The Coming of the Mexican War: Joel Poinsett and Anthony Butler in Mexico, 1825-1836

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THE COMING OF THE MEXICAN WAR: JOEL POINSETT
AND ANTHONY BUTLER IN MEXICO,
1825-1836

Gallais E. Matheny

A thesis presented to the Department of History of Old Dominion College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in History

OLD DOMINION COLLEGE
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CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

We were sent to provoke a fight, but it was essential that Mexico should commence it. . . . Mexico showing no willingness to come to the Nueces to drive the invaders from her soil, it became necessary for the invaders to approach to within a convenient distance to be struck. . . .

The speaker was Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant in early April of 1846, and he was referring to the advance of United States troops under General Zachary Taylor into Mexico on orders from President James K. Polk. Another lieutenant in Grant's regiment stated that ". . . the march to the banks of the Rio Grande was of itself an act of hostility . . ." and that the United States forced Mexico into assuming the "... odium of beginning the war."\(^2\)

One of Taylor's regimental commanders perhaps summed it up best of all:

I have said from the first that the United States are the aggressors. We have outraged the Mexican government by an arrogance and presumption that deserves to be punished.

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For ten years we have been encroaching on Mexico and insulting her.\(^3\)

Mexican troops crossed the Rio Grande River on April 25, 1846, to attack Taylor's Detachments, and on May 3, President Polk declared that a state of war existed between the United States and Mexico.\(^4\)

The writer would slightly modify the pronouncement of Taylor's regimental commander so that it might state that the "United States had been encroaching on Mexico and insulting her" for some twenty-one years, since March of 1825 when Joel Poinsett of South Carolina was appointed Charge d'Affaires of the United States in Mexico.\(^5\) His primary objective was to purchase the territory of Texas from the Mexican government with the thought of annexing it into the union as soon as possible. Poinsett was frustrated at every turn, and in October of 1829 the Mexican government demanded his recall because

\[\ldots\ldots\text{public opinion has pronounced itself against him in the most conclusive, general, and decided manner}\ldots\ldots\text{not only among the authorities and men of education, but}\]

\(^3\)Quoted in Ibid., pp. 607-608.


\(^5\)James M. Callahan, American Foreign Policy in Mexican Relations (New York: Macmillan Company, 1932), p. 29. Hereinafter cited as Callahan, American Foreign Policy . . . .
also among the vulgar classes; not only among the individuals who suspected him, but also among many of those who have been his friends.  

His successor, Anthony Butler of Mississippi, ordered to resume these negotiations, was empowered to offer Mexico the sum of five million dollars, but, above all, to avoid the obvious mistakes of his predecessor. His diplomatic instructions from Secretary of State Martin Van Buren read:

A social, open, and frank deportment towards men of all classes and all parties; a proper degree of respect for their opinions, whatever they may be; a ready frankness in explaining the true policy of our government, without attempting to obtrude your views where they are not desired; and the guarded care in condemning or censuring theirs, are among the means which the president would suggest as most likely to command the confidence of the people, and to secure for yourself a proper standing in the opinion of their public functionaries.

The purpose of the present study is to analyze United States relations with Mexico in the period 1825-1836, focusing primarily on the ministries of Joel Poinsett and Anthony Butler, and most particularly on boundary questions between the two nations during that period. This emphasis is due to the fact that this writer believes that all major


7Van Buren to Butler, October 18, 1829, Ibid., pp. 40-53.
problems leading up to the Mexican War in 1846 stemmed from Poinsett's and Butler's misconduct of diplomacy during this period of eleven years in Mexico. They so thoroughly misled, antagonized, and insulted Mexico that the acquisition of Texas by peaceful means became nothing less than an outright impossibility. The United States government, particularly under President Andrew Jackson, constantly endorsed, and agitated for, the independence movement of Texas while it was a legally constituted province of Mexico, and when Texas did declare its independence and go to war with Mexico in 1836, the United States openly violated its proclaimed neutrality. Further aggravating the tense situation, Butler, backed by his government, was creating a completely untenable boundary dispute from 1829-1836 over the southwestern limits of Texas, a dispute that culminated in the Mexican War.

Thus the critical student of American history has a definite problem for analysis in the ministries of Joel Poinsett and Anthony Butler to Mexico. Their conduct and deceit, as well as that of their government, was so irresponsible that the Mexican War of 1846 was in effect a foregone conclusion by the time of Butler's withdrawal ten years earlier. If the above charges against Poinsett, Butler, and the United States government are proven correct,
then the immediate significance of their actions was a major cause of the Mexican War, out of which the United States gained possession of the vast New Mexico territory and Upper California, but the long range significance would obviously, and justifiably, be a deep-rooted distrust and suspicion on the part of Mexicans towards the United States which was to be reflected in diplomatic relations between the two countries for years to come.

Since the main object of Poinsett's and Butler's missions was always the purchase of Texas, and since the Texas-Mexico boundary was ultimately the main cause of armed conflict between the United States and Mexico, it would now seem appropriate to establish a background from which to consider the above points.

In 1685 the French explorer LaSalle, sailing under the auspices of Louis XIV, supposedly landed in Matagorda Bay and established a settlement on the Rio Grande, which broke up two years later when LaSalle was murdered. The French government, as well as Presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison of the United States, based future claims in Texas on this settlement. It is of some interest however,  

8Thomas Marshall, "The Southwestern Boundary of Texas, 1821-1840," Texas State Historical Association Quarterly, XIV (April, 1911), 278-79.
irrespective of future events, that many historians doubt that LaSalle's expedition settled as far west as the Rio Grande. Nevertheless, Spain's interest was then aroused and the Spanish explored and began to occupy eastern Texas, establishing their first mission, San Francisco de los Tejas, near the Neches River in 1690. Subsequent explorations penetrated to the Red River and finally to the Rio Grande with the mission of San Juan Bautista in 1700. Although France still claimed all territory to the Rio Grande in 1700, her activity west of the Sabine River was confined to several isolated trading posts and nothing resembling a colony had been built. Until 1727, the provinces of Texas and Coahuila were united under a single government, claiming the Medina River as a southwestern boundary.

Beginning in 1735, the French began to cross the Sabine, as their fort at Natchitoches was transferred to the west bank of the Red River and another fort was established.

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10 Marshall, Texas State Historical Association Quarterly, XIV, 277–278.

at Nacogdoches, but the Spanish government protested to no avail. In 1746, with the establishment of the Spanish province of Nuevo Santander, boundary questions took on a new complexity. Nuevo Santander and Coahuila had settlements on the Rio Grande, and Texas, now a separate unit, had as its boundary the San Antonio River. There were no settlements between the two rivers. In 1762, France ceded to Spain all lands west of the Mississippi, and boundary disputes between those two nations ceased to exist.

Beginning in 1778 with the Morfia Map, all official maps and documents for the rest of the century placed the boundary line between Texas and Nuevo Santander at the Nueces River, a line that was uncontested.

In 1800, by the Treaty of San Ildefonso, the Louisiana Territory was ceded to France by Spain, and when Napoleon then sold the land to the United States in 1803, it was supposedly to be under the same boundary limitations as it was when he had obtained it from Spain. The French did not define the western limits of the purchase, stating that "... this part of America contains little more than

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13 Ibid., p. 618.
14 Yoakum, History of Texas ..., I, 90.
15 Garrison, Westward Extension, p. 103; Marshall, Texas State Historical Association Quarterly, XIV, 278.
uninhabited forests and Indian tribes, and the necessity of fixing boundaries has never yet been felt there."16 Both President Jefferson and Secretary of State James Madison, desirous of obtaining the specific western limits of Louisiana, felt that they had some claim to the Rio Grande and determined to negotiate with Spain for clarification. Their claims to the Rio Grande were based on a various assortment of charters and maps including a Louis XIV charter issued in 1712 to Antoine Crozat for trading purposes around the Rio Grande; a British map by George Bowen in 1755 showing the boundaries of British, French, and Spanish colonies in America; and a Spanish map in 1762 released by Tomás López, geographer to the king. Their primary claims, however, were always based on LaSalle's expedition of 1685 as well as the fact that French settlers had recently located west of the Sabine River, the intended boundary.17 Accordingly, James Monroe and William Pinckney journeyed to Spain in


October, 1804, with instructions to negotiate for a boundary settlement at the Rio Grande, and Spain became so alarmed by these pretensions that she asked France to make a statement on the subject. Talleyrand immediately sided with the Spanish argument and replied that

... the United States cannot demand a cession of greater territory from Spain unless such an additional grant is agreed upon by some subsequent treaty between the said country and Spain. 18

Here the diplomatic discussions rested until 1818 as the United States rather reluctantly remained to the east of the Sabine River, but border disputes continued. General James Wilkinson, commander of American troops at Natchitoches, reported several clashes with Mexican settlers along the Sabine, and in July of 1806, Wilkinson, suspected of collaborating with Aaron Burr to undertake an expedition against Spanish Mexico, wrote to a friend that he planned to cross the Sabine with some five thousand troops and that with an additional fifteen or twenty thousand men, he could reach the coast of California. Wilkinson then dispatched his own personal agents into Mexico for advance intelligence reports, but the plan failed to materialize as the agents were captured. Then cognizant of Wilkinson's plot, Spain

immediately sent reinforcements to the western bank of the Sabine, and an uneasy cease-fire prevailed.  

Feeling somewhat secure about the boundary line between her empire and the United States, Spain in the meantime had taken corrective measures to clear up the confused boundary picture within her own empire. An official order of May 30, 1804, had said that all land between the Rio Grande and Nueces Rivers belonged to Nuevo Santander, an order that was reiterated in 1811. An official map, drawn for the Spanish government in January of 1816 by Joaquin de Arredondo, gave the Nueces as the boundary line between Texas and Nuevo Santander, and the Medina as the boundary between Texas and Coahuila. This was, and remained, the understanding both of Spain and later of Mexico. It was important with respect to the Texas-Nuevo Santander boundary that the Texans themselves always recognized the Nueces as their limits. Nuevo Santander maintained a Custom House between the Nueces and the Rio Grande and paid duties on

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19 Callahan, American Foreign Policy . . ., pp. 3-5; Bancroft, History of the North . . ., II, 9-13.

20 Authorities for these statements are numerous. See Bancroft, History of the North . . ., I, 602-605; Garrison, Westward Extension, pp. 103-105; and Marshall, Texas State Historical Association Quarterly, XIV, 278.
goods bound for Texas, and they also had distributed grants of land in the area to prominent Mexican citizens. Texas had never exercised any control whatsoever between the two rivers, and when they claimed the Rio Grande as their limits on declaring independence, Mexican General Francisco Mejía stated that "... the limits of Texas are certain and recognized; never have they extended beyond the River Nueces." 21

The United States supported Texas' claim to the Rio Grande, although that claim involved a portion of the New Mexico Territory. Ironically, after Texas had become a state and Governor George Wood sent a judge and troops to New Mexico territory, the United States government warned Texas to recall the judge and troops or they would face prosecution as aggressors. 22 The implication was clear that the United States never really accepted all of the Rio Grande as the boundary of Texas.

The final negotiations for the Florida territory continued through 1818 with Secretary of State John Quincy Adams still pressing United States demands for the boundary at the Rio Grande. When it became apparent that there was

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22 Morgan, Great River ..., pp. 799-800.
no hope of claiming Texas, however, Adams gradually retreated from his extreme demand and accepted the Sabine River. As the Florida purchase and the Texas boundary question were always considered together by the negotiators and never as separate issues, the United States had to renounce forever "... all rights, claims, and pretensions..." to Texas in order to secure the Florida Territory. The treaty was finally signed on February 22, 1819.23

Interestingly enough, shortly after the completion of the Florida Treaty, James Long and a company of seventy-five men moved into Texas in June, 1819, with the thought of transforming the province into an independent republic, claiming that the United States had no right to give away Texas land without the consent of the people of Texas. Long and his men, failing to rally the necessary support for his idea and succeeding only in arousing the ire and suspicion of Mexico, ended up in jail, and later was released as a favor to Minister Joel Poinsett.24 Despite this incident, the Mexican government still was liberal enough in its

23 Bancroft, History of the North..., II, 45; Callahan, American Foreign Policy..., pp. 16-17.
24 Callahan, American Foreign Policy..., p. 18.
thinking to grant Moses Austin a tract of land around Béxar to establish a colony in February, 1821.\textsuperscript{25}

In September of 1822, Joel Poinsett was sent to Mexico by President Monroe in an unofficial capacity to ascertain overall conditions there as well as to judge the durability of the imperial Iturbide government and whether or not Iturbide was in power by consent of the people. Shortly after his arrival, Poinsett had come to some very rapid conclusions. Obviously repulsed by the character of Iturbide, he pictured him after their initial meeting as a Machiavellian whose "... usurpation of the chief authority has been the most glaring and unjustifiable, and his exercise of power arbitrary and tyrannical." Furthermore, Iturbide was unscrupulous and not a man of talents, and Mexico as a country was not suited to Republican institutions.\textsuperscript{25} This would seem to be quite an analysis for just one meeting with the Mexican President, but Poinsett did correctly predict his coming fall.


