's decade of experience in regional and national U.S. affairs also made him an important source for Honduran leaders seeking to understand events in *El Norte*. For instance, Bonilla and Burke followed the 1896 U.S. presidential campaign closely enough for the Honduran president to send Burke a telegram notifying him three days after election day that William McKinley had defeated William Jennings Bryan.⁹

In letters to President McKinley and Policarpo Bonilla, Burke advocated a bold shift in Central American and U.S. relations that revealed how political events and personal experiences had changed his views since his arrival in Honduras. While a New South politician and editor of the *Times-Democrat* in Louisiana, Burke had explicitly rejected calls for the conquest of Latin America, and the idea of annexation seems never to have crossed his mind. Indeed, he once candidly told Bonilla that his political and journalistic careers had always promoted "firm friendly intercourse" on a "commercial and fraternal basis" that would "keep alive the doctrine of Monroe [and] safeguard [Central American] countries against European aggression." By 1897, however, Burke drew on the Monroe Doctrine to argue that the United States should use economic and diplomatic soft power to induce Central American annexation. Ironically, Burke told McKinley and Bonilla that his work as owner-editor of the *Times-Democrat* and director general of the 1884 world's fair had implicitly functioned to "prepare public thought" for the

⁸ Burke to George Hoadley [sic], April 8, 1897, Fondo Policarpo Bonilla, Marzo-Mayo, 1897, Archivo Nacional de Honduras.

⁹ Bonilla to Burke, November 6, 1896, Burke Papers: Berkeley.

eventuality that “Mexico and all the Central American Republics would find their way voluntarily, into the American Union,” which would, in so doing, build “New Orleans into a great Commercial City.”¹⁰

Burke had changed his opinion because of what he perceived as new foreign threats to Latin America. “Africa and China are being parceled out,” Burke warned, “will the veracity of Europe be satisfied with that spoil?” The major divined that “secret plans” were in the works for European powers to “obtain islands for coaling stations on the Atlantic . . . and . . . Pacific side” of Central America. According to Burke, Porfirio Díaz had recognized the threat by 1897 and was poised to seize the “reins” of the region and “unite Mexico and Central America in one great republic.” Firm and concerted American efforts were needed to avoid these possibilities, Burke contended, but not through direct intervention. Voluntary annexation was the only answer, with Central Americans genuinely in favor of it. His reasoning reflected the intimate knowledge of Latin American nationalism Burke had gained through a decade of observing and shaping Central American politics. The United States needed to send “intelligent men of affairs” who operated with “kindness, fairness and diplomacy” to ensure that the “Central American States [would] swing into the Union,” he insisted. If Hondurans sensed a “spirit of territorial acquisition,” their “*Amour Propre*” (self-respect) would compel them to reject the plan.¹¹

Another reason for Burke’s full throated advocacy for annexation was consistent failure of the region’s liberals to revive a Central American federation. Since the countries of Central America had already demonstrated their ability to “lay aside the name of Republic when they formed the Central American Pact,” Burke argued that leaders such as Bonilla should pivot their

¹⁰ Burke to Bonilla, December 10, 1897, Burke to President William McKinley, December 10, 1897, Burke Papers: LSU.

¹¹ Ibid; Burke to Bonilla, February 10, 1898, Ibid.

desire for enhanced security and prosperity that an enlarged country would bring and “enter the federal union as *equal independent states* of the United States of America” (emphasis in original).¹²

In an attempt to foster pan-American identity under the umbrella of the United States, Burke revived rhetoric common to the 1884 New Orleans exposition. He spoke of the “people of the United States,” rather than “Americans,” since, as he assured Bonilla, “we are all Americans.” He also echoed a central theme of his *Times-Democrat* by insisting that “the open Highway of the Sea . . . bind[s] North America and Central America, geographically and commercially” through “a thousand trackways of commerce.” Surely, Burke argued annexation would give Latin American liberals what they had long desired, including peace and political stability, civil and political liberties, and the influx of capital and skilled labor needed to develop infrastructure and natural resources. What was more, with the U.S. government assuming Central American debt, Burke maintained, Honduras would be “set on firm progressive ground, capable of marvelous development” as the “center of the trade links of the world.”¹³

Burke argued that he was “so profoundly interested in Central America,” and “bound up” in his “sympathies and interests with Honduras” that “no son of the [Honduran] soil” would charge him with partiality for his “native country.”¹⁴ Burke’s rationale for annexation revolved around an orthodox definition of progress as material and industrial progress, which would further enrich himself. Burke dreamed of the “hundred-thousand men and more than twenty million dollars worth of machinery” that would come to his mineral zones on the Guayape alone if Honduras became a part of the American republic. Yet Honduran annexation was in no small

¹² Burke to Bonilla, December 10, 1897, *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

part contrary to Burke self-interest, as it would bring the major within the jurisdiction of his previous indictments. As Katherine Unterman, an historian of high-profile American fugitives abroad, asserts, Burke's seeming contradictions and mixed loyalties were common among such men.¹⁵

On the whole, Burke's new embrace of American imperialism both reflected and anticipated significant changes in U.S. foreign policy during the 1890s. From his vantage point in Central America, Burke believed that the thrust of American imperialism should begin there, not Cuba, which was the primary focus of U.S. interests at the time. Therefore, Burke's views foreshadowed America's direct role in Central American development, and ultimately annexation, with the Panama Canal. Nor was he opposed to military intervention under certain circumstances. America "must whip the world," Burke told President McKinley; "pour blood and treasure to recover and safeguard" Central America if foreign powers threatened the region. Importantly, Burke made no mention of race or assimilation in his plenary letters to McKinley and Bonilla. In advocating the annexation of the states of Central America as "sisters of the same tongue," Burke's experience in the region made him reject the racist and xenophobic views common amongst anti-imperialists.¹⁶

Burke's carefully crafted argument for annexation did not elicit a response from President McKinley, who was concerned most with rising tensions in the Caribbean. Bonilla, meanwhile, indulged Burke but curtly responded that annexation was "an impossibility" due to "our Latin race." Having peacefully transferred the presidency to his leading general, Terencio Sierra, Bonilla revealed a deeper rationale for rejecting any annexation schemes, for he, like the

¹⁵ Ibid; Unterman, *Uncle Sam's Policemen*, 110.

¹⁶ Burke to President William McKinley, December 10, 1897, Burke to Bonilla, December 10, 1897, Burke Papers: LSU.

majority of liberals in the region, continued to hope for a federation of Central American states. As in his response to Burke, he also prioritized racial differences as an obstacle to annexation. Such a scheme, he insisted, could only come to fruition “after intermixture” of the “Latin American and the Anglo-Saxon” races. Still, Bonilla played astutely to American hopes for annexation by suggesting that such a dramatic move might be considered more favorably “after the establishment of American works and institutions” in Central America and if, as Burke assured, Honduras and other countries “were allowed to come in as other States of the Union and . . . [with] equal rights.”¹⁷

While Burke assuredly did not, as he boasted to President McKinley, own or control “more property than any other individual American or group of Americans in Central America,” he retained a high degree of international visibility and level of prominence within Honduras. In addition to attracting frequent newspaper coverage, Burke continued to shape American popular culture and perceptions of Latin America in other ways. In 1897, the same year that William Sydney Porter fled to Honduras fleeing the law in Texas and New Orleans, one of America’s most popular Gilded Age authors, Richard Harding Davis, published his most successful novel. Both Davis and Porter, to be better known as O. Henry, wrote about U.S. fugitives from justice, with Porter also coining the term “banana republic” in his *Cabbages and Kings*. However, Davis’ *Soldiers of Fortune* was a colorful account of American exiles and investors who advanced U.S. interests in the supposedly lawless lands of Latin America. His protagonist, Robert Clay, was an American miner and mercenary who operated amid intrepid industrialists and nefarious politicians and *generalismos*. While set in a fictional Latin American republic named Olancho, one of the characters who helped bring order and riches out of political and