\textsuperscript{26}Joel Roberts Poinsett, \textit{Notes on Mexico Made During the Autumn of 1822} (London: John Miller Company, 1825), pp. 91-93. Hereinafter cited as Poinsett, \textit{Notes} ...
In November, 1822, Poinsett obtained the release of James Long's filibustering expedition, and although they were mainly citizens of the United States, Poinsett stated that "... our government has not claimed them, and could not do so with propriety."27 It was about this time that the South Carolinian definitely showed a lack of diplomacy and an unwarranted frankness in explaining to Juan Azcarate y Lezama, a high-ranking Mexican official, that the United States wanted not only Texas but New Mexico, Upper California, Sonora, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and parts of Lower California.28 General Álvaro Obregón, also present at this meeting, was then prompted to say, with apparent justification, that Poinsett "... possessed no diplomatic talent."29

The bulk of Poinsett's Notes on Mexico Made During the Autumn of 1822 concerned overall impressions of the country, in which he lauded the Mexican peasantry for their orderliness and submissiveness, in contrast to the people living in the

27Ibid., pp. 164-165.


cities who were "... immoral and viscous [sic] in the extreme."30 He correctly foresaw that he would have difficulties with the British in Mexico, stating that the government had a great desire to conciliate Great Britain, needing the support of a great manufacturing and commercial people for their own commercial interests. "We shall glean something of the commerce of their country, but the harvest will be for the British."31 In an analysis that was later used to its utmost potential by Anthony Butler, he found the Mexican priests to exercise an enormous influence on the people, although being greedy, immoral and "... adverse to civil liberties ... ."32

In arriving at a frank evaluation of Poinsett's mission of 1822, one cannot help but condemn his poor methods and lack of any diplomatic finesse. While correctly forecasting the impermanence and imminent fall of the Iturbide government, there can be no official justification for his frank avowal of the territorial designs of the United States. Nor can there be any doubt that the actual beginning of

30 Poinsett, Notes . . . . , p. 266.
31 Ibid., p. 93.
32 Ibid., p. 164.
suspicion and distrust toward the United States originated with his 1822 mission and that his frank disdain for Mexican leaders and institutions, based as they were upon spot judgments, colored his subsequent negotiations with Mexico.

While Poinsett was still in Mexico, in January of 1823, the official post of United States Minister to Mexico was offered to Andrew Jackson. Jackson stated at the time that

... The present unhappy revolutionary state of Mexico, with an oppressed people struggling for their liberties against an Emperor, whom they have branded with the epithets of usurper, and tyrant, convinces me no minister from the United States could at this period effect any beneficial treaty for this country; and of the impolicy of a Republican Representative at a court which might be construed as countenancing the Empire in opposition to a Republic--The People of Mexico in their honest efforts for freedom, command my warmest sympathies; and their success is intimately the ultimate and general triumph of those liberal principles for which our Revolutionary worthies bled; and which now form the pride and boast of United America--With these feelings and wishes, and which I believe to be in unison with my fellow citizens generally; you may readily conceive that my situation at Mexico would be embarrassing to me, independent of the conviction that I was rendering no service to my country. To render service could alone constitute any motive for again acting in a public capacity ... 33

Thus, it is apparent that Jackson had a definite antipathy to the Mexican government and looked to the day when liberal

33United States, National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Despatches from Mexico, microfilm, I, March 15, 1823. Hereinafter cited as Despatches from Mexico.
principles might triumph. Jackson also spoke of "revolutionary worthies" and rendering service, and it is a question for historians whether this rendering of service meant fostering an independence movement in Texas. This question, and Jackson's motives, will be considered later in this study.

After much deliberation on many other candidates, notably Henry Wheaton, Thomas Hart Benton, and William Henry Harrison, President Monroe finally offered the post to Poinsett in July, 1824. Due to Poinsett's refusal to leave until after he was certain of Jackson's defeat in the 1824 presidential election, his instructions were not issued until March, 1825, by the new Secretary of State, Henry Clay. At that time he became the first United States Minister to Mexico.

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CHAPTER II

POINSETT'S EARLY DIFFICULTIES:

1825-1826

Joel Roberts Poinsett was only forty-six years old when he left to represent the United States in Mexico in 1825, but in his relatively short diplomatic career up until that time he had accumulated a wealth of valuable experiences. A liberal Jacksonian democrat, Poinsett had represented his home state of South Carolina in the United States House of Representatives, had served as Consul General for his country in Buenos Aires, Peru, and Chile from 1810-1815, and had also been in an unofficial capacity in South America to determine the state of its affairs following the independence revolutions. Furthermore, he was well-educated, well-traveled, and quite proficient with the Spanish language, and despite his undiplomatic frankness as to United States territorial designs during his 1822 mission, the overall impression that he had left in Mexico was a favorable one.¹

Secretary of State Henry Clay's instructions to Poinsett dealt with five particular subjects, the most important of which was a suggested revision of the 1819 boundary line between the Louisiana Territory and Mexico. The minister was directed to explain to Mexican officials the principles of inter-continental law as we then interpreted them and also to make it clear that we would not hesitate to proclaim the use of the Monroe Doctrine whenever applicable. Mexico was to be brought to a thorough understanding of the Monroe Doctrine. The return of fugitive slaves was to be provided for, as there had recently been a number of escapes along the frontier borders. Poinsett was to attempt to effect a beneficial commercial treaty which would include a joint commission to draw up plans for a road from the western frontier of Missouri in the direction of Sante Fe in New Mexico Territory. Both countries would pay an equal amount.²

But Clay, a vehement opponent of the 1819 Treaty in which the United States gave up all pretensions and claims to Texas, was primarily concerned with expanding in order

²Clay to Poinsett, March 26, 1825, in United States, National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Diplomatic Instructions, All Countries, microfilm, X, 225. Hereinafter cited as Diplomatic Instructions.
to obtain "... that territory lost in the treaty with Spain...," and Poinsett's main task was always to seek a new boundary line.3

The line of the Sabine approaches our great western mart nearer than could be wished. Perhaps the Mexican government may not be unwilling to establish that of the Rio Brazos de Dios, or the Rio Colorado, or the Snow Mountains, or the Rio Grande in lieu of it. By the agreed line, portions of both the Red River and branches of the Arkansas are thrown on the Mexican side, and navigation of both of those rivers, as well as that of the Sabine, is made common to the respective inhabitants of the two countries. When the countries adjacent to those waters shall become thickly inhabited, collisions and misunderstandings may arise from the community thus established, in the use of their navigation, which it would be well now to prevent.

As to what benefit Mexico would derive from such a vast transfer of land, Clay stated that Mexico's capital would then be closer to the center of all Mexican territories and, furthermore, the troublesome Comanche Indians would become the problem of the United States.4 Clay's reasoning was interesting in that, not giving the Mexicans credit for much intelligence, he apparently thought that they might be gullible enough to accept it. This same underestimation of, or lack of respect for, Mexican intelligence also characterized subsequent American negotiations. Clay's argument

3Callahan, American Foreign Policy ..., p. 31.

4Clay to Poinsett, March 26, 1825, Diplomatic Instructions, X, p. 225.
was about as convincing in this instance as saying:

Your house is not in the middle of your fields. Give me forty acres next to my line and you will not have to go so far to work. Besides, this field contains an ugly patch of thistles which my superior industry and intelligence will enable me to cope with more successfully than you can.5

Clay's final statement was that his minister should "... show on all occasions an unobtrusive readiness to explain the practical operation and the very great advantages which appertain to our system of government."6 It was this final objective that landed Joel Poinsett in a great deal of difficulty and lead to his recall on charges of interfering with internal Mexican affairs.

In approximately 1811, Masonic lodges were founded in Mexico that practiced the Scottish rite. This group, known as the Escoceses and purely political in nature, was composed of professional and commercial people and well-to-do landowners, and they were definitely opposed to republican principles of government.7 These were the

5Manning, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XVII, 224.

6Clay to Poinsett, March 26, 1825, Diplomatic Instructions, X, p. 225.

7Rives, The United States and Mexico ... I, 163.
Centralists. Poinsett, considering it as part of his mission to espouse republican principles, also felt duty bound to work for the overthrow of hereditary privilege and aristocracy. Accordingly, not long after his arrival, he began to organize rival lodges dedicated to liberal ideals, the Yorkinos. As the lodges grew in membership and effectiveness, the country became divided into two political camps—the Yorkinos and the Escoceses. Poinsett, although he claimed to have withdrawn himself from the York lodges not long after their formation and disassociated himself from any further political intrigue, had practically ruined any possible chances of success in subsequent negotiations. The Escoceses quite naturally aligned themselves against him, and, due to unfavorable public sentiment then existing against the United States, the Yorkinos were also forced to oppose him and to disavow any association with him. Poinsett himself had noted this hostility from the very beginning of his mission, and he later wrote President Adams:

They regarded the United States with distrust and the most unfounded jealousy—a feeling which, I am sorry to say, still exists, and which, during the present administration, cannot be changed. It is in vain that I represent the disinterested and generous conduct of the United States towards these countries. . . .

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8 Poinsett to Adams, Poinsett Mss, April 26, 1827, Quoted in Ibid., 165.
As will subsequently be seen, Poinsett's statement that he was completely "disinterested" was untrue, and it is extremely difficult to justify his excursions into local politics, much less his explanations attempting to explain them. To acknowledge an existing feeling of hostility against his country and then to give foundation to this feeling in any way would have to be called poor diplomacy.

Poinsett had also given Mexicans further doubts as to his disinterested conduct in the future when he had spoken of reopening the Texas boundary controversy on June 1, 1825, in a conference with President Victoria. Also present at this conference was Henry Ward, newly-arrived Minister from England, whose objective was the closing of a favorable commercial treaty. Ward and the English Foreign Secretary, George Canning, became quite instrumental in turning Mexican public opinion against Poinsett, as well as outmaneuvering him diplomatically at every turn. Canning had already warned Mexico that the Monroe Doctrine showed the United States plan "... to connect itself with all the powers of America in a trans-Atlantic league of which it would have the sole direction."

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9Callahan, American Foreign Policy . . . , p. 35.
A source of British strength and popularity in Mexico was their pledge in October, 1823, that the British would not allow the former Spanish colonies to be taken over by anyone—a statement of policy which sounded far more disinterested and agreeable to the Mexicans. Also important in molding anti-American feeling was Henry Ward, who constantly worked to show Mexico that the United States sought to annex Texas by any means possible and that further admission of Americans into Texas was definitely not for their own good.10

On July 12, 1825, Poinsett officially met for the first time with Lucás Alamán, Mexican Minister of Foreign Relations, concerning the boundary. He reasoned that although the United States government considered itself bound by the limits of the Treaty of 1819, it would still like to establish a new boundary line "... which would be more easily defined, and which might be mutually more advantageous." Alamán then proposed the creation of a joint commission to consider the territory thereby affected so that the two countries could "... act understandingly on the subject ...," but Poinsett objected due to the time element involved.11

10Parton, Career of Poinsett, pp. 74-76.
11Poinsett to Clay, July 18, 1825, Despatches from Mexico, I
United States government, as expected by Poinsett, also refused to accede to Mexico's joint commission proposal due to the loss of time that it would cause, although it did suggest the creation of separate commissions. These commissions would then make their separate reports and negotiations would proceed on this basis. Even to the lay surveyor with little knowledge of the problems involved in the two surveys, it would seem that the United States proposal would take more time, since there would undoubtedly be a great deal of discussion of, and revision concerning, the two separate surveys before a final acceptable compromise could be reached. Surely a joint commission could have ironed out many of these problems in the process of completing one survey and thereby minimized the discussions to follow.

During the next two weeks, Poinsett and Alamán conversed frequently on the proposed boundary revision, and on July 27, the American minister reported to Clay and revealed his true feeling on the subject--namely his plan to stall for time until an American-dominated Texas might become either too difficult for Mexico to cope with or which would revolt and declare its independence from Mexico. If the former happened, the

12Clay to Poinsett, September 24, 1825, Diplomatic Instructions, X, p. 835.
United States could probably then buy the province with less money and less trouble. If the latter happened, as was later encouraged by Anthony Butler, then the acquisition of Texas could be accomplished without spending a cent. Poinsett wrote:

> It appears to me that it will be important to gain time if we wish to extend our territory beyond the boundary agreed upon by the Treaty of 1819. Most of the good land from the Colorado to the Sabine has been granted by the state of Texas and is rapidly peopling with either grantees or squatters from the United States, a population they will find difficult to govern, and perhaps after a short period they may not be so averse to part with that portion of their territory as they are at present. 13

It is interesting to note that Poinsett referred to "... that portion of their territory..." and not a portion of United States territory, or even a portion of disputed territory, as certain Congressional leaders had proclaimed following the 1819 Treaty and proclaimed right on up to the time when Texas was annexed. With respect to the United States boundary claim to the Rio Grande, it would seem to have been mainly for external consumption when one considers the number of separate proposals and counter-proposals made to Mexico which were calculated to bring additional territory to the United States. If the United

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13Poinsett to Clay, July 27, 1825, Despatches from Mexico, I.
States government, despite agreeing to give up all claims to Texas in the 1819 Treaty, truly believed that the Louisiana Territory extended to the Rio Grande and not just into Texas at some other locale, then their constant proposals for boundary revision should have consistently reflected this belief. Instead, these proposals consistently varied. Clay's opening instructions showed doubt and pragmatism. Poinsett again wrote Clay on August 5:

... while it will be politic not to justify their jealous fears on that subject by extravagant pretensions, I think it of the greatest importance that we should extend our territory toward the Rio Grande either to the Colorado or at least to the Brazos. We ought to have on the frontier a hardy race of white settlers which the climate of that region and country situated between the Mississippi and the Sabine will not admit of. 14

Poinsett's thinking was obviously not motivated by the legality of the United States claim to the Rio Grande. Instead, it seems to be a cross between the ideas of manifest destiny and the "white man's burden."