¹⁷ Bonilla to Burke, 1898, Burke Papers: LSU; Policarpo Bonilla, “The Outlook in Central America,” New York *The Independent*, June 22, 1899.

economic disorder displays striking parallels to Burke. Named “Captain Burke,” he was a middle-aged, bombastic, and pugnacious man, described as a “brave soldier and a citizen of [America] or of any country, which happens to have the most sympathetic Consul-General.” It is more than likely that Davis, a well-attuned journalist who had visited Honduras and wrote extensively about the lottery, based the character of Captain Burke on the real life exploits and persona of Major Burke.¹⁸

The major’s only child, Lindsay, also came to embrace his father’s audacity and transnational worldview. In 1896, Lindsay left his father’s Honduran business ventures to join Belgian King Leopold II’s Force Publique in the Congo. Leopold’s government was equal to the most inhumane and exploitative imperial regimes of the nineteenth century, but young Burke was one of dozens of adventure-seeking and profit-driven white foreigners who gained commissions in his army in order to exploit the region’s rubber, ivory, and precious metals. Commanding forces of conscripted African soldiers that were, in effect, slaves subjected to brutal discipline, officers such as Burke dealt with frequent mutinies. In early 1897, when he took part in suppressing a major revolt in the Kasai region of south-central Congo, Lieutenant Burke and twenty-seven of his men were killed in an ambush.¹⁹

Around the time of Lindsay Burke’s commission in the Force Publique, the elder Burke transferred his residency from Tegucigalpa to Puerto Cortés, where he lived only two doors from the U.S consulate. The affable major either made friends with U.S. Consul W. M. Little or bribed him, because Little, without permission from the American minister to Central America in

¹⁸ O. Henry, *Cabbages and Kings* (New York: Doubleday, Page, & Company, 1904), 132, 296; Richard Harding Davis, *Soldiers of Fortune* (New York: American News Company, 1897), 198; Unterman, *Uncle Sam’s Policemen*, 92-95.

¹⁹ Tegucigalpa *La Regeneración*, Jan. 10, 1895; Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1999), 127-128.

Guatemala City, granted passports to Burke and his wife to travel to Europe and Africa in April, 1897. Hoping to learn the whereabouts of their only son, the couple were told in Africa that Lindsay and his men had been “cut down and hacked to pieces” while fighting for Leopold.²⁰ For the rest of his life, Burke blamed Belgian mining agents for recruiting his son to the Congo. Some two decades later, the major happened upon a representative of the Belgian firm in a Tegucigalpa hotel. Burke, despite being over seventy years old, confronted the younger man in a rage, “whanged him with his walking stick,” and retrieved a shotgun to seek final retribution before Burke’s friends restrained him.²¹

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Burke floated in and out of official positions in the Honduran government, including assistant superintendent and auditor of the Honduras Interoceanic Railway, of which he was investor.²² In spite of such posts, the major had cause for concern. Progressives in the United States had finally induced the government to take decisive action against *La Compañía Nacional de Lotería de Honduras*, which was estimated to contribute one-hundred-thousand dollars a year to the Honduran government. More than fifty arrests and three-hundred-thousand dollars in fines later, a series of U.S. Secret Service sting operations against the lottery’s American printers and distributors brought its downfall in 1907. After nearly forty years in operation, the last iteration of the insidious Louisiana lottery was defeated.²³

²⁰ 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; as quoted in Vivian, “Major E. A. Burke,” 184; Burke to Policarpo Bonilla, June 26, 1897, Fondo Policarpo Bonilla, Año 1897, Fólder 1, Archivo Nacional de Honduras.

²¹ “Major E. A. Burke,” Guy R. Molony Papers, Louisiana Research Collection, Manuscripts Collection 178, Tulane University, New Orleans.

²² Tegucigalpa *El Estado*, Sept. 7, 1904; Vivian, “Major E. A. Burke,” 181; Unterman, *Uncle Sam’s Policemen*, 108.

²³ Unterman, *Uncle Sam’s Policemen*, 112; Berthold C. Alwes, “The History of the Louisiana State Lottery Company,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 27 (October 1944): 1099-1102.

Around the same time, the Honduran foreign ministry changed its policy of unquestioned asylum for exiles and began to extradite American fugitives in order to gain favor with the U.S. government, which had directly intervened in Honduras in 1903 and 1907. In 1908, for example, Honduras handed over the wealthy former president of the State National Bank of New Orleans, William Adler, whose institution had done business with the lottery.²⁴ Negotiations for an extradition treaty between Honduras and the U.S. began in 1909, an action welcomed by the Hondurans as it became a means for them to assert their sovereignty and refute America's growing hegemony in the region. The treaty would not be finalized until three-and-a-half years later, in no small part because Burke himself became a conduit for the debate.

At issue in the negotiations were the numerous fugitives in Honduras who constituted, as Consul Albert W. Brickwood put it, a particularly large "class of immigration" of men "who [were] prominent in the States." Honduran diplomats wanted guarantees that the treaty would apply only to people who had lived in the country for fewer than ten years. According to U.S. officials in Washington, "the object of [the] restriction was to protect Edward A. Burke, twenty years in Honduras."²⁵ Honduran ministers were capable of being even more blunt, at one point requesting a provision to guarantee that the "Government of the United States . . . [would never] request the Government of Honduras to surrender Major E. A. Burke for crimes . . . charged against him in the state of Louisiana." Ultimately, Honduran officials held up the treaty until the U.S. government accepted loose retroactive stipulations on the understanding that such stipulations remained informal. The compromise allowed Honduras to extradite American

²⁴ Unterman, *Uncle Sam's Policemen*, 112; Tegucigalpa *La Regeneración*, Jan. 10, 1895.

²⁵ As quoted in Vivian, "Major E. A. Burke," 185, 186; Unterman, *Uncle Sam's Policemen*, 112, 108; "Naturalization Convention Between the United States and Honduras," Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, with the Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress, December 7, 1909*, 364-365.

fugitives, even wealthy ones, while retaining the flexibility to protect the elite political and economic tier of fugitives who had a long residency in the country. Unsurprisingly, Burke enjoyed an informal special status and remained safe in Honduras.²⁶

The major's influence continued into the second decade of the twentieth century (See Appendix I). During the Great War, he defended the American cause in Central America. In the wake of the Zimmerman telegram and a strong German commercial presence in the region, Burke used the war as an opportunity to malign German competitors, whom Burke described as "silently but effectively making [their] way" in Latin America "under the nose" of the United States. "All of us will have the chance to 'do our bit' before this world war ends," Burke explained to a friend in Louisiana in 1917; "do not fancy that [the United States] will not require the help of sound Americans of experience in Central America and Mexico." More actively, the major sought a commission in the U.S. army for the intrepid soldier of fortune Lee Christmas, an American citizen who had served as a general in the Honduran military. Burke's home in Puerto Cortés also demonstrated the major's patriotism, as he hung a framed picture of Abraham Lincoln next to one of George Washington.²⁷

The rising prominence of the banana trade along the northern coast of Honduras at the turn of the century meant a changing geopolitical landscape. Bananas became the country's most valuable export in 1902 and climbed to over ten times that of mineral exports in the following three decades. The pull of work in the banana plantations on the Caribbean coast likewise put a labor drain on mineral operations in the highlands of central Honduras. Consequently, the economic and political center of Honduras shifted from Tegucigalpa to Puerto

²⁶ As quoted in Unterman, *Uncle Sam's Policemen*, 108; Vivian, "Major E. A. Burke," 184-186.

²⁷ Burke to Colonel Robert Ewing, April 18, 1917, Hermann Bacher Deutsch papers, 1827-1970, Louisiana Research Collection, Manuscripts Collection 130, Tulane University; Handwritten post script in Thomas Garland, Treasury Department, to E. A. Burk, September 3, 1867, Burke Papers: LSU.

Cortés and La Ceiba. As Burke recognized this shift, he changed his residence to Puerto Cortés and sought service with the government-led *Ferrocarril Nacional de Honduras* (National Railroad of Honduras).²⁸

Burke became actively involved with *El Ferrocarril Nacional* as early as 1908, when he served as auditor. In February 1912, Burke rose to superintendent of the railroad. Apparently a foreigner occupying the highest post caused discontent, as Burke was removed from the position two months later. However, Honduran leaders recognized Burke's "extensive experience . . . in railway matters" and retained him as assistant superintendent and auditor. Working for the railroad, Burke's earliest vocation, meant his life had come full circle, albeit with over a thousand of miles of separation. Living in Puerto Cortés but routinely traveling throughout the country on various social and business trips as a railroad official, Burke was among a handful of wealthy residents of Honduras who owned an automobile. By the late 1910s, Hondurans came to know Burke's Ford car and his driver, Lisandro Garay. The major held his posts at the *Ferrocarril Nacional* until old age forced his retirement in 1926.²⁹

Burke's evolving influence was evident in other ways as well. In 1918, Burke's friend and business partner, James M. Lynch, was appointed U.S. vice-consul at Puerto Cortés. Consulate offices were at times briefly overseen by private citizens when the assigned representative was away. While it was uncommon for a citizen of another country, much less a fugitive, to take temporary charge, Burke did just that on at least one occasion for the British consulate at Puerto Cortés.³⁰

²⁸ Gene Sheldon Yeager, "Honduran Transportation and Communication Development: The Rise of Tegucigalpa, 1876-1900" (M.A. thesis: Tulane University, 1972), 103-105.

²⁹ Tegucigalpa *La Gaceta*, Mar. 4, 1908; San Pedro Sula, Honduras *El Comercio*, June 18, 1916; Tegucigalpa *Boletín de la Secretaria de Fomento, Obras Publicas, y Agricultura*, May 31, 1914; José Reina Valenzuela, *De la Adversidad a la Gloria: Una Biografía de Lisandro Garay* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 2003), 45; Vivian, "Major E. A. Burke," 181.

³⁰ Vivian, "Major E. A. Burke," 191, 193, 186.

In 1926, Burke's long-awaited exoneration from the charges of fraud and embezzlement in Louisiana came to fruition. For years, Burke had steadfastly maintained his innocence. At various times and according to various accounts, Burke claimed he was a scapegoat in a wider conspiracy, that the alleged theft never occurred, and that the funds, while not properly documented, went to support what the major considered his crowning achievement, the 1884 New Orleans exposition. Since it was uncommon for Gilded Age politicians, especially in Louisiana, not to enrich oneself through officeholding, it is likely that the misuse of state bonds was a machine tactic to fund kick-backs and patronage. The common Gilded Age practice of assessments, in which partisan officeholders were expected to contribute to party coffers, also points to others benefiting from the treasury scheme. The sheer size and longevity of the scheme, involving five different bonds from 1882 to 1888, lends doubt to the claim that Burke alone carried out or benefited from the theft. However, as a leading Democratic machine operative and state treasurer, he was no doubt central to the operation. Although he was immediately informed of the dismissal of charges, Burke decided to remain in Honduras, likely due to increasingly chronic ill-health.³¹

Burke's role in Colonel Charles Lindbergh's famous world tour proved to be the final dramatic act for a man with a knack for the spotlight. On January 3, 1928, Burke joined President Miguel Paz Barahona in the lead government car to Toncontin Field to greet Lindbergh on his arrival in Tegucigalpa during his good-will flight through Central America. With hundreds of people making the ten mile round trip to the airfield on foot, at least two thousand Hondurans flocked to the numerous government ceremonies to honor Lindbergh during his

³¹ Terry Golway, *Machine Made: Tammany Hall and the Creation of Modern American Politics*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), 112; Mark Wahlgren Summers, *Party Games: Getting, Keeping, and Using Power in Gilded Age Politics* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 149; Vivian, "Major E. A. Burke," 181; "History of Major Burke's Frauds," *New York Times*, May 22, 1894..

three-day stay in the capital. Young boys paraded with torches while crying “¡Viva Lindbergh!” local girls dressed in their finest to wait on his every move, and Barahona insisted that the aviator sit in the presidential chair during a national banquet given in Lindbergh’s honor.³²

The people able to meet Lindbergh, whom Hondurans called Don Carlos and “*El Niño Prodigio*” (The Wonder Boy), represented a who’s who of the country’s political and social elite. During one ceremony, Burke presented the famous bachelor with a gift for his mother. It was a golden chest containing, as Burke described in a letter to Mrs. Lindbergh widely reprinted in Honduran newspapers, gold nuggets harvested on his Olancho properties by “crude *bateas* and indigenous methods.” Burke was also a part of the delegation that shook Lindbergh’s hand one last time on the airfield before his departure. As over a thousand onlookers gave cheers of “¡Viva!” to Lindbergh, the United States, and Honduras, President Barahona presented him with a New Orleans-made gold medal set with a diamond. Shortly thereafter, the *Spirit of St. Louis* departed for Managua with Burke’s gift safely stowed.³³

Burke’s visible role in one of Honduras’ most popular public ceremonies in decades also elevated the major’s stature and likeability among the populace. It was a fitting capstone for a man who was socially, as well as economically and politically, prominent. Burke moved around this same time from Puerto Cortés back to Tegucigalpa, in no small part due to failing health and the better medical care the capital afforded. In the last years of his life, Burke made his home in the Ritz Hotel, and his niece moved to Honduras to help care for the aging major.³⁴

³² “Put Lindbergh to Flight,” *New York Times*, Jan. 6, 1928; Charles A. Lindbergh, *The Spirit of St. Louis* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 512, 518, 523, 525; Acuerda No. 709, January 2, 1928, Contenido Ministerio Hacienda y Credito Publico Correspondencia, Archivo Nacional de Honduras; “Simpática correspondencia cruzada entre la Sra. Evangeline Lindbergh y el Mayor E. A. Burke,” Tegucigalpa *El Demócrata*, Apr. 3, 1928.

³³ “Put Lindbergh to Flight” and “Lindbergh Flies Safely to Nicaragua,” *New York Times*, Jan. 6, 1928; Lindbergh, *The Spirit of St. Louis*, 518, 523, 525; “Simpática correspondencia cruzada entre la Sra. Evangeline Lindbergh y el Mayor E. A. Burke,” Tegucigalpa *El Demócrata*, April 3, 1928.