Having reached a hopeless stalemate with respect to the appointment of a joint boundary commission, Poinsett next turned his attention to negotiating a treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation, and on August 22, 1825, he met with Alamán and José Esteva, Secretary of State and Treasury,

14Poinsett to Clay, August 5, 1825, Ibid.
for that purpose. His efforts to secure a most-favored-nation agreement for the United States met with little success as Mexico favored the principle of reciprocity. Their point of view was that, due to the greater tonnage involved, the reciprocity agreement would favor the United States anyway, and besides, they had just turned down a similar British request over the loud protests of Ward. Mexico would grant special provisions to those republics which had declared independence with them, as Alamán declared that a sort of fraternal bond existed with the other former Spanish colonies. Poinsett, however, failed to understand this reasoning, stating that the policy of his government was one of such extraordinary sympathy, friendship, and understanding that he felt it had a right to be considered on at least an equal footing with any of the newer American republics.

On September 27, 1825, Don Manuel Gómez Pedraza replaced Alamán and immediately tried to get Poinsett to accept Mexico’s principle of reciprocity, as England had already done, and to sign similar agreements, but the American declined,

15American State Papers, Foreign Relations, VI, p. 583.
16Parton, Career of Poinsett, pp. 88-90.
pointing out that England's interests and those of the United States were different. England sought merely commercial profits while the United States wanted to build up the American system in the hemisphere. Further elaborating on his feelings, Poinsett wrote Rufus King on October 10, that his primary objection was that the proposal would detract from the proper dignity and respect due to his government.

This type of thinking would seem to back up the charge of Canning that the United States desired a trans-Atlantic league of American states with the United States as the sole determinant of policy, although Canning probably had insufficient evidence to back up the charge when he initially made it.

Undoubtedly Mexico's major reason for granting special privileges to the other new American republics, a reason Poinsett and Clay woefully failed to overcome, was that it was a necessary alignment to guard against a future Spanish attack if it ever came. Poinsett's reply was a reminder of the existence of the Monroe Doctrine, but Mexican officials

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17Poinsett to Clay September 28, 1825, Despatches from Mexico, I.

asked if this definitely meant that the United States was willing to take an active part in a hypothetical contest between Spain and her former colonies. Was the Monroe Doctrine so much verbiage, or would the United States promise real and positive military assistance as the other American republics had done? Poinsett's reply, not destined to reassure the Mexican diplomats present, was that it would be "... highly impolitic and injudicious, to all parties, for the United States to take part in the present contest between Spain and her former colonies."19 Henry Clay's reasoning in this instance was both confused and confusing, if not almost absurd. The Secretary of State felt that should the United States pledge military assistance in this purely problematical contest between Spain and her former colonies, as the Monroe Doctrine clearly implied if not stated, the result would be disadvantageous to Mexico. Why? Because a war between the United States and Spain would arouse so much sentiment that the other American republics might ally with Spain and make Mexico's problem even greater. The United States would not be a part to "... a principle wholly inadmissible and which, being assented to in the case of Mexico, might form a

19Parton, Career of Poinsett, pp. 92-93.
precedent to be extended to others of the new states."²⁰ The Mexican delegates by this time were thoroughly confused as to the true meaning of the Monroe Doctrine, and since the American minister could not satisfactorily explain it to them, the conference broke up, not to reconvene for another seven months.

Definitely a hindrance to Poinsett at the conference, however, was the fact that while the proceedings were going on, a radical change had occurred in the ministry whereby the centralist faction then in power was overcome by the federalists, or Yorkinos, and he was cited for exerting undue influence in the elections to effect a new boundary for his country at the expense of Mexican territory. As previously stated, although the Yorkinos were favorable to the interests of the United States, they were forced to disavow this sentiment in the face of overwhelming anti-United States sentiment among the populace. This factor would have limited Poinsett's effectiveness at the conference even without his failure to deal persuasively with Mexico's objections to the most-favored-nation clause.²¹

²⁰Clay to Poinsett, November 9, 1825, Quoted in Ibid., p. 94.

²¹Manning, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XVII, 229.
The diplomats reconvened on May 6, 1826, with Sebastian Camacho replacing Pedraza as the chief Mexican official. Although the commercial aspects of Poinsett's mission are not intended to be an important part of this study, and hence will not be emphasized, the writer will try to bring out certain pertinent points thought to be characteristic of the overall attitude of Mexico or the United States, or which would affect boundary negotiations. This does not mean to imply that these commercial aspects were not important, because they certainly were. Poinsett did begin negotiations that culminated in a successful and profitable treaty but if properly treated they would constitute a thesis in themselves.

With few real problems, the Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation was completed and signed on July 10 with both the American and Mexican delegations giving in on several points. In Article Two, Mexico agreed to the principle of reciprocity whereby no special favors would be granted to new American republics. Poinsett in turn dropped his

22For excellent coverage of negotiations leading to the Treaty, see Parton, Career of Poinsett, pp. 109-117. For the Treaty itself, see American State Papers, Foreign Relations, VI, 590-597.
demands for a most-favored-nation clause for the United States. Both sides also agreed that citizens of either country could travel freely in the other, while Mexico pledged prompt return of any fugitive slaves from the United States as soon as they might be apprehended. The only touchy issue was Article Thirteen which said in effect that free ships carried free goods, with Mexico objecting due to extensive American smuggling operations on their coast. Frequent complaints had been made to Poinsett about this smuggling and he had relayed these complaints to Clay, but the operations continued. Camacho also lodged a personal complaint about Lewis McGregor, Poinsett's assistant, citing him for improper conduct and being openly opposed to the government. Poinsett assured Camacho that McGregor would be removed and that the United States would investigate the charges of smuggling. Accordingly, Mexico agreed to Article Thirteen. All that remained was for both governments to ratify the Treaty and for the ratification to be exchanged within eight months.

It would seem that both the Mexican delegates and Poinsett's group were sincere in their desire to effect a successful treaty, but it should be noted that the Government

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23 Poinsett's early correspondence contains frequent Mexican complaints. For the charges against McGregor, see Poinsett to Clay, July 12, 1826, Despatches from Mexico, II.
in Washington took no effective steps, if any, to limit smuggling, and also, for various reasons, delayed the passage of the Treaty for two years after Poinsett's recall. The Mexican Congress, suspicious of the fact that the Treaty did not mention the United States' acceptance of the 1819 boundary line, also delayed ratification until an article would be added stating that the United States would respect the 1819 limits until new limits were mutually agreed upon.24 In the meantime, the separate commissions were to examine closely the country near the proposed boundary and to make recommendations for the facilitation of a new treaty of limits.

Unrest in Texas, British antagonism, and widening of anti-United States feeling in Mexico occupied Poinsett's time in the closing months of 1826. As early as March, 1826, a minor rebellion had taken place in Texas and Poinsett had been called in for lengthy discussions with President Victoria about it, assuring him that neither he nor his government was at all connected with it.25 Although

24Camacho and Esteva to Poinsett, June 19, 1826, in American State Papers, Foreign Relations, VI, 599.

25Poinsett to Clay, March 3, 1826, Despatches from Mexico, I.
Victoria was momentarily satisfied, The British Charge, Henry Ward, was not. In a confidential note to George Canning, Ward wrote:

Mister Poinsett's views are equally mysterious, without indeed one supposes what one has always been inclined to think—namely that he has never had any other object than to throw this country into confusion in order to facilitate the acquisition of the territory to the north of the Rio Brazos, by his own.26

Granting that Ward and Poinsett were political rivals, each trying to secure advantageous concessions for his country each at the expense of the other, the important fact here was that the above charge was not made for propaganda purposes but rather as a personal observation. Ward and Poinsett were seeing a lot of each other, both in and out of diplomatic circles, and thus Ward's statement, since it was not for Mexican consumption, should carry some weight. The exact charges were later lodged against Poinsett by several local legislatures, notably the Congress of Vera Cruz.27

The event that really inflamed Mexican public opinion was the so-called Fredonian Revolt in December, 1826, when

26 Ward to Canning, March 31, 1827, most confidential, excerpts in Parton, Diplomatic Career . . . , pp. 117-118.

Hayden Edwards and several friends made a treaty with the Cherokee Indians whereby Texas was declared independent from Mexico and the state divided between the red man and the white man. This abortive plot was almost immediately put down by Mexican troops together with a group of settlers under Stephen Austin, and the Fredonians quickly broke up with only token resistance.\textsuperscript{28} This independence revolt, although a complete farce, marked an important turning point in diplomatic relations between the two countries. Obregón, Mexican Minister in Washington, stated that the Texans, always a problem to Mexico, considered themselves American colonists and would unite with their country as soon as possible. The Texans also broke any Mexican law that they considered inconvenient, notably the one prohibiting slavery, and the only way Mexico could maintain peace was to disallow any further American settlements, as well as to send in troops to keep the peace at present. Obregón stated distinctly that he was not accusing the United States of any involvement in the Texas situation, but only that he wanted Mexico alerted to the seriousness of the unrest, as demonstrated by the Fredonian Revolt, and to take the necessary measures to

\textsuperscript{28}There are varying accounts of this revolt, but see Bancroft, \textit{History of the North . . .}, II, 98-110 for an objective analysis.
quiet it.²⁹ Henry Ward, however, saw the rebellion differently. Again in a confidential letter to Canning, he said that the Fredonian Revolt illustrated his conviction that

... the great end of Mister Poinsett's Mission ... is to embroil Mexico in a civil war, and to facilitate ... the acquisition of the Provinces to the North of the Rio Bravo ... ³⁰

1826, the first full year of his ministry, had thus ended on an unfortunate note for Joel Poinsett. The Mexican populace and a good percentage of higher officials resented his interference in local politics and his association with the Yorkinos. His country was being blamed, by the people anyway, of trying to foster an independence rebellion in Texas and for delaying the passage of the Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation, his only positive accomplishment to date. The English commercial treaty with Mexico, ratified in London on December 10, was more favorable to England than his treaty was to the United States.³¹ He had failed effectively to counter the accusations made against him personally and against his government by Ward and Canning.

²⁹Manning, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XVII, 233.
³⁰British Foreign Office (50), p. 31, Quoted in Rippy, Rivalry. , p. 285.
³¹Parton, Career of Poinsett, p. 117.
and there seemed to be no immediate possibility of negotiating a treaty of limits with a new boundary line. Nevertheless, despite all of these problems, Poinsett's difficulties in 1825 and 1826 appear mild when compared to those which he was destined to face in the next three years.
CHAPTER III

POINSETT'S FAILURE: BOUNDARY PROBLEMS

AND THE YORKINOS

In Washington, Henry Clay hastened to express the regret of his government over the recent disturbances in Texas. He wrote Obregón:

... I hasten by the direction of the President to express to you the very great regret which he feels on account of the existence of those disturbances. The frankness which has ever characterized the government of the United States in all its intercourse with foreign powers and the friendly feelings which it cherishes for the welfare of the Republic of the United Mexican States supercede altogether any necessity for the assurance which, nevertheless, I take pleasure in giving that the government of the United States has not given the smallest countenance or encouragement to those disturbances. The President has directed orders to be conveyed to that portion of the military force of the United States which is stationed on the Mexican frontier to give no aid or succor of any kind to those who have taken arms against or may oppose the authority of the government of the United Mexican States; and he will see the restoration of tranquility with much satisfaction.

President Victoria was satisfied that the United States had not encouraged the Texas revolt, although he related his desire to Poinsett that Adams should make a public statement to that effect. Victoria's opinion was singular, however, as the Mexican Congress charged that the United States

\[1\] Letter enclosed in Obregón to Secretario, 17 de Febrero de 1827, quoted in Manning, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XVII, pp. 233-234.
"... was privy to this movement, if indeed it had not encouraged it." [The Texas Revolt]. El Sol, the popular anti-United States newspaper, echoed the opinion of Congress and carried its indictment even further.2

If the United States government was disavowing any connection with revolts in Texas, it was nevertheless ready to take advantage of them. Clay wrote Poinsett that Mexican land grants to citizens of the United States

... authorize the belief that but little value is placed upon the possession of that province by that government... These emigrants will carry with them our principles of law, liberty, and religious freedom, and however much it might be hoped that they might be disposed to amalgamate with the ancient inhabitants of Mexico, so far as political freedom is concerned, it would be almost too much to expect that all collisions would be avoided on other subjects. Already some of these collisions have manifested themselves, and others, in the progress of time, may be anticipated with confidence. These collisions may insensibly enlist the sympathies and feelings of the two republics and lead to misunderstanding.