³⁴ Emma Vantine, Burke’s niece, also taught English classes, see Tegucigalpa *El Demócrata*, July 15, 1927. Vivian, “Major E. A. Burke,” 181. Policarpo Bonilla represented the mirror image of Burke’s life trajectory. The former

Given his long illness, residents of the capital were not surprised to hear of Burke's death on September 23, 1928. Nor were U.S. consulate officers, with whom Burke had arranged to secure his private papers and belongings from both Tegucigalpa and Puerto Cortés upon his passing. The major knew that his long residency and diverse activities in Central America, not to mention his political career in the United States, had engendered jealous enemies or, as Burke described them, "many hungry" and "voracious" "sharks [that] await my passing." However, the response of Hondurans, from official acts of government to the rank and file, demonstrate how they perceived Burke.³⁵

To Hondurans, as early as 1890, Burke's efforts to develop the country outweighed his checkered past in Louisiana. The Honduran press regarded him as "thoroughly honest" and "a public benefactor," and wished that there were "more such men."³⁶ *El Demócrata*, in Tegucigalpa, remembered the major as a "charming, enterprising and generous American who made Honduras his *segunda patria* (second homeland) to which he demonstrated at all times his sincere affection." While noting his various business interests in Honduras, the newspaper emphasized that he had previously served the Ferrocarril Nacional with "honesty and success . . . lending his cooperation for everything that meant progress and a good name for the country."³⁷ A correspondent from Yuscaran, where Burke held mining interests, reported that the major's passing led locals to conclude that Honduras had lost "the best of foreigners."³⁸ Another

Honduran president had moved to New Orleans by 1911, where he set up a practice in the Louisiana Building, on Canal Street, and advertised himself as a "legal adviser on Latin American Affairs" until his death in 1926. See Bonilla, November 10, 1911, Fondo Policarpo Bonilla, Año 1911, Archivo Nacional de Honduras.

³⁵ "Notas de Duelo," Tegucigalpa *El Demócrata*, Sept. 24, 1928; as quoted in Vivian, "Major E. A. Burke," 181, 191. Burke's death has been widely, but mistakenly, cited as September 24, 1928. During disputes over the execution of Burke's will, however, his relatives verified the early Honduran newspaper reports that cited his death as occurring on September 23. See "Report Number Seven in the Matter of the Estate of Major Edward Austin Burke," 1936, Burke Papers: Tulane.

³⁶ "Gold from Honduras," Homer, La. *Homer Guardian*, Mar. 28, 1890.

³⁷ "Notas de Duelo," Tegucigalpa *El Demócrata*, Sept. 24, 1928; "Maj. A. Burke Dies in Honduras at 89," *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 1928.

³⁸ "Duelo de Yuscaran por la Muerte del Mayor Burke," Tegucigalpa *El Demócrata*, Sept. 26, 1928.

editorial in *El Demócrata* boldly proclaimed, “We Hondurans will hold on to his memory as the greatest foreigner who has ever pitched his tent on our promised land.” No wonder, then, that Burke’s thirty-nine year residence in the country made his passing a notable event. Honduran newspapers reported an “influx of people” from Tegucigalpa and surrounding areas soon grew to an “enormous” crowd around the Ritz Hotel.³⁹

The Honduran government joined the public display with an official *Acuerdo* to honor Burke’s passing. It was issued despite the rarity of someone outside the highest level of government receiving an official notice of death in the national newspaper. President Miguel Paz Barahona’s decree asserted that Burke had “dedicated himself to work for the good and prosperity of the country” in a long career that made “manifest his love” for Honduras. As such, Honduran officials deemed it “a duty of the Government to pay homage” to such a noteworthy individual. The *Acuerdo* made provisions to give Burke a state funeral equivalent to those at the rank of brigadier general, but a state funeral in Tegucigalpa was contested by Yuscaran locals who demanded that Burke be buried near their city.⁴⁰ Ultimately, locals from Yuscaran won out, in no small part aided by the major’s own will, which included stipulations as early as 1897 that he be buried near his mining operations. A procession of Yuscaran’s Honduran and indigenous population carried the body from Tegucigalpa some ninety miles on their shoulders to the outskirts of Yuscaran for burial. “We deplore the death of the honorable Mayor Burke,” *El Demócrata* lamented, “and we wish that the roses he loved . . . to adorn the button hole of his jacket always grow on his grave.” Back in the United States, the value Americans placed on profitable overseas trade and influence by the late 1920s meant that Burke was remembered quite

³⁹ “Notas de Duelo,” Tegucigalpa *El Demócrata*, Sept. 24, 1928; “Eduardo Alfredo Burke,” Tegucigalpa *El Demócrata*, Oct. 4, 1928, as quoted in Unterman, *Uncle Sam’s Policemen*, 108.

⁴⁰ Acuerdo Numero 444, September 24, 1928; “Los Honores Tributados por el Poder Ejecutivo al Mayor E. A. Burke” Tegucigalpa *La Gaceta*, Sept. 26, 1928.

fondly. The Associated Press excused Burke's embezzlement of funds as wholly tied to his stewardship of the 1884 New Orleans exposition, which "brought him world-wide prestige, but cost him his health and fortune."⁴¹

Burke was to Honduras what John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie were to the United States, a benevolent robber baron who extolled a "gospel of wealth." They exploited the country, the government, and the people, but were astute enough to court good will through public acts of charity. While the original stipulations of his mining concessions required the support of Honduran society, Burke voluntarily continued the process throughout his residency in Honduras. When entering negotiations to sell or acquire companies, Burke often justified his actions as an obligation to bring about "justice to my family and the country" of Honduras. This desire remained dear even in death. Half of his estate passed to the descendants of his wife's first marriage. The other portion was bequeathed to the Honduran government as a means to support "the youth of Honduras" through public education. This probably included Burke's extensive collection of books, which was reported to constitute the best private library in Honduras. The amount of wealth Burke held during his time in Honduras cannot be discerned, but he had definitely achieved enough to be counted among the elite.⁴²

On the whole, Burke's experiences and actions represent the dynamic and fluid nature of transnational forces in the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.⁴³ From his childhood in

⁴¹ "Notas de Duelo," Tegucigalpa *El Demócrata*, Sept. 24, 1928. Burke expressed the wish to "find a resting place in [the] undisturbed sands" within his mineral zones. See Burke to Policarpo Bonilla, December 10, 1897, Burke Papers: LSU; "Major E. A. Burke," Guy R. Molony Papers, Tulane University; "Maj. A. Burke Dies in Honduras at 89," *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 1928.

⁴² Andrew Carnegie, *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays* (New York: Century Co., 1901), 1-2; Burke to Bonilla, February 6, 1897, Fondo Privado de Policarpo Bonilla, Enero-Febrero, 1897, Archivo Nacional de Honduras; "Louisianian Left Half Estate to Honduras," *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 1928; Vivian, "Major E. A. Burke," 182; "Maj. A. Burke Dies in Honduras at 89," *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 1928; José María Sandoval to William E. Hawkins, December 28, 1928, Burke Papers: Tulane.

⁴³ Brian Ward, "Carly Phillips, David Armitage, and the Place of the American South in Atlantic and Other Worlds," in *The American South and the Atlantic World*, editors Brian Ward, Martyn Bone, and William A. Link (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2013), 32.

Kentucky, Confederate service dealing with Mexican trade, import-export business at a primary Gulf South port, editorship of a leading newspaper, oversight of an international exposition, capitalist venture in Latin America, ties to British investors, and familial connections to Africa, Burke epitomized the Atlantic World as much as any one person. Yet his New South vision while in Louisiana and his dealing in Honduras, both of which included the Pacific world, demonstrate that, as historian Moon-Ho Jung as shown, postbellum southerners thought about and acted in a truly global worldview.⁴⁴

Burke himself, and the Louisiana lottery as an institution, represent significant continuity between the Civil War era and the first decades of the twentieth century. As Edward Haas and other historians have demonstrated, the elements of Regular versus Reform Democrats and their respective strategies and constituents began in the postbellum period of which Burke was active and formed the contours of Louisiana politics through the era of Huey P. Long and beyond. It was a common campaign tactic well into the twentieth century to resurrect the specter of Burke and Ring rule, but often the candidates who employed that tactic, such as Benjamin F. Jonas, had strong ties to machine Democrats. On the whole, the shifting nature of Louisiana politics allowed conservative machine politicians to present themselves as reformers while reformers often furthered conservative ends.⁴⁵

Despite the dubious electioneering methods, systematic fraud, and coordinated violence that machine politicians such as Burke condoned, their transnational, New South platform demonstrates that postbellum Democrats, as much as their more studied Republican counterparts,

⁴⁴ Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 6-8.

⁴⁵ Edward F. Haas, "Political Continuity in the Crescent City: Toward an Interpretation of New Orleans Politics, 1874-1986," *Louisiana History* 39 (Winter 1998): 6-10; "Are You Opposed to Ring Rule?," B.F. Jonas Campaign Flyer, 1903, and "The Ring is Broken," Good Government League, 1912, Vertical Files, Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University.

had viable and legitimate policy goals to attract voters. Close studies of Louisiana, and specifically New Orleans, also show that the postbellum South had significant commonalities with the immigration, machine politics, labor struggles, and global trade that was characteristic of the Gilded Age North.

Burke at times expressed regret that the abrupt end to his political career in the United States meant he was unable to build his own “monument in acts of public good.”⁴⁶ During such moments of reflection, he thought most fondly of his journalistic achievements and leadership of the 1884 New Orleans exposition. Indeed, the New Orleans World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial represented a demonstrable moment in which many Americans no longer saw Louisiana as the periphery of an east coast dominated trade system, or the Gulf and Caribbean as backwaters to a teeming North Atlantic. And thanks to the precedent, the 1884 exposition would not be the last time Louisianans used a fair to project the state as the center of world trade and progress. New Orleans businessmen and the leaders of the Choctaw Club, an early twentieth-century political machine akin to the Ring, initiated a drive in 1910 to host an international fair celebrating the opening of the Panama Canal. Ties to the previous New Orleans fair in the mid-1880s were extensive.

Louisiana politicians who got their start in the 1880s, such as Mayor Martin Behrman, take an active part in mobilizing support. The assistant secretary of the Mexican commission to the 1884 fair, who subsequently worked for United Fruit, took part in recruiting Latin American support for New Orleans to host the Panama exposition. The rationale of such men in the early 1910s was nearly identical to Burke’s postbellum New South vision, mainly that New Orleans had extensive ties to Latin America, was geographically suited for Central American commerce,

⁴⁶ Burke to William E. Hawkins, October 1, 1896, Burke Papers: Tulane.

and was connected by the Mississippi River to the heartland of America. When San Francisco challenged New Orleans for the right to host the exposition, civic boosters in each city trading insults through widely disseminated propaganda. One issue that advocates for the California site repeatedly raised was the unpaid congressional loan that Burke and Louisiana had secured in 1884. Ultimately, New Orleans lost its bid to San Francisco, which hosted the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915. However, a hundred years after the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial, New Orleans hosted the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition. Sadly, despite over seven million visitors, it too, like Burke's exposition, was a financial failure.⁴⁷

During his residency in Central America, Burke contributed significantly to Honduran politics, economy, and society. Operating one of the largest mineral concessions ever given to an individual, Burke's mining corporations represented an influx of cash and credit that worked its way through all sectors of the Honduran economy.⁴⁸ Still lagging behind most Central American countries, the economy of Honduras was at least more productive than British Honduras for most of the period. Nonetheless, its emphasis on exports and liberal concessions to attract investors did not provide the silver bullet needed to defeat the nation's economic woes. Instead, Honduras was indicative of the persistent problems that plagued the entire region. The economic growth inspired by mining was not enough to stimulate a substantial domestic market or to attract the amount of skilled labor and wage increases necessary to create such a market. Instead, an elite group of Latinos and foreigners funneled their profits outside the country by purchasing manufactured imports. However, Honduran liberals such as Reinholt Fritzgartner

⁴⁷ Frank Traub to T. P. Thompson, May 21, 1910, Congressman Robert F. Broussard to T. P. Thompson, June 4, 1910, Thomas Payne Thompson Papers, MSS.1405, University Libraries Special Collections, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama; Victoria D. Baiamonte, "New Orleans, the New South, and the Fight for the Panama Exposition," (M. A. thesis: University of New Orleans, 2011), 13-14; Bill Cotter, *The 1984 New Orleans World's Fair* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 120.

⁴⁸ Kenneth V. Finney, "Merchants, Miners, and Monetary Structures: The Revival of the Honduran Import Trade, 1880-1900," *SECOLAS Annales* 12 (March 1981): 31-32.

and Luis Bográn were not wholly in error. A robust silver and gold mining sector could have helped Honduras escape the common Central American characteristic of a monocultural economy. When this did not occur, and banana exports began to overtake the mineral sector, the geopolitical landscape of Honduras shifted from mining-oriented Tegucigalpa in the central highlands to the banana entrepôts of Puerto Cortés and La Ceiba.⁴⁹

Ties established between Louisiana and Honduras in the late nineteenth century would continue into the twenty first century. As such historians as Lester Langley, Thomas Schoonover, and Darío A. Euraque have shown, Central America has been exceptional within Latin America for its relationship with the United States, a relationship shaped by the large number of American capitalists attracted to the region, the amount of wealth invested and procured there, and the frequency of U.S. interventions in those countries. Consequently, the status of Central America as a satellite, or informal empire, for the United States, as formulated between the 1880s and 1910s, has cast a long shadow over the region for a large part of the twentieth century, with tangible legacies in the humanitarian crises of the 1980s.⁵⁰

Cold War violence and immigration patterns beginning in the 1990s built upon the established links between Honduras and Louisiana. As of 2009, Hondurans comprise the largest Latino population living in the New Orleans metropolitan area, with over eleven thousand people born in Honduras and thousands of others being second and third generation Americans. Traditions are maintained through foodways, music, and dance, often celebrated at Honduran

⁴⁹ Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided*, Third Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 163, 176, 159, 160; Yeager, "Honduran Transportation and Communication Development," 103-105. For an analysis of how the country's leading mining corporation, The New York & Honduras Rosario Mining Company, shaped Honduran society and economy, such as bringing electricity to the country, see Nelson Carrasco, Martes Reyes, et al., "Impacto sociocultural y Económico de La New York & Honduras Rosario Mining Company en Tegucigalpa, 1880-1925," *Yazkin* 29 (January 2016): 122-124, 132-133.

⁵⁰ Lester D. Langley and Thomas Schoonover, *The Banana Men: American Mercenaries and Entrepreneurs in Central America, 1880-1930* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 2.