The Secretary of State then proposed the creation of a new boundary line and authorized Poinsett to offer a monetary reward for either one of two suggestions. It is again obvious that United States' suggestions for new boundary lines were motivated by preference and practicality and did not mention the legality of the supposed claim to the Rio Grande.

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2 Poinsett to Clay, March 8, 1827, Despatches from Mexico, II.
The boundary which we prefer is that which, beginning at the mouth of the Rio Grande in the sea, shall ascend that river to the mouth of the Rio Puerco, thus ascending this river to its source, and from its source, by a line due north, to strike the Arkansas, thence following the course of the southern bank of the Arkansas to its source, in latitude forty-two degrees north, and thence by that parallel of latitude to the South sea. The boundary thus described would, according to the United States' Tanner's map, published in the United States, leave Santa Fe within the limits of Mexico and the whole of Red River or Rio Roxo and the Arkansas, as far up as it is probably navigable, within the limits assigned to the United States. If that boundary be unattainable, we would, as the next most desirable, agree to that of the Colorado, beginning at its mouth, in the bay of Bernardo, and ascending the river to its source, and thence by a line due north to the Arkansas, and thence, as above traced, to the South sea. This latter boundary would probably also give us the whole of the Red River, would throw us somewhat farther from Santa Fe, but it would strike the Arkansas probably at a navigable point. To obtain the first-described boundary, the President authorizes you to offer to the Government of Mexico a sum not exceeding one million of dollars. If you find it impracticable to procure that line, you are then authorized to offer, for the above line of the Colorado, the sum of five hundred thousand dollars. If either of the above offers should be accepted, you may stipulate for the payment of the sum of money, as you may happen to agree, within any period not less than three months after the exchange at the city of Washington of the ratifications of the treaty. 3

Although feeling that the sum offered Mexico for either portion of territory was too small, Poinsett immediately approached the Secretary of Foreign Relations on the subject. After several lengthy discussions he wrote Clay that the

3Clay to Poinsett, March 15, 1827, Diplomatic Instructions, XI, pp. 270-273.
Mexican government was determined not to part with any segment of their Texas province "... because it would be considered a dismemberment of the Mexican territory, which is prohibited by the Constitution."\(^4\) A probable factor in Mexico's pronouncement was the fact that recently in Washington, Obregón had complained to Clay of "... unwarranted and unauthorized incursions from the United States into territory of the United Mexican States."\(^5\) An obvious deadlock had been reached, and nothing of major importance on the subject of limits took place until the following year.

In the meantime, Poinsett had come under a great deal of criticism within Mexico for his association with the Yorkinos, the anti-administration lodge of Masons. The Puebla and Vera Cruz legislatures sent in fully-endorsed petitions to the Mexican National Congress demanding his recall. On July 8, 1827, Poinsett wrote Clay in detail of the charges and his rebuttals, enclosing a copy of the "Manifest of the Congress of Vera Cruz to the Mexican Nation."

Poinsett personally was accused of being "... destitute of

\(^4\)Poinsett to Clay, January 8, 1828, Despatches from Mexico, III.

\(^5\)Clay to Poinsett, March 29, 1827, Diplomatic Instructions, XI, p. 236.
honor, . . . a disturber of order, . . . and a hazard to the public tranquility." The York Lodge was accused of being composed mainly of Spaniards and Iturbidists which created "... hatred and want of confidence, and consequently division and parties between the simple and worthy Mexicans." The Yorkinos, as founded by Poinsett, were an "instrument of vengeance" for the ousted Iturbidists that led to anarchy. Furthermore, the policy of the United States, through Poinsett's "subtle mind," was directed to breaking Mexico's prosperity and checking her rising greatness by the unwarranted seizure of territory.⁶

Poinsett's explanations concerning the above charges were not only unconvincing, but, in the case of the political motives of the Yorkinos, unbelievable. He also seemingly contradicted himself on numerous occasions. He began the letter to Clay by stating that he had not demanded satisfaction from Vera Cruz, because if he had failed to obtain it, he would have had to leave Mexico, and the Vera Cruz Legislature would have gotten its desired result from the publicity.

⁶The indictment of the Vera Cruz Legislature, together with his rebuttals, are found in Poinsett to Clay, July 8, 1827, Despatches from Mexico, III.
He admitted that the Scottish Masons were the only organized party when he arrived and also that the group was already hostile to the United States. In what must be considered a grave diplomatic error, he also stated that he was against the ideas and personalities representing both the government and the Scottish Masons. He called President Victoria a "... weak man influenced first by a woman and then by a fanatical priest." In the same paragraph he called the United States policy in Mexico "... generous, disinterested, and magnanimous," while admitting his "... well-known addiction to the cause of liberties and independence of the Americas." Again contradicting himself, he stated that he thought that the Yorkinos were "... friends of order and were animated by the purest motives," and that he knew that they were against the government. Later he said that the Yorkinos were "... calculated to extend liberal views." Surely if the government were a monarchy and if the Yorkinos were going to "extend liberal views," he could have foreseen future problems. In still another contradiction he admitted setting up the Yorkinos for persons whom he knew "intimately," and yet he then told Clay that he had no idea that they would become an anti-government political party. It would seem highly improbable that he would not know the motives of
persons whom he knew intimately, particularly when it is considered that he admitted that their principles coincided with his. The South Carolinian also answered the charge of the Vera Cruz Legislature that his government was jealous of Mexico's relationship with England by saying that the United States and England had identical interests in Mexico. Earlier, he had stated that English and American aims in Mexico were motivated by different considerations. In a confusing statement following his portrait of the government as being inimical to republican principles, Poinsett wrote:

I could not suppose that any objection could be made in a republic against the formation of an institution so purely and perfectly republican.

In a final statement in his defense, the American minister assured his Secretary of State that he "... had never taken any part in the internal affairs of Mexico ..." and that he had only tried "... to explain the practical benefits of the institutions of the United States and the blessings which his countrymen have enjoyed and still continue to enjoy under them." 7

Henry Clay wholeheartedly accepted Poinsett's explanations, reasoning that since the government in Washington had not been informed officially, then the charges against his

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7 Poinsett to Clay, August 2, 1829, Despatches from Mexico, IV.
minister must be groundless. He assured Poinsett that his recall was not desired, although if he was uncomfortable, he should not remain against his own wishes. "You should conform to your own inclination." Joel Poinsett chose to remain, although for all practical purposes his effectiveness was ended and his mission doomed. Richard Pakenham, Ward's successor in Mexico, had previously written Canning that

... it cannot be denied that he has identified himself with a sect of people whose object appears to be nothing short of bringing about a revolution, and that by the countenance and assistance which he has afforded them, and the active part which he has taken in their intrigues, he has done considerable mischief to this country, without in any way advancing the interest of his own.9

In the opening months of 1828, Poinsett's attention was once again turned to the Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation. A stalemate had occurred after Mexico's demand in June, 1826, that an article be inserted whereby the United States would respect the boundary limits of the Treaty of 1819. Poinsett wrote Clay that despite his many attempts to the contrary the Mexican Congress would definitely not consider any articles of the commercial treaty until this was done and that "... believing, therefore, that any

8 Clay to Poinsett, November 19, 1827, Diplomatic Instructions, XI, p. 416.

9 Pakenham to Canning, most confidential, June 27, 1827, quoted in Parton, Career of Poinsett, p. 129.
attempt to alter the former treaty of limits would prove ineffective and only excite unfriendly feelings . . . ,” he intended to renew the 1819 Treaty. ¹⁰ This was done, and negotiations were completed on January 12, but only four months time was allowed for mutual ratification and that of the United States was not accomplished until April 28. Mexico ratified on April 24, but neither ratification came in time to forward to the other country by the May 12 deadline. ¹¹ The Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation was then submerged by events of greater importance—namely, disturbances in Texas and a deepening of hostility in Mexico toward the United States.

Poinsett, unable to cope with a new wave of anti-United States feeling beginning in 1828 and stemming from reports of unrest in Texas, wrote Clay of his problems:

This government and people have been kept purposely in a continual state of excitement upon this very delicate question Texas. We have been represented by the agents of certain European powers as the natural enemies of Mexico, and our desire to make alterations in the treaty of limits concluded and to deprive them of a portion of their territory was constantly urged in proof of our bad faith and insatiable ambition. It became necessary therefore, for me to use very cautious language upon

¹⁰Poinsett to Clay, January 8, 1828, Despatches from Mexico, III.

this subject, and in all my conversations and notes in relation to the question of limits to endeavor, if any change were made, that it should be at the suggestion of this government, so that the honorable dealing of the United States in this respect might at all times be manifest.12

The Adams administration agreed that it was momentarily useless to attempt to purchase Texas again since there were no further offers officially made that year. It would seem appropriate at this juncture to examine more closely the situation in Texas and recent events there which had prompted such hostility to the United States.

To begin with, when Hayden Edwards had established the Republic of Fredonia in December, 1826, he had set his boundary for Texas at the Rio Grande.13 This sounded to the Mexicans like a subversive revival of the United States' claim, and when it became known that Edwards was expecting a number of United States volunteers to assist in the revolt, then Mexican suspicions turned to anger.14 A series of disturbances followed the Fredonian Revolt, which, although minor, alarmed Mexican officials and fed the flames of hostility toward any United States diplomatic proposals.

12Poinsett to Clay, February 7, 1828, Despatches from Mexico, III.

13Yoakum, History of Texas ..., I, 248.

14Bancroft, History of the North ..., II, 107.
In 1827 there had been an attack by Americans from New Orleans and an attack of the Comanche Indians on Nacogdoches. In the same year there was a report from Obregón in Washington that the United States was planning to take control forcibly of Mexican territory just south of the Red River in order to suppress reported Indian raids. Two points are of interest here. The Comanches in Mexico had been denied a petition by the Mexican Congress to pursue United States Indians into United States territory out of respect for a friendly nation, while Obregón related that he had received no official complaints from the Washington government, and that troops were arbitrarily going to go into Mexican territory. The main point, however, is that there are doubts as to the seriousness of the Indian attacks in the first place. For three or four years following Austin's establishment of the first American colony in Texas, problems with the Indians were frequent, and there were numerous bloody conflicts; but after this, as the colonists began to inflict greater punishment and losses on the Indians, they gradually won the awe and respect of the wild tribes surrounding them. Certainly some problems always remained.

15 Marshall, Texas State Historical Association Quarterly, XIV, 280.
concerning these wild tribes, but not a great deal and certainly not enough to merit an invasion of United States troops, as later happened under General Gaines. Also in 1827, Mexico had passed a slave law forbidding the introduction of new slaves into Texas, while also providing for gradual emancipation of those one thousand already there. This caused much dissent in Texas and created many problems for enforcement agents since slaves continued to enter Texas and the unruly colonists had no intention of thinking about gradual emancipation.

About the middle of the year 1828, reports reached Mexico City that a small group of Americans had penetrated into Texas at Nacogdoches and had announced themselves as an advance guard of a United States army. At the same time it was reported that at several key locations along the border, United States troops and supplies were being massed. Poinsett's attention was called to these rumors, and he stated that he would inform Washington of the matter in order to prevent any possible outbreaks. A final aggravation

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17 Ibid., pp. 90-92.

18 Poinsett to Clay, July 14, 1828, *Despatches from Mexico*, IV.
for Mexico in 1828 was repeated smuggling and illegal trading in Texas by certain companies operating out of New Orleans and New York. Poinsett had written Clay that he had received numerous complaints from authorities in Texas and that he intended to write the Chambers of Commerce once again in each of the cities. From his wording, it is apparent that these operations had previously been serious enough for him to have written letters of reprimand. All in all, none of the incidents in 1827 and 1828 were too serious and might not have caused any dissent if taken separately, but coming when they did, in a wave, and in the tense atmosphere of an already existing feeling of suspicion and distrust, they only served to convince Mexico that the United States had subversive designs on Texas.

Reports of American troop movements on the Texas border continued into 1829, and Poinsett was constantly trying to explain the rumors by attributing them to the libelous Mexican press and to the enemies of American republican institutions. He also accused the Mexican government of accepting these rumors without sufficient inquiry as to their truthfulness. Nevertheless, in a letter to Martin

19 Poinsett to Clay, April 23, 1828, Ibid., III.

20 Poinsett to Bocanegra, July 31, 1829, Despatches from Mexico, IV.
Van Buren, the new Secretary of State under President Andrew Jackson, Poinsett stated that in a meeting with Bocanegra he had said that Mexico should expect United States military movements in order to put down the reported increase in Indian raids across the border. Whenever the Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation might be ratified, the movements would cease, since the Treaty contained a provision for suppressing the Indians on the border. This admission quite naturally had the effect of neutralizing his denials of the movements and led to a demand by the Mexican Senate that an investigation be held regarding United States activities on the border.21

By March, 1829, it had become evident that Joel Poinsett's days in Mexico were numbered. In that month, for the benefit of the new administration, he had written Van Buren and related in full all of his activities and problems in Mexico. In July he wrote that he had come to the conclusion that the United States could never acquire Texas peaceably. He concluded by saying that "... there is no instance on record of the foreign minister having been

21Poinsett to Van Buren, August 22, 1829, Ibid.
so persecuted in any one country. In the meantime, however, the Jackson administration had already launched plans and instructions for the acquisition of Texas. A long-time friend of Jackson, Colonel Anthony Butler, had been commissioned to submit a report on general conditions in Texas—soil, climate, waterways, natural resources, and the value of the province to the United States. Butler also authored a report in which he urged the administration to "... counteract the evils growing out of the surrender of that part of Louisiana west of the Sabine and east of the Rio Grande ..." Instructions for reopening the Texas question, issued on August 25, were to be carried to Poinsett by Butler.