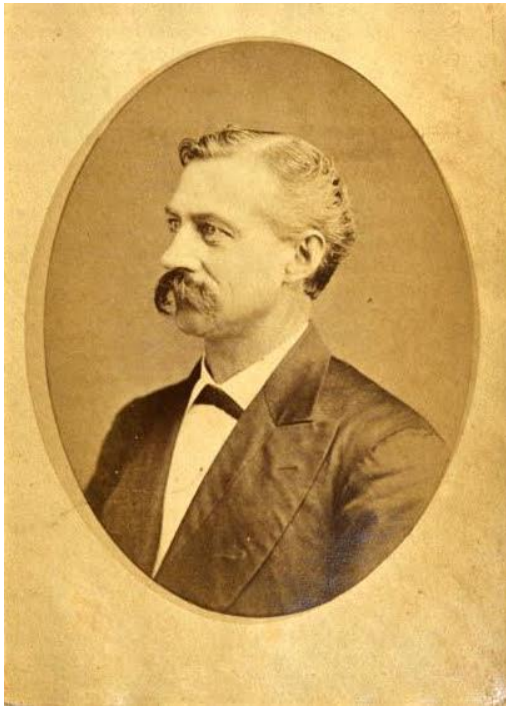
holidays. The annual February 3 feast and mass honoring the patron saint of Honduras, Our Lady of Suyapa, is the largest Honduran community event celebrated in New Orleans churches, such as Immaculate Conception Church and St. Theresa of Avila. On September 15, Hondurans join other Latinos in celebrating Latin American Independence Day with *punta* dances sponsored by the New Orleans Hispano America Dance Group, which specializes in traditional Honduran folk dancing.⁵¹

To conclude, examining the indomitable Major Edward Austin Burke provides a much-needed analysis of an individual who embodied the South's postbellum transnational links as much as any one individual. As a contemporary observer realized in the 1920s, "no story of Honduras," or the United States in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, "is complete without mention of the Major."⁵²

⁵¹ Denese Neu, "Honduran Identity within South Louisiana Culture," *Folklife in Louisiana* (2009), http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/hondurans1.html (accessed April 28, 2017).

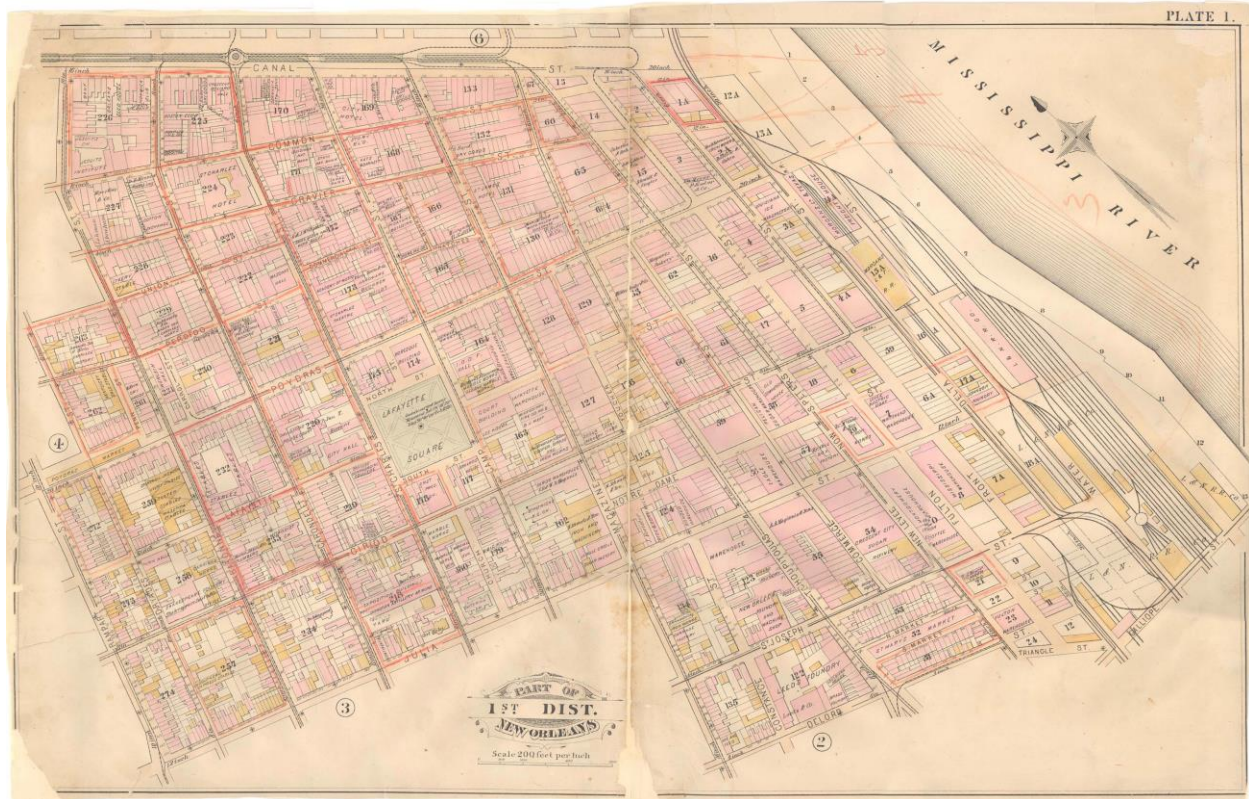
⁵² Alfred Batson, *Vagabonds Paradise* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1931), 82, 86-90.

Appendix



A: Edward Austin Burke c. 1875¹

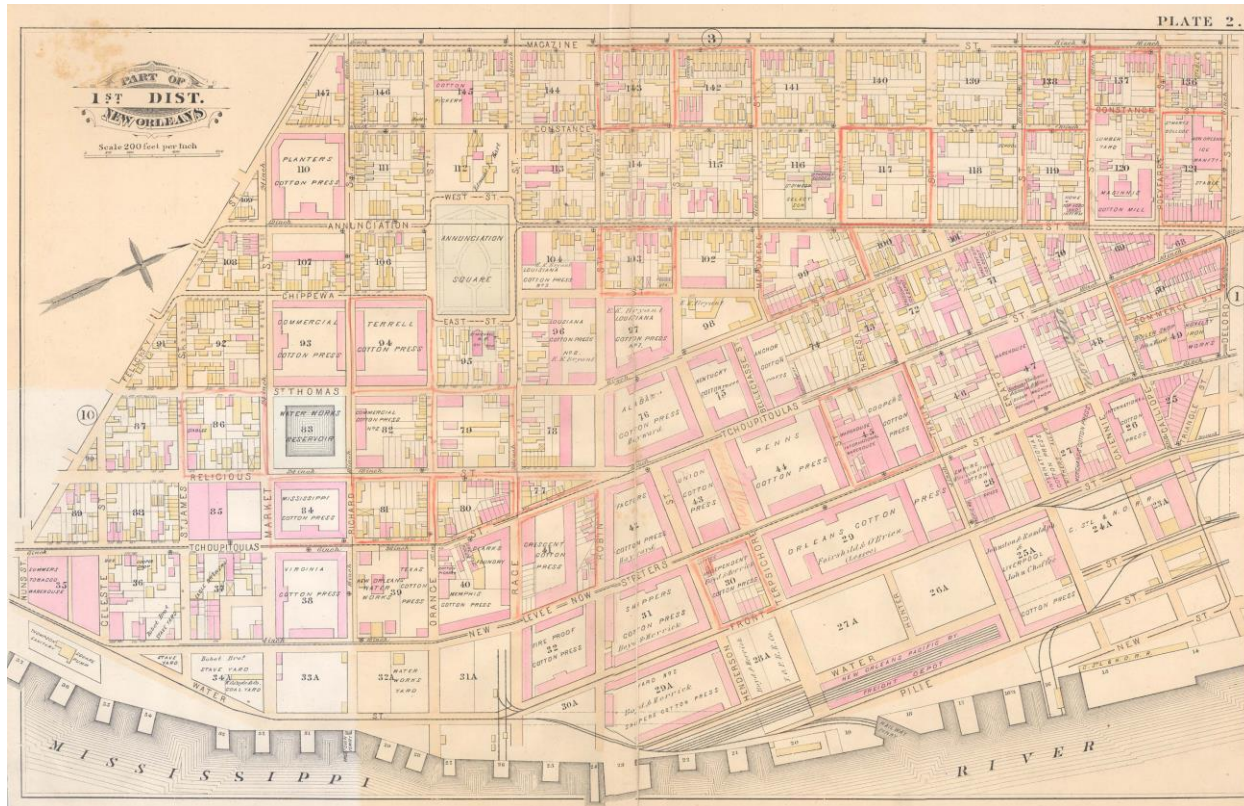
¹ Napier Bartlett, *Military Record of Louisiana: Including Biographical and Historical Papers Relating to the Military Organizations of the State* (New Orleans: L. Graham & Co., 1875), 21.



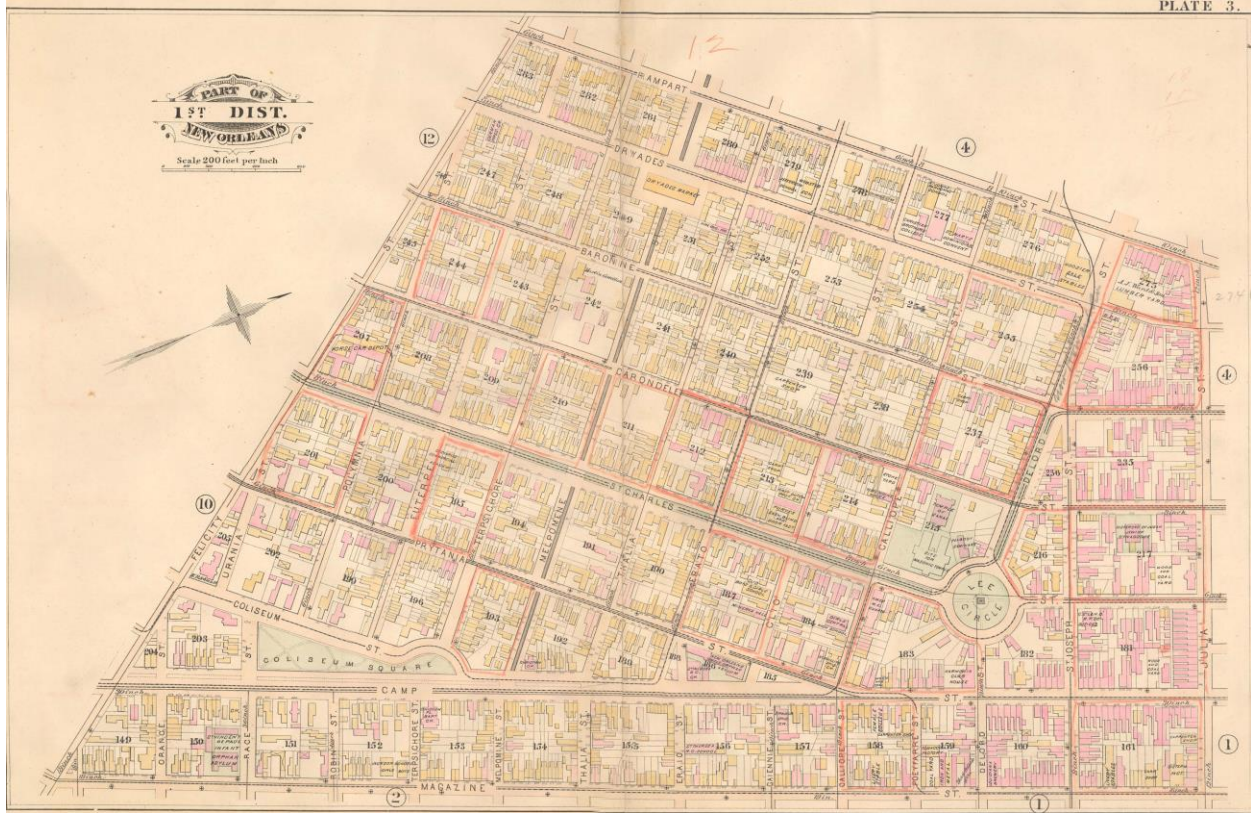
B: New Orleans 1st District²

Canal to Julia, Mississippi River to Rampart

² Elisha Robinson and Roger H. Pidgeon, *Robinson's Atlas of the City of New Orleans, Louisiana* (New York: E. Robinson, 1883). Compiled for the use of insurance companies from surveys by New Orleans city surveyor and architect John F. Braun during the late 1870s. The maps indicate existing lots, buildings, and geographic landmarks. The color pink represents brick buildings, and yellow signifies wooden structures. Printed street names are contemporaneous to publication; hand-written name changes were added at a later undetermined date. Street addresses predate the current system, which was adopted by New Orleans in the early 1890s.



Delord to Felicite, Mississippi River to Magazine



Julia to Felicity; Magazine to Rampart



C: Map of Major Cotton and Sugar Producing Parishes of Louisiana, 1880

³ Donna A. Barnes, *The Louisiana Populist Movement, 1881-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 35.

NO SEED, NO HARVEST!

THE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THIRD

GRAND MONTHLY DISTRIBUTION

OF THE

LOUISIANA

STATE LOTTERY COMPANY

WILL TAKE PLACE AT

NEW ORLEANS,

TUESDAY, AUGUST 10, 1880,

And every Second Tuesday of each Month throughout the Year.

In June and December, two Semi-Annual Extraordinary Distributions take place, under the Personal Supervision of

Gen. G. T. BEAUREGARD, } AND { Gen. JUBAL A. EARLY,
OF LOUISIANA, } OF VIRGINIA.

IMPORTANT.—The Post Office Department has decided that the Mails of this Company cannot be intermixed with

M. A. DAUPHIN, New Orleans, La.
Or, M. A. DAUPHIN 319 Broadway, New York.

Send by Post Office Money Order, New York Exchange, or Draft on New Orleans. Send money only by Express or Registered Letter, otherwise it will not be safe.

N. B.—Our patrons will find it profitable to send delivery of their mail to various addresses with their full address written by themselves, thus preventing mistakes. The omission of the Company's name and logo is one of the great causes of delay and misrouting. Every direction or signature not perfectly plain are especially to be avoided.

D: Advertisement for the Louisiana State Lottery Company



Louisiana State Lottery Company ticket



E: "Our Press," New Orleans *Mascot*, May 27, 1882.