Meanwhile in Mexico, the Yorkinos had just won an important election, placing their man Guerrero in the president's seat, and Poinsett was once again accused of interfering with Mexican politics. Just prior to this, the Jackson administration had issued a statement to the effect that the United States resolved not to interfere in the internal affairs of any South American country. Following the election, Pakenham wrote Van Buren and asked how

22Poinsett to Van Buren, July 22, 1829, Ibid.

23Butler to Secretary of State, August 11, 1829, in Manning, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XVII, 253-254.
Washington reconciled their statement with Poinsett's obvious activities. Pakenham concluded by accusing Guerrero personally of being a United States puppet and a stooge for Poinsett. 24 Van Buren did not reply.

With the election of Guerrero, Poinsett's political future in Mexico for all practical purposes came to an end. The Mexican Congress had been determined to obtain Poinsett's recall for some time—since the Vera Cruz and Puebla Legislatures had sent in their recall petitions in July of 1827. Contenting themselves for over a year with suggestions to the President to that effect, the Senate had finally, on December 1, 1829, voted by a margin of twenty-seven to four to officially ask the President to demand Poinsett's recall. This request was never acted upon, but a similar one in July, 1829, after the Yorkinos' triumph in the recent elections, was more favorably received. 25

Guerrero, resenting the "... discredit brought upon his government by the prevailing idea that he was acting under the influence of a foreign power ...," 26 told Pakenham

24 Parton, Career of Poinsett, pp. 138-140.
25 Ibid., pp. 127-128, 137.
that he was in favor of ousting Poinsett, and on October 17, 1829, the recall of Poinsett was demanded by the Mexican government due to the fact that

... public opinion has pronounced itself against him in the most conclusive, general, and decided manner ... not only among the authorities and men of education, but also among the vulgar classes; not only among the individuals who suspected him, but also among many of those who have been his friends.27

Anthony Butler, then en route to Mexico with new instructions and suggested plans for reopening the Texas question, did not know it but he himself would receive instructions before his arrival, directing him to replace Joel Poinsett.

Poinsett's ministry was undoubtedly affected adversely by several factors either out of his control or due to events no fault of his own. The disturbances in Texas cannot be positively attributed to him, and there is no concrete evidence that he was aware of any connection between his government and the revolts of the Texans. It is also true that the highly influential El Sol was definitely anti-United States in its views and that it undoubtedly caused much of the hostility on the part of the people. Furthermore, Poinsett's negotiations both for a boundary revision and a

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and a commercial treaty were adversely affected by British efforts, with both Ward and Pakenham constantly undermining his position. Nevertheless, if Poinsett was not guilty of any of the above charges, he did nothing to dispel them and on several occasions appeared all the more guilty by trying to deny them. He made several elementary diplomatic errors in admitting that the ultimate aim of the United States was to obtain Texas, and if a definite connection cannot be made between the United States' objective in Texas and Poinsett's knowledge of it, then at least there is room for doubt and suspicion. Finally, there can be no defense whatsoever of Poinsett's excursions into the arena of Mexican politics—his attempts to influence elections were obvious—and this was where he created so much antagonism. Instructed initially by John Quincy Adams to explain United States republican institutions, he constantly overworked this part of his instructions, making it no secret that he had a great disdain for the Mexican government and its principles, and working for its overthrow through the radical arm of his creation, the Yorkinos. His only positive endeavor seems to have been the beginnings of talks which culminated in the Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation, but even the final ratification of this treaty did not occur
during his residence in Mexico. Anthony Butler received credit for its ratification from President Jackson on April 5, 1832.  


CHAPTER IV

BUTLER

Approximately in the middle of the year 1829, some few months after his close friend, Andrew Jackson had been installed as President of the United States, Anthony Butler arrived in Washington in search of a job. There was nothing particularly striking about the man, either physically or with respect to his employment qualifications. He had had a fairly successful military career, although of short duration, when he was made a lieutenant-colonel at the beginning of the War of 1812 and subsequently was promoted to the rank of colonel in command of an infantry division. It was in this capacity that he first met Andrew Jackson and began an intimate friendship with him. The two had fought side by side in the 1815 battle of New Orleans and kept in close correspondence with each other following the war with Great Britain.

Butler's first entrance into politics was in 1826 when he became a member of the Mississippi State Legislature, and he had remained a member of that body until his appearance in Washington in 1829.¹ It is interesting to note at this

¹Rives, The United States and Mexico . . . , I, 235-236.
juncture, however, that his tour of duty as a Mississippi politician was characterized by no noteworthy achievements, and it was furthermore a tour of duty marked by absenteeism. Such was this record of absenteeism that the senator had more than enough time to frequent the Mexican province of Texas during the ministry of Joel Poinsett, becoming a landowner near the town of Nacogdoches. It was of no small future concern that Nacogdoches lay between the Sabine and Neches Rivers--landmarks which were to become part of a bitter American-Mexican dispute--and the value of Butler's land holdings would undoubtedly be enhanced by the acquisition of that territory to the United States. Sam Houston, another old and close friend of Andrew Jackson who later became one of the heroes of the Texas independence movement, obviously took an early and instant dislike to Butler since he accused him of being a wife deserter, a swindler, a gambler, and a man who would do anything to advance his own ends. Houston also stated that rather than being a citizen of Mississippi in 1829, Butler was in fact a resident of Texas. Many other pertinent and detrimental

2Ibid. See Figure 1, page 60. Butler's land dealings were with Lorenzo de Zavala, whom he later bribed to attempt to persuade Mexico to sell Texas to the United States.

3Ibid., p. 236.
FIGURE 1

MEXICAN LAND GRANTS IN TEXAS

Empresario Grants.

1. Fellisa's Grant.
2. Burnett's "
3. Vehlin's "
4. Zavalla's "
5. Austin's Colony.
6. Robertson's Grant.
7. S.F. Austin's "
8. Milam's "
9. Dewitt "
10. DeLeon's "
11. Bexar District
12. McMullin & McCline's Grant.
13. Power's "
14. John Cameron's "

From Homer S. Thrall, A Pictorial History of Texas, 1879
character references to Anthony Butler could be cited, but it can now be said that Butler always had his own personal gain foremost in mind when conducting diplomacy on behalf of the Jackson administration and that he seldom, if ever, concerned himself with the far-reaching ramifications his actions might have on his country's diplomatic and personal relationship with Mexico. To handle the sensitive Mexican people and the precarious situation which already existed there, a worse choice for a representative of the United States government could not have been found. It should be considered equally unfortunate that the highly-respected and progressive Andrew Jackson, as President of the United States, either was fooled as to Butler's despicable character, or that he saw through his friend's rather thin disguise and yet countenanced his actions for his country's own aggrandizement. One fact is clear--both men under-estimated the intelligence of the Mexican nation.

Professing an intricate knowledge of Texas geography which in fact he never had, Butler soon convinced President Jackson both of the feasibility and desirability of attempting to annex the Mexican province. Jackson, whose sympathy and concern for the inhabitants of Texas had already been
shown in his statement refusing appointment as the initial United States minister, consequently commissioned his old friend to submit a report on general conditions. In this report Butler stated his view that there were in actuality two rivers flowing into Sabine Lake on the Gulf Coast -- one from the north, known as the Sabine, and another from the northwest, known as the Neches. It was Butler's contention that in reality the boundary between the United States and Mexico was the Neches, a conclusion nothing less than ridiculous as there was never any confusion over names in the Treaty of 1819. It should again be mentioned that the location of Butler's land holdings between the two rivers near Nacogdoches would be an obvious reason for his putting forth the idea of the Neches as the boundary, but unfortunately this idea became the basis for Jackson's subsequent policy.

Almost from the beginning of his appointment as Poinsett's successor, Butler had initial handicaps. Louis de Onis, Spanish minister in Washington, had warned the Mexican nation that

4 Ibid., pp. 236-237. Rives' further states that when the boundary line between the United States and Texas was finally run "... the commissioners agreed without difficulty that the Neches did not form the boundary." Ibid., 237, note 3.
the haughtiness of these republicans will not allow them to look upon us as equals but merely as inferiors; and in my opinion and judgment their vanity goes so far as to believe that their capital will be that of all the Americas . . . .

With a rather ominous prediction of future events, Onis stated that the American objective was to plant colonists in Texas, acquire influence and a majority in the population, and then force the inhabitants to declare their desire for annexation. Immediately prior to Butler's arrival in Texas, Henry Ward, British Charge in Mexico, wrote George Canning "... the great end is to embroil Mexico in a civil war, and to facilitate ... the annexation of the provinces to the north of the Rio Grande." As will subsequently be seen, Anthony Butler did nothing to quell these fears, and indeed, succeeded in substantiating them.

For unexplained reasons, Butler took his time in reporting to his new post, travelling overland through Texas, and visiting numerous persons who owed him money, principally Stephen Austin. In a letter to his sister in July of 1828, Austin objected to paying a six thousand dollar

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5Quoted in Manning, Early Diplomatic Relations . . . ., p. 279.

6Quoted in Rippy, Rivalry . . . ., p. 285.
debt to Butler over some unscrupulous dealings of the latter in connection with some jointly-owned mines. This letter, written as it was in 1828, definitely places Butler in Texas prior to his arrival there in 1829 as United States minister and also lends strength to Houston's accusation that he was a resident of Texas much of the time when he was supposedly a state senator in Mississippi. Finally, it casts grave doubt upon the already besmirched character of Anthony Butler. In what may or may not be a coincidence, Austin, a primary mover for the independence of Texas and its annexation to the United States, accused Butler shortly afterward of using secret propaganda "to arouse the people of Texas into rebellion" and that these Texans were being "tools to promote the personal aggrandizement of Anthony Butler."8

Butler finally arrived in Mexico City on December 19, 1829, but his primary objective was already known, since en route he probably had boasted not that he was going to

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7Austin to Emily Perry, July 24, 1828, in The Austin Papers, American Historical Association Annual Report, 1922, II, 76. See also Austin to W. C. Carr, May 4, 1829, Ibid., 177.

negotiate for Texas, but that he would purchase Texas before he was finished. Mexico's attitude was not long in manifesting itself as an editorial in the chief newspaper El Sol stated on January 9, 1830:

As we are not informed that, so far, the colonel has made any overtures on the subject, we presume that he does the new administration the justice to suppose it incapable of lending itself to a transaction as prejudicial and degrading to the republic as it would be disgraceful to the minister who would subscribe to it.10

Butler's poor diplomatic position, though partially self-inflicted, was obviously not conducive to good negotiations. Mexico could cite numerous articles in administrative news organs in the United States stating the great value of Texas and pointing out the desirability of annexing it, and a multitude of violently anti-United States articles and pamphlets immediately ensued from the Mexican press.11 They condemned the United States for obviously attempting to disrupt and dismember the Mexican nation, and José María Tornel, Mexican minister to the United

9Rives, The United States and Mexico . . . . I, 244.

10Quoted by Butler in letter to Van Buren, January 10, 1830, House Executive Documents, 25th Cong., 2nd Sess., XII, Doc. 351, p. 310.

11Manning, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XVII, 258-259.
States, stated that ". . . no nation in the civilized world can equal them in their boundless ambition when they ruthlessly trample everything in the way of their desire . . ."12 With respect to a possible Texas revolt, Jackson himself had stated that ". . . this our Government will be charged with fomenting. . . ."13 Although Butler's main objective in Mexico was always to bring about the acquisition of Texas, it was hopefully to be before a revolution for independence could make the motives of the United States suspect in international circles.

In Washington, the administration correctly perceived that it would be unwise to pursue negotiations for Texas at this inauspicious moment and on April 1, 1830, Van Buren, complaining that Mexico had done nothing " . . . which would serve to relieve the unfriendly aspect of its whole conduct . . .," wrote Butler:

". . . the present is not an auspicious moment for the successful opening of the negotiations . . . watch the state of the public mind and . . . the greatest caution and circumspection is enjoined upon you, and the


13Jackson to Butler, October 19, 1829, Jack Mss, Quoted in Rives, The United States and Mexico . . ., I, 243-244.
exercise of the most guarded discretion will be necessary on your part not to commit yourself or your government upon any point connected with the subject. . . . If, however, an opportunity should present itself to carry into effect the wishes of your government, in this respect, you will not fail to embrace it.14

These instructions, in the hands of most diplomatic agents, together with the state of public opinion then existing in Mexico, would have ended any further efforts for the time being to obtain the province of Texas. Butler, however, never to be classed with most diplomatic agents, chose to interpret the last sentence of his instructions as meaning that the matter was entirely up to his own discretion. We wrote Van Buren that "... I am glad that you have placed under my discretion the period of manner of opening that subject. That discretion shall be exercised with all proper caution. ..."15 Depending upon the viewpoint of the examiner—that is, whether or not he looks at Butler's official or unofficial actions—the words "discretion" and "caution" take on two different meanings. Officially, Butler took absolutely no action on the boundary controversy

14Van Buren to Butler, April 1, 1830, House Executive Documents, 25th Cong., 2nd Sess., XII, Doc. 351, p. 62.
15Butler to Van Buren, May 21, 1830, Ibid., p. 326.
for two years, and therefore, in understanding the case, he was certainly "cautious." Also, since Butler was rarely even seen by Mexican officials in the capital city and only distant rumors reached them concerning the American's activities in Texas, it could be said that the man used some amount of "discretion." However, a close examination of Butler's unofficial activities in both Mexico and the province of Texas shows that he did not even know the meaning of either "discretion" or "caution." This is also readily discernible in examining his correspondence with Washington during his six-year residence, and yet his ministry lasted six years despite the fact that his ministerial tools of trickery and bribery, and his foremost consideration--self aggrandizement--were quite evident long before Mexico demanded his recall in 1835.

In the meantime, however, events in Mexico were taking a drastic turn for the worse. The temporary Treaty of Limits, stating the boundary between the United States and Mexican Texas, was scheduled to come up for renewal, and the Mexicans were making every effort to settle the question once and for all. Butler had written the Secretary of State that
... the Mexican government is becoming anxious on the question of limits and boundary between the United States and Mexico, and I have more than once been approached on that subject, but always have found means to evade it, leaving them under the influence of whatever their imagination might create to awake suspicion and alarm their fears.

He thus admitted antagonizing and arousing the fears and suspicions of the Mexican people, hoping that "... a revolution in that province [Texas] would follow and that it could then be annexed without costing a cent." This attitude was definitely not calculated to win friends and influence people, and Butler underestimated the intelligence of Mexican officials if he thought that this was not suspected.

General Antonio López de Santa Anna, travelling in the Province of Texas, noticed that the Texans were becoming quite restless and unruly, and already thinking of independence. He charged that United States policy was responsible for the unrest and mutterings of independence, and stated that it was "... an opinion that even the Texans themselves expressed without disguise." 16

To Mexico's chagrin, and directly related to disturbances and unrest in Texas, other disgruntled provinces, notable in

16 Butler to Van Buren, March 9, 1830, Ibid., pp. 311-312.

17 Castañeda, The Mexican Side ..., p. 42.
the north, were beginning to cause their central government some concern. Writing several years later of Sam Houston's idea of possibly enlisting the aid of these northern provinces in a large scale independence revolution, A. J. Donelson, American representative in Texas at the time, said that he would have had no problem. Lorenzo de Zavala, the man from whom Butler bought his land surrounding Nacogdoches and the man whom Butler tried to bribe to influence a cession of Texas, noted a general feeling of discontent in Coahuila, Texas, and both Californias as early as 1828. Like Butler, Zavala recognized the rise in land values which would result should Texas become a part of the United States, and this was probably his main motivation in later betraying his country. Criticizing Mexico for being too lax on its American settlers, Zavala correctly predicted that an abstract loyalty to a distant government would soon fade, and that eventually the inhabitants would begin to look at things in the light of the welfare of their own province.

18 Justin Harvey Smith, "The Mexican Recognition of Texas," American Historical Review, XVI (October, 1910), 661-663.

These observations were made while Zavala was Governor of Coahuila and after his business dealings with Anthony Butler. More will be said of Lorenzo de Zavala later when he was mentioned by Butler in 1833 relative to a bribe.

To the Mexicans, it seemed as though disturbances in their northern provinces, primarily Texas at this early date, were directly connected with the recent arrival of Anthony Butler. They had been warned in advance by their representatives in Washington. *El Sol* was printing excerpts daily from various American articles and reports citing reasons why Texas should be incorporated into the union; President Andrew Jackson was already on record as not being in sympathy with the policies of the Mexican government; the previous American representative had taken part in a revolutionary society; the present minister had spoken in plain language of "getting Texas" on his journey to the Mexican capital--it all seemed to be too great a coincidence. Many Mexicans were reminded of the prophetic statement of Louis de Oñis when he warned that the objective of the United States was to plant colonists in Texas, secure a majority of the population, and then foster a desire for independence, after which annexation would be a relatively simple matter.
Accordingly, Lucás Alamán, the very astute Secretary of Foreign Relations, not fooled by Butler's stalling tactics with regard to the Treaty of Limits, pointed out that the United States' intentions to possess Texas in any expedient manner were too thinly veiled and that the time had come for Mexico to take positive steps to quell disturbances in that province. Therefore, he presented a plan to the Mexican Congress to tighten governmental control that was approved on April 6, 1830. In brief, the new law called for military occupation at key points in Texas, placed authority over public lands with the federal government, and prohibited foreigners from entering without authorized passports. The key provision, however, was Article Eleven which stated that colonization by citizens of any adjacent nation was thereby forbidden.20 Sam Houston personally blamed Butler for this law, stating:

In an effort to try to get the Rio Grande as the border, he tried to bribe the Mexican officials, but not handling the matter properly only antagonized them so that eventually further immigration of Americans to Texas was stopped.21

20For the complete text of Mexico's Land Law of 1830, see Vicente Filisola, Memorias para la Historia de la Guerra de Tejas, 2 Volumes (Mexico City: R. Rafael, 1948-1949), II, 590-612. Hereinafter cited as Filisola, Memorias.

Butler chose to take no definite stand on Mexico's newly instituted policy, and for the next twelve months nothing of great importance took place relative to Butler's mission. On April 5, 1831, the long delayed Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation once again momentarily occupied his attention.\footnote{22} It will be recalled that this treaty had been completed in January, 1828, but that, due to the failure of the two participants to act within the allotted four months time, final ratifications were never exchanged. At the instigation of the Mexican government, Washington was also informed that ratifications of the commercial treaty would not be exchanged unless ratification of the Treaty of Limits were also exchanged. The first renewal of the Treaty of Limits, respecting the Sabine River as the United States-Mexico boundary as set forth in the Treaty of 1819, had been signed in January of 1828.\footnote{23} Several minor articles had been added to the treaty, none of which were opposed by Butler. President Andrew Jackson, not eager to have the treaty ratified and thus give up on acquiring

\footnote{\textit{22}Marshall, A History of the Western Boundary ..., p. 95.}

Texas, wrote his minister in Mexico to actively reopen negotiations which would lead to the cession of Texas. Butler, for still inexplicable reasons, did absolutely nothing from April until October, a period of six months. He then was informed by Alamán that, due to the overwhelming opposition of the Mexican people, Texas was simply not for sale. Nevertheless, despite this rather blunt rebuke, Butler, amazingly enough, sent glowing letters to President Jackson assuring him of ultimate success. There was no excuse for this delay, much less the assurances of success, and this writer can only assume that Butler was either doing nothing, or worse, that he was corresponding or scheming with the Texas revolutionaries.

It seems appropriate at this point to turn to Texas, their feeling about independence, and most particularly the attitude of Andrew Jackson and the United States government toward its acquisition.

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CHAPTER V

CONTINUING INTRIGUES

John Quincy Adams, Jackson's predecessor in the White House, was quite explicit in his Diary referring to Jackson's intentions toward Texas. He stated:

Jackson was so sharpset for Texas that from the first year of his Administration he set double engines to work, of negotiating to buy Texas with one hand, and instigating the people of that province to revolt against Mexico with the other. Houston was his agent for the rebellion, and Anthony Butler, a Mississippi land-jobber in Texas, for the purchase.¹

It was this same Andrew Jackson who vowed that the United States should relinquish her claim on Texas with the passage of the 1819 Treaty with Spain for the Floridas, but he obviously and openly had changed his mind by 1828.²

When Mexico closed further immigration into Texas by United States citizens with the Land Law of 1830, Jackson pledged support and declared the neutrality of the United States in any Texas-Mexico quarrel which might develop.

The President's statements, however, were merely for public


consumption, as United States citizens continued to cross the Sabine River into Mexico, unencumbered by either Mexican or American enforcement of the immigration laws. Not only did the flow of immigration not stop, but arms and all varieties of war materials found their way into the hands of the Texas revolutionaries. Due to numerous Mexican complaints and the almost open character of the movement of men and arms, it is inconceivable that the President of the United States was not aware of the violations of his proclaimed neutrality. While there is no evidence to support the contention that Jackson was directly behind the border violations, there can be no doubt that he was aware of them, and desirous of the Texas annexation from the very beginning, did absolutely nothing about it. Indeed, if ex-President Adams is any authority, as he should well be, Jackson supported the violations in open defiance of the Mexican decree and encouraged settlers to migrate to Texas: "Profoundly a secret as it affected the public, it [the movement of men and arms] was then in successful progress." 


Ex-Minister to Washington, Louis de Onís, attached positive significance to Jackson's policy: "Utterances and intrigue on the presidential level caused suspicion of the Mexican authorities and thereafter the Texas Revolution was a foregone conclusion." At this time the Mexican Minister to Washington, José María Torne l, wrote a searing indictment of Jackson and of United States violations of Mexican law by stating in the Mexican press that "... they recognize no other right than their own desire and no other justice save their own convenience." These statements, seem to back up earlier statements by Onís and Henry Ward, British Charge in Mexico, to the effect that the objective of the United States was clearly to involve Texas and Mexico in a war after which Texas could be annexed easily without cost. Santa Anna's statement that even the Texans admitted as much also seems to be strengthened. This policy of deception, so well known and blatant, was an insult to the Mexican nation. To think that Mexico possessed no more intelligence than to see through such a thinly-veiled conspiracy was to commit a grave, and

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6Castañeda, The Mexican Side ..., p. 304.
rather elementary, error in diplomatic policy.

Back in Mexico, Butler had decided on new tactics with which to approach Alaman on the subject of a new boundary. Showing an obvious disdain and lack of confidence in the Mexican government, Butler's argument was that Texas was too big a province for Mexico to administer--recent disturbances had shown the inability of the government to control them properly--and therefore it should be a blessing for Mexico to part with it. Besides, according to Butler, the revolutionary fever was growing in Texas, and in all probability it would eventually succeed, but only after costing Mexico thousands of dollars. Due to the unstable financial condition then existing in Mexico, this loss could not be afforded, and even if the rebellion was temporarily squelched, the cost of maintaining occupation forces to prevent subsequent outbreaks was prohibitive. Therefore, reasoned Butler, the only intelligent thing to do was to dispose of the troublesome Texas before all of these expenses would be incurred. 7 Jackson, completely misjudging the character and temperament of the Mexicans, also felt this way, stating that since Mexico was obviously incapable of

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administering Texas, they should therefore be glad to sell it. 8 Alamán, however, shortly withdrew from the cabinet and the new Minister, Francisco Fagoaga, quickly rejected Butler's reasoning. Butler nevertheless figured that Alamán was still the power behind the office and determined to attempt to bribe to secure his support. 9

At this point, the Mexican government was beset by an internal power struggle for control of the government. Numerous outbreaks were quickly put down by the Bustamente Regime, but one originating in Vera Cruz, led by Santa Anna, proved to be Bustamente's undoing. Proposing nothing different in the way of governmental ideas, Santa Anna's take-over signified only an exchange in officials. He was declared President on March 30, 1833, after Bustamente had abdicated in December, 1832. Due to the frequent absences of Santa Anna, his Vice President, Gómez Farías, often was in control. 10 Anthony Butler, seeing that nothing could be accomplished in such confused surroundings, journeyed to

8 Rives, The United States and Mexico . . . ., I, 238-239.

9 Marshall, A History of the Western Boundary . . . , p. 100 refers to a letter to Jackson admitting this.

Texas for unknown reasons, although his presence there was thought to have been to stimulate rebellions for independence. The political chief of Béxar definitely placed him in that vicinity in rather mysterious circumstances, and he wrote Fagoaga of his suspicions. As sporadic rebellions did indeed break out in Texas at this time, including one in Béxar, one might, given Butler's character and a definite location there at the time, connect him directly with the incidents. Despite the hostile attitudes on the part of the new Mexican government and turbulent events in Texas, however, Butler continued to write Jackson glowing reports of his chances for success: "... I will succeed in uniting Texas to our country before I am done with the subject or I will forfeit my head."11 He then suggested that since Mexico was in such dire financial straits, the United States should loan her five million dollars with Texas as a mortgage. Since Mexico would most likely be unable to make payments, Texas would therefore revert to the United States almost upon demand. Jackson informed his agent that there was no

11Thomas M. Marshall, "The Southwestern Boundary of Texas, 1821-1840," Texas State Historical Association Quarterly, XIV (April, 1911), 280; Filisola Memorias ... I, 310-315.
constitutional authority for such a move. There was absolutely no ground for these assurances of success, and this writer can only assume that Butler wanted to stay in office until something positive could be effected as to the independence of Texas. As will be shown, he was not content with waiting for critical events to happen—he attempted actively to bring them about.

It is of great significance that Sam Houston entered the picture at this time in Texas, specifically to take a major part in the revolutionary independence movement and that Jackson, a long time friend of Houston, was aware of this and corresponded directly with him. Houston had written in February that "... the people of Texas are determined to form a state government... The Province of Texas will remain separate from the Confederacy of Mexico... I will apprise you of the course adopted..." With respect to Jackson's motives, it is a great coincidence at this very time that he wrote Butler:

12Barker, American Historical Review, XII, 792.