AS SOON AS SHE WILL BE WITH YOU, BAD LUCK WILL DISAPPEAR! ACT. I. 123 SCENE 1234

PRICE 5 CENTS

THE MASCOT

VOLUME 7 NEW ORLEANS February 28th, 1885. NUMBER 159

ENTERED AT THE POST OFFICE NEW ORLEANS AS SECOND CLASS MAIL MATTER

EXPOSITION VISITORS

ARRIVED

RR	200,000
RR	300,000
RR	200,000
RR	200,000
STEAMBOAT	100,000
	1000000

GATE RECEIPTS

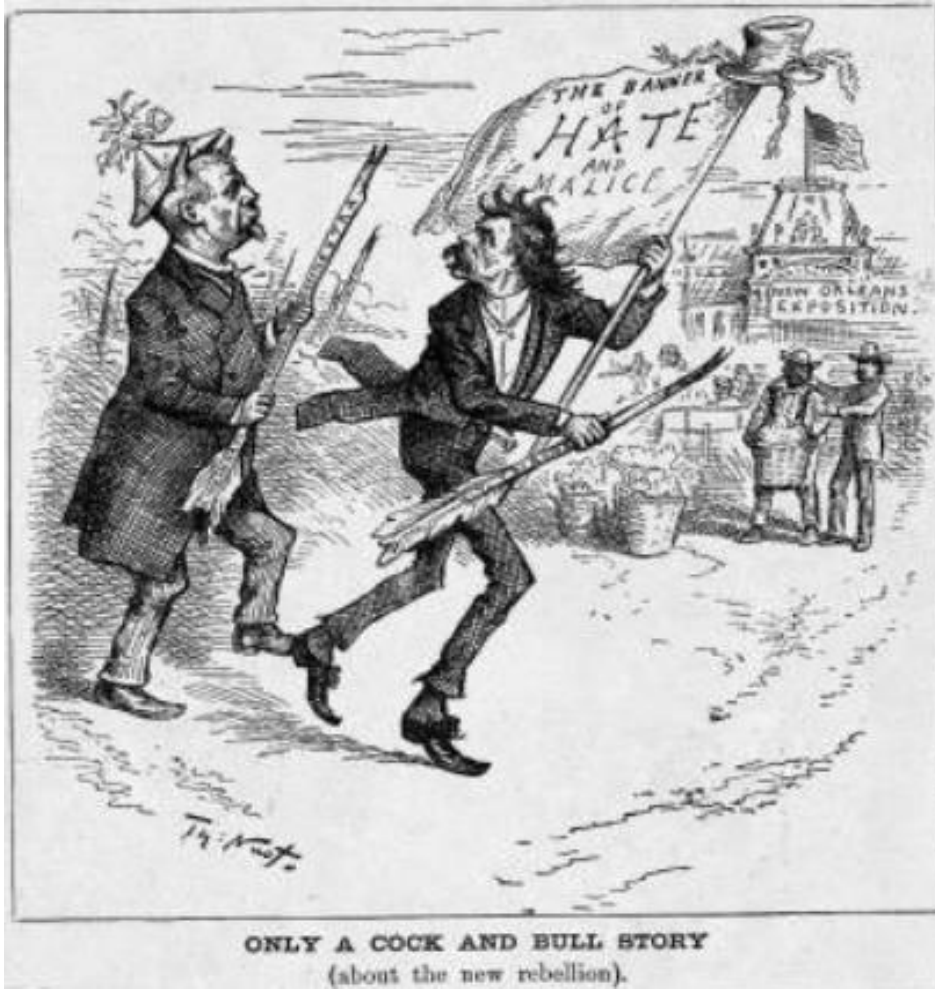
OFFICIAL RECEIPTS
FEBRUARY 16. to 22^d
\$ 47,599.25

REPORTS
FINANCE
STOCKHOLDERS

B.

STOCKHOLDERS BEING THE ONLY, RICHMOND, I DON'T MAKE THEM FINANCE TALK.
PRESIDENT RICHMOND: WELL, NEVER MIND, SCHMIDT, BURKE WILL FIX US ALL RIGHT.

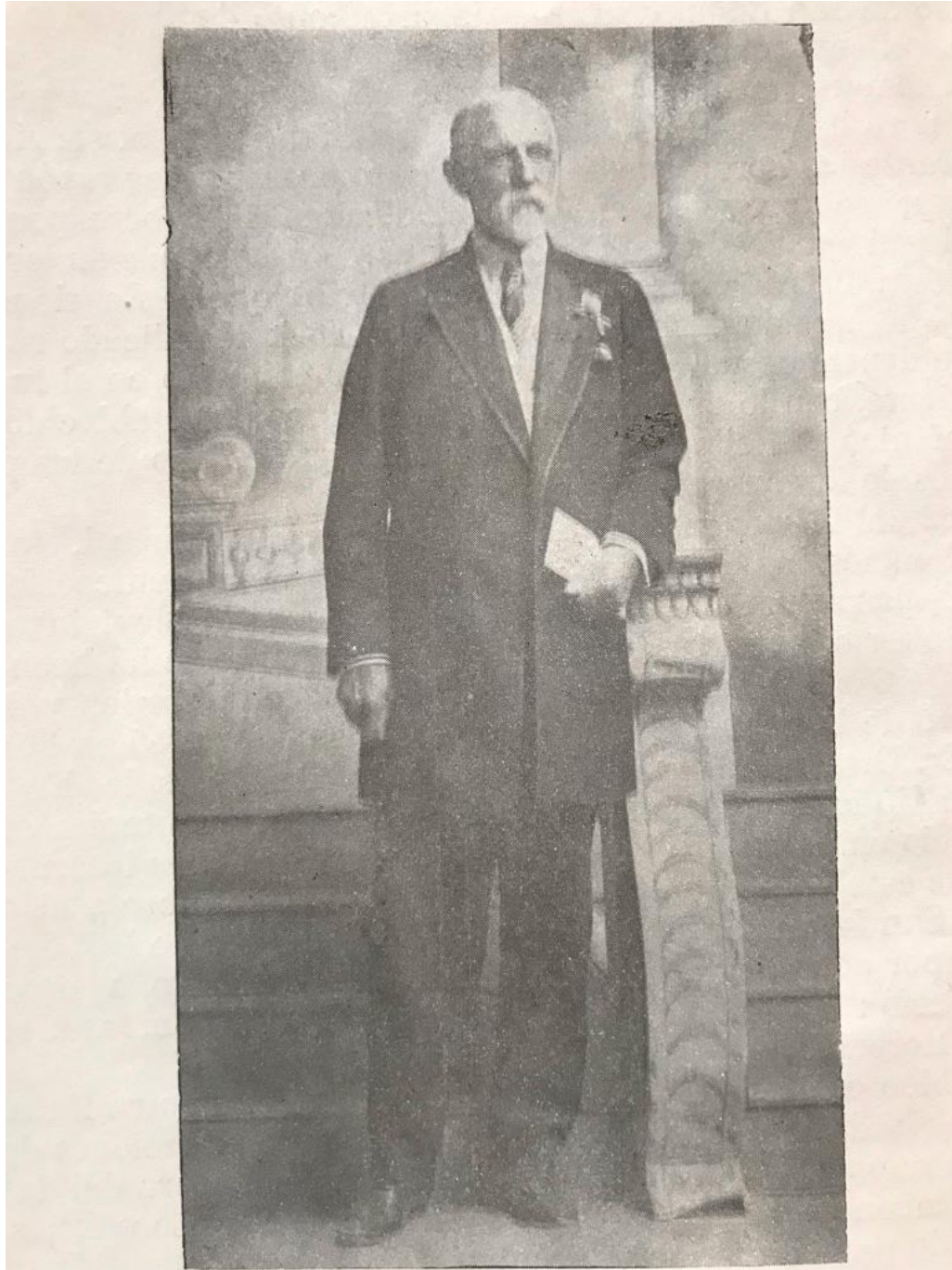
F: New Orleans Mascot, February 28, 1885.



G: "Only a Cock and Bull Story (about the new rebellion)," New York *Harper's Weekly*, Dec. 6, 1884.



H: Policarpo Bonilla, c. 1890s (Photo courtesy of Eric Schwimmer, used with permission).



I: Edward A. Burke, 1914.⁴

⁴ Tegucigalpa *Boletín de la Secretaria de Fomento, Obras Publicas, y Agricultura*, May 31, 1914.

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New Orleans Republican

New Orleans Times

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New York, *Century Magazine*

New York, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*

New York Herald

New York, *Illustrated American*

New York, *The Independent*

New York, *The Nation*

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