13Jesse S. Reeves, American Diplomacy under Tyler and Polk (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1907), p. 72. Parton, Life of Andrew Jackson, III, 653-656.

14Houston's Letter of February 13, 1833, quoted in Barker, American Historical Review, XII, 793-794.
The Convention in Texas meets the First of April to form a constitution for themselves. When this is done, Mexico can never annex it to her jurisdiction again, or control its legislature. It will be useless after this act to enter into a treaty of boundary with Mexico.15

It would thus appear that Jackson had been swayed by Butler's earlier arguments for backing the Texas independence movement as a means of saving five million dollars, and would also substantiate Adams's accusation that, while stationing Butler in Mexico to negotiate for Texas, Jackson was cognizant of, and supported, Houston's revolutionary activity. This sort of duplicity of policy, given Butler's lack of subtlety and Jackson's open failure to observe his promised neutrality in stopping immigration, was bound to offend the Mexican government and cause an immediate suspicion and lack of trust in all movements and utterances of Anthony Butler.

The Texas Convention did meet in April and formed their own state constitution. Although it was adapted to the Mexican federation system, failing to mention religious freedom, it was republican in form and much like the United States Constitution. The Texans also filed a petition for independence at this time through Vice President Fariás, although no action was taken immediately.16

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15Reeves, American Diplomacy . . . , p. 72.

16Bancroft, History of the North . . . , II, 133-137.
Secretary of State who was decidedly hostile to Butler, blamed the American for the rising discontent in Texas and had written him relative to information he had received that the Texans were preparing for independence and eventual annexation to the United States: "... it appears that they are favored and encouraged by the inhabitants of the adjacent parts of said states." He further urged that the United States government "... may adopt such precautions as will prevent any steps being taken on the part of said inhabitants for the purpose of dismembering the national territory."17 A "shocked" Butler then wrote to Washington that

... we are calumniated and misrepresented to this administration as entertaining views towards Texas of a character hostile to the territorial integrity of Mexico, and of secretly abetting and encouraging the citizens of that country to throw off their allegiance to Mexico.18

Events in Texas now began to proceed on their own initiative. In October, 1833, six months after the petition for independence had been filed, Stephen Austin told Fariás that if Mexico did not act soon, then Texas would. The government, although offended by the brashness of the Texans,


18Butler to McLane, July 26, 1833, Ibid., p. 483.
nevertheless began to take steps to alleviate the tension and avoid possible military action. Santa Anna finally abrogated the non-colonizing section of the 1830 Land Law on November 25, 1833—to take effect in six months. Although repealing certain repugnant articles of the Land Law, however, Mexico did imprison Austin for what was thought to be revolutionary activity for a period of eight months, the Texan not returning to his province until September, 1835.19

Ironically enough, Austin was rather conservative in his attitude when compared to Butler or Houston, and his absence from Texas only served to weaken the moderates and strengthen the Houston-led radicals. Writing in 1832, Lorenzo de Zavala lauded him and his organization and cited many instances in which Austin worked hand in hand with local Mexican officials in averting possible incidents.20 Austin himself in 1832, viewing the growing restlessness in Texas despite a Mexican laxity in enforcing laws, said: "I fear . . . that the predominant traits in the North American character are ingratitude, selfishness, and avarice."21 The implication seems to be that the Mexicans, even after the stringent Land

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19 Bancroft, History of the North . . ., II, 136-139.


21 Quoted in Horgan, Great River . . ., p. 506.
Law of 1830 and before repeal of its non-colonizing section, were quite tolerant of the Texans and that the latter had no serious quarrel with their benefactors.

Apparently becoming somewhat perturbed with his diplomatic ineffectiveness, Butler then suggested more direct action. He wrote President Jackson and urged immediate occupation of the disputed land between the Sabine and Neches Rivers, stating that he would be the obvious choice for the ensuing governorship of the territory. The writer uses the word "disputed" hesitantly, for it was never disputed by anyone with the exception of Anthony Butler, and this dispute was prompted only because of his land holdings which happened to be between the two rivers. For the sake of clarity and a better understanding of what follows, let us briefly review Butler's boundary arguments. At the outset of his mission, Butler had convinced Jackson that the Neches was the western branch of the Sabine and that all land between the two rivers actually belonged to the United States. He had argued that the Neches was a mile wide and huge, while the Sabine was dried up, and that therefore "... the question is whether common sense and the reason of the thing does not authorize the interpretation that the western branch of the two rivers ... should be deemed the
branch contemplated in the Treaty as the boundary." As previously stated, there was never any confusion over names with either of the two contracting parties in 1819, but Butler was nevertheless urging that the United States now occupy and fortify the garrison at Nacogdoches.22 Unfortunately, President Andrew Jackson had agreed with Butler from the beginning, although in this particular case he did not act on his suggestion to occupy the garrison at Nacogdoches.

In October, 1833, Butler's ideas for obtaining Texas became all the more radical, and since Lorenzo de Zavala played a prominent role in them, it would be well to trace some of his background. He had been a deputy to the Spanish Cortes before Mexico's independence, and afterward he was a senator in the Mexican Congress. In 1827 he was elected Governor of Coahuila, holding this position despite his re-election to Congress. He was a prominent landowner in the Nacogdoches area and it was there where he initially came to know Anthony Butler. Previous to this association, he was apparently quite loyal to his country, stating once during Poinsett's ministry that honor would never permit the sale of Texas to the United States. Since he figured so prominently in Butler's attempt at bribery, however, his

22Barker, American Historical Review, XII, 794.
death in November, 1835, was that of a vagabond and a traitor.23

In his October 28 letter to Washington, Butler unfolded an elaborate scheme of bribery by which he was certain that the purchase of Texas could be effected. For three hundred thousand dollars Zavala's influence could be bought, and for good measure an additional three or four hundred thousand dollars would be needed to bribe several other key persons. The letter offers an interesting insight into the diplomatic and personal character of Butler. He sent the letter through normal diplomatic channels not even bothering to use some sort of code; he assumed that he had the money with which to bribe the Mexican officials, and he also assumed that the way to use the money was up to his discretion. Jackson immediately wrote: "Let us have a boundary without the imputation of corruption . . . ," but he also added that should present negotiations fail, "... we will run the line and take possession of Nacogdoches."24 Obviously, he wasn't overly concerned with Butler's methods--his answer does not show that much indignation.

23Zavala, Ensayo Histórico . . . , p. 205; Bancroft, History of the North . . . , II, 158, note 16.

24Quoted in Barker, American Historical Review, XII, 795-796.
Historians are generally divided in their theories on Jackson's motives for purchasing Texas, but those who defend the President's actions have a difficult time explaining the incident concerning James S. Wilcocks, the United States Consul in Mexico. It has thus far been shown, and will further be shown, that Anthony Butler's conduct was disgraceful and insulting to the Mexican people, but he also was a disgrace as far as Wilcocks was concerned, and the Consul brought formal charges against him. He wrote to Secretary of State McLane that Butler was "... unworthy and a disgrace to the office he now holds, and ought to be recalled by his government." He accused Butler of "... being a mean and despicable character..." who was guilty of assault, refusal to pay debts, immorality, usury, seduction, and interference with consular duties.\footnote{McLane to Butler, October 12, 1833, \textit{House Executive Documents}, 25th Cong., 2nd Sess., XII, Doc. 351, pp. 109-111.} Without the slightest investigation or delay to hear Butler's response, Jackson promptly dismissed Wilcocks and asked Butler to find a more "suitable" replacement.\footnote{McLane to Butler, October 18, 1833, \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 111-112.} Just what Jackson meant by "suitable" is unknown, but if his motives were honorable and above reproach, then the brusque dismissal of Wilcocks needs an explanation.
Fortunately for all concerned, nothing was officially
made known from Anthony Burns in 1852, but the years 1854
and 1855 brought even fiercer discussions. But neither attempts
designed to lead to a planned and diagonal withdrawal.
CHAPTER VI

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF ANTHONY BUTLER

Anthony Butler, undaunted by the mild rebuff of his President, was still certain that negotiations for Texas would succeed by bribery. He also maintained that he had been told by Jackson, or had been led to believe, that it was of no great consequence to the Government how the acquisition of Texas was affected. Accordingly, on March 7, 1834, Anthony Butler made his supreme contribution to American diplomatic history by suggesting that the United States send troops to the southwest to occupy not only Nacogdoches, but a much greater area. Admitting that diplomacy was now out of the question and that only bribery or force would succeed, he suggested that United States troops cross the Sabine "... to possess that part of Texas which is ours." Never one for modesty, Butler stated then that if Jackson would only place him at the head of this new territory, he would guarantee "... that we will have all we desire in less than six months without a blow and for the price we are willing to pay for it."1 Butler's wording here

1Quoted in Barker, American Historical Review, XII, 796.
is important, although insulting and contradictory, for it does reveal something of his character. He spoke of occupying "... that part of Texas which is ours ..." as if, at least in his own mind, that it might be a perfectly legal move, despite all evidence and statements to the contrary. He then spoke of "... all we desire ..." and "... the price we are willing to pay ..." If we had a legal claim to the area of Texas between the Sabine and Neches Rivers, as his first comment would imply, then why mention what we desired? We actually desired California for several reasons, but we had no legal claim to it. Also, if we had a legal right in Texas, then why did Butler speak of a suitable price to pay? If the United States believed she owned Texas, then paying anybody anything would not be involved. The answer, of course, is that Butler fashioned a boundary dispute to suit his own purposes and never believed in its legality. Nevertheless, Jackson's reaction to Butler's letter was classic. On the back of it he wrote:

A. Butler. What a scamp. Carefully read. The Secretary of State will reiterate his instructions to ask for an extension on the treaty running boundary line, and then recall [sic] him, or if he has received his former instructions and the Mexican government has refused, to recall [sic] him at once.2

2Quoted in Rives, The United States and Mexico ... , I, 255.
The writer uses the above word "classic" for the reason that Jackson's statement had to be for posterity's consumption—Anthony Butler was never recalled by his government. If Jackson, completely disregarding all Mexican testimony as to Butler's lack of principles, had ever even wondered about the character of his minister, then the March letter should have removed all doubts. Actually, this was the second positive indication that the man was a rascal, again disregarding any Mexican charges, the first being the Wilcocks case several months earlier. If Jackson's motives had been open and sincere, then Butler obviously should have been immediately replaced.

If Butler believed that peaceful negotiations were now out of the question, he was soon to be proven correct. Santa Anna removed Farias from power in April 1834, and on May 31, he dissolved the Mexican Congress. All state legislatures were indefinitely suspended, and Santa Anna's new revolutionary party established him as a dictator. One of his first official acts in his new position was to consider the petition of Texas for statehood, and he disposed of it almost immediately. Texas lacked the necessary elements for statehood—she needed a population of eighty thousand to be able to elect one deputy, and she had then only roughly twenty-one thousand inhabitants. Since the Texans were not about to
look at the issue logically, Santa Anna dispersed four thousand troops to the province to quell expected revolts.³

With events in Texas becoming more volatile by the day, Mexico attempted on several occasions in 1834 to renew the Treaty of Limits, but due to Butler's stalling and one Congress or the other adjourning, mainly that of the United States, nothing was accomplished. On one such adjournment, when the Mexican Congress was not scheduled to meet again until January of 1835, Butler requested permission for a leave of absence to return to Washington so that "... certain communications may be made, and opinions freely exchanged and compared, which it is impracticable to do by any other mode."⁴ The full significance of this request will be seen later, but for unknown reasons Washington did not act on it for some time, and during that time Butler continued to pursue his weird course.

In February, 1835, Butler again wrote to Jackson stating that he would return in April, supposedly to bring papers relative to the boundary settlement. To better understand Butler's character, or lack of it, the following letter is

³Yoakum, History of Texas ..., I, 325-326; Bancroft, History of the North ..., II, 143-146.

⁴Butler to McLane, April 20, 1834, House Executive Documents, 25th Cong., 2nd Sess., XII, Doc. 351, pp. 118-119.
quoted in full. It should also show his radical tendencies toward overconfidence.

Whenever I shall have the pleasure of seeing you, it will be in my power to show you clearly that I have not been idle; that all has been done which, under present circumstances, could have been done; that everything is ripe for concluding satisfactorily the whole subject. I can prove almost to demonstration that in three months we may consummate everything; that there is but one stumbling block in the way, which you must remove. The explanation would be too long for a letter, independent of the documents which it is proper to lay before you, in order to command the whole ground; and I am so shortly to be with you myself, when we may confer fully, that I feel it is the less necessary to write a written communication; and, moreover, the stumbling block to which I allude you cannot immediately remove. It will require a few months to get everything in motion; but I pledge myself to you--mark me--I give you my pledge, that your administration shall not close without seeing the object [Texas] in your possession.5

Since Butler was in Texas at this time, and had been for several months, it is questionable just exactly what he meant was necessary "... to get everything in motion ... " Since he was not in the capital city, this writer assumed that "everything" did not involve diplomacy with any Mexican officials, and, as will be shown, it actually involved another elaborate scheme of bribery. Regardless of the plan, however, it definitely was not a justification for any positive "pledge." Interestingly enough, at about this time, Sam Houston wrote a friend, James Prentiss:

5Butler to Jackson, February 26, 1835, Ibid., p. 555.
Such men as he [Butler] would destroy a country, but take my word for it he will never gain one. In the first place he is vain, and in the next he is avaricious; and in a word men cannot adhere to him and imbibe consistency and confidence from him.  

It would seem to be reasonable speculation that some of Butler's activities in Texas at this time had aroused Houston's notice and prompted the above mentioning of Butler. The next month, to further set the tone of mystery as to his diplomatic maneuverings, Butler wrote Secretary of State Forsyth:

By the establishment of the true line, a door will be opened to us, through which we may enter for the satisfactory arrangement of a question of much deeper interest to us than the mere marking of a boundary line. All this will be fully, and unless I am greatly mistaken, satisfactorily explained to you by documents and other information in my possession that can be communicated at a personal conference.

Butler's ineffectiveness was causing him to become more and more arrogant even in his official capacity. Back in Mexico by April, 1835, he found that the Mexican government was becoming quite anxious to conclude the long-delayed Treaty of Limits--there had been no action on the part of the United States Government in Washington. At last, on April 3, the papers were signed and Mexican Secretary of State Forsyth:


7Butler to Forsyth, March 31, 1835, House Executive Documents, 25th Cong., 2nd Sess., XII, Doc. 351, p. 556.
State Joaquin del Castillo happily informed the United States State Department of the event. For totally inexplicable reasons, Anthony Butler did not even bother to write Washington of the occurrence.\(^8\)

Leaving shortly thereafter for his conference with President Jackson, Butler arrived in Washington in June, 1835, managing to bring with him the Mexican ratification of the Treaty of Limits. He then laid before Jackson and Forsyth his most elaborate plan to date for the acquisition of Texas. Bribery was again his diplomatic tool, and this time the agent to be used was a certain Hernández, Santa Anna's priest, at a cost of five million dollars. For this amount Butler claimed that not only Texas, but New Mexico and both the Californias could be secured, and he produced correspondence he claimed to have had with Hernández. All of this for only five million dollars! Unfortunately for Anthony Butler, however, Hernández was quoted as saying that half a million dollars would be sufficient, and thus an obvious question to arise might be--Who was to get the other four and a half million?\(^9\)

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\(^8\) Marshall, *A History of the Western Boundary*, p. 112.

Jackson emphatically stated once again that bribery was outside his code of ethics, but nevertheless Butler was retained in the service and sent back to Mexico for one final attempt to secure Texas legally. His new instructions were quite different in objectives from past ones:

... The main object is to secure within our limits the whole bay of San Francisco ... if, however, you cannot obtain a line which will include within our limits the whole bay of San Francisco, you will proceed under your original instructions, and bring the negotiations to a close.10

Butler was not exactly returning to any rendezvous with destiny in Mexico, however, as increasing disturbances in Texas and United States diplomatic conduct had made the Mexicans all the more determined never to sell Texas. Therefore, on October 31, 1835, the recall of Anthony Butler was demanded by the Mexican Government. The letter was actually quite mild in tone, accusing Butler only of arousing public opinion against himself, "... intrigues unbecoming a diplomatic agent ... ," and being behind most of the revolutionary activity in Texas.11 It could have been much worse. Powhatan Ellis was chosen to be his successor, and


11Secretary of State of Mexico to Castillo, October 31, 1835, Ibid., p. 719.
Butler's mission was scheduled to end on December 31, 1835.\textsuperscript{12}

Unfortunately, Mexico had not heard the last from Anthony Butler. Conscious of his total failure as a diplomat, he seemed determined to cause trouble intentionally, and cause trouble he did. Initially delaying his departure—supposedly to straighten out his affairs—he ordered a custom-built wagon from the United States and then refused to pay duties on it. Mexico finally gave in.\textsuperscript{13} He next began to publicly insult Mexican officials in general, but finally settled on José María Tornel, distinguished Minister of War. Writing Tornel a blistering letter that challenged him to a duel, Butler, among other things, called him: "... destitute of honor ... a demon ... cowardly ... disgrace ... ass in lion's skin ... ."\textsuperscript{14} Butler's conduct was beginning to wear thin, and Mexican patience had been tried long enough. The above incident had occurred in August of 1836, eight months after the departure date set by his government, and he was promptly given an order to depart within eight days.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{12}Forsyth to Ellis, January 8, 1836, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 159.
\textsuperscript{13}Monasterio to Ellis, August 2, 1836, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 597.
\textsuperscript{14}Contained in \textit{Ibid.}, p. 600.
\textsuperscript{15}Montasterio to Butler, August 8, 1836, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 599.
Mexico waited rather than force Butler out, but when he was still in town two weeks later and had not even replied to his initial order, he was ordered to leave as soon as possible. Butler then asked for a passport to go through Texas, a letter of security, and a twelve-man escort. After a great deal of argument about his proposed route through Texas, Butler next requested that the Mexican government investigate a supposed plot he had heard of to assassinate him on the way. The subsequent investigation disclosed nothing. It would seem quite apparent that Butler was stalling for some reason or other, but there is no evidence, at least on the surface, which would support the theory.

On October 11, 1836, three hundred and forty-five days after his recall was demanded, Anthony Butler departed from Mexico, bound for Texas without a passport, having refused it when it failed to mention Texas.

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16Monasterio to Butler, September 7, 1836, Ibid., p. 606.
17Butler to Monasterio, no date, Ibid., pp. 611-612.
18See letters from Monasterio to Ellis in Ibid., pp. 605-617.
19Ellis to Forsyth, November 5, 1836, Ibid., pp. 604-605.
Although admittedly not a good general practice, the writer thinks it justifiable here to reprint what may be the best summation of the character and ministry of Anthony Butler by a foremost authority of the topic—Justin Harvey Smith.

In brief he was a national disgrace. Besides having been through bankruptcy more than once... and having a financial interest in the acquisition of this Mexican territory, he was personally a bully and a swashbuckler, ignorant... of the Spanish language and even of the forms of diplomacy, shamefully careless about legation affairs, wholly unprincipled as to methods and openly scandalous in conduct. One virtue, to be sure, he never drank spirits. But one learns of this with regret, for an overdose of alcohol would sometimes be a welcome excuse for him... Maintaining a hold on our President by positive assurances of success, he loafed, schemed, made overtures, threatened, fancied he could outplay or buy the astute and hostile Alaman, plotted bribery with one Hernández, grossly violated his conciliatory instructions by engaging in a truculent personal affair with Tornel, and was finally ordered out of the country. In short, he succeeded only in proving that we had for a minister a cantankerous, incompetent rascal, in making it appear that our government was eager to obtain Mexican territory, and in suggesting... that we felt no scruples as to means.20

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

A close examination of any number of incidents shows clearly that the United States' policy from 1825-1836 was to obtain the Mexican province of Texas at any cost.

As in the Morfia Map of 1778, all maps thenceforth showed the Nueces River as the boundary between Texas and Nuevo Santander. Following the Louisiana Purchase, the United States, pointing to LaSalle's settlement in 1685, thought that she had a claim to all territory to the Rio Grande. LaSalle's settlement on Matagorda Bay, although questionable, never extended to the Rio Grande—even the French government admitted this—but even if it was west of the Sabine River, the United States renounced "... all rights, claims, and pretensions ..." to the area west of the Sabine in 1819. There was no confusion among the boundary commissioners as to whether the Sabine was in reality the Neches. Thus, it was understood even to the Texans that their limits were the Sabine on the southeast and the Nueces on the southwest.

Joel Poinsett's preliminary mission in 1822 actually began Mexican suspicion of the United States. Exhibiting a
lack of finesse and poor methods, Poinsett openly stated that the United States wanted not only Texas, but New Mexico, Sonora, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and both Californias. Besides this frank avowal of our territorial designs, he also labelled the Mexican leader, Iturbide, a tyrant. Jackson at this time also showed an antipathy for Mexico's government and looked forward to the triumph of "liberal principles."

Poinsett's task as minister to Mexico was always primarily to obtain Texas, and Secretary of State Henry Clay constantly spoke of the Sabine boundary as being inconvenient or undesirable—but never illegal. Poinsett himself referred to the land as "their territory." As early as 1826, he noticed rumblings of discontent in Texas and wrote Washington that it might be best to let the Texans revolt, thereby bringing about future annexation that would cost the United States nothing.

Part of Poinsett's initial instructions called for him to expouse the "very great advantages" of our type of government, and this caused his downfall. He admittedly started the York Masonic Lodge to spread liberal principles, and it is inconceivable that he did not know their revolutionary objectives, particularly when he spoke of knowing
all of the men well. He constantly complained that Mexico reacted negatively to the "disinterested and generous conduct" of the United States, and yet his conduct was neither disinterested nor generous. He acknowledged hostility and yet his actions furthered it. As late as 1827, after he supposedly had disassociated himself from the Yorkinos, an intimate connection was still being drawn by British Charge Pakenham. Although Pakenham and his predecessor Henry Ward were obviously prejudiced against American aims, their charges were made in confidential letters, not for propaganda purposes in Mexico.

Following the takeover of the government by the Yorkinos, Poinsett was accused of being a "disturber of order" by the legislatures of Puebla and Vera Cruz—referring both to his connection with the Yorkinos and his sympathy for the Texans. His answers to the charges are contradictory, questionable, and in some cases, unbelievable. There is no doubt as to his close association with the Yorkinos. Poinsett's only positive achievement was to begin negotiations that would culminate in 1832 in the Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation, but his efforts here were somewhat overshadowed by the failure of Washington to ratify it in time on several different occasions.
A skilled and understanding diplomat would have had trouble with the Mexicans, but neither "skilled" nor "understanding" described Anthony Butler. Butler, prior to his appointment to succeed Poinsett, already had vested land interests in the Nacogdoches area of Texas. Both Stephen Austin and Sam Houston placed him there prior to 1829, with Houston knowing him well enough to accuse him of being a swindler. Butler, thus, was not a disinterested party as far as future events in Texas were concerned—He had an immediate and personal stake in Texas's possible annexation to the United States, as this annexation would inflate the value of his property. The man from whom Butler purchased his land was Lorenzo de Zavala, later to be intimately involved in an elaborate bribery scheme.

Butler's initial argument that the boundary commissioners in 1819 had meant the United States-Mexico boundary to be the Neches, rather than the Sabine, was ridiculous. There was never any confusion over names. Butler's stand was motivated solely by the fact that his land holdings were located between the two rivers. Unfortunately his theory became the basis for the policy of Andrew Jackson, who relied only on the word of his old friend as to the southwestern limits of the United States.
Butler's journey through Texas to Mexico can, at best, be called indiscreet. It is known that he bragged en route that he would "get Texas," and it is also known that he made a brief stop in Texas prior to assuming his duties in Mexico--Austin accused him then of attempting to start a revolt in Texas to achieve selfish ends. Although his reception in Mexico was hostile, and rumors were widespread that he would try to acquire Texas at any cost, Butler did nothing to dispel the rumors or soothe Mexican feelings. Indeed, his subsequent actions would convince the Mexicans that the United States wanted Texas and would stop at nothing to get it. Later instructions from the Secretary of State told Butler that, due to existing hostility, he should delay until a more appropriate time. Nevertheless, Butler interpreted the last sentence of these instructions, stating that he should seize any opportunity that presented itself, as meaning that the matter was up to his discretion.

Anthony Butler, by his own admission, tried to stall the Mexican authorities when they sought a solution to the boundary problem. Also by his own admission, he hoped that the Texas independence movement would succeed, thereby leading to acquisition at no expense to the United States. He felt that even if the movement failed, the Mexicans would sell
anyway, seeing that the province would just be a lasting problem. Butler was not content with waiting for events to happen; he wanted to make them happen. Scheming with Zavala, he almost single-handedly caused the Land Law of 1830 prohibiting further immigration. Even Sam Houston, sharing Butler's ultimate aim of annexation to the United States, admitted this. Despite one rebuke after the other, Butler continued to mislead President Andrew Jackson, assuring him of ultimate success. His conduct became so insulting to both Mexicans and Americans that he was reported by Consul James Wilcocks for being "of a mean and despicable character" for interfering with consular duties, and for being guilty of many other charges. Butler's aims, in other words, were obvious, and since he was an agent of the United States government, it was assumed by Mexico that United States aims were thus also obvious.

The role of President Andrew Jackson was a strange one. Wanting Texas from the very beginning, according to Adams, Jackson, if he did not encourage American immigration after 1830, did absolutely nothing to prevent it. He certainly knew about it since several Mexican officials complained to him. He certainly knew about Butler's irresponsible methods, elementary mistakes, and bribery schemes, but he did not
recall his minister. When Wilcocks charged that Butler was a disgrace to his country, Jackson dismissed Wilcocks and asked Butler to recommend a "more suitable" replacement. He corresponded regularly with Houston and was always informed of events in Texas. A close examination of Butler's correspondence shows that he was arrogant, over-confident, and motivated by his own ends. Nevertheless, even after Butler's fantastic plot involving bribery and the expenditure of five million dollars—four and one half million being unaccounted for, Jackson failed to dismiss Butler or even to issue him a strong reprimand.

In 1833 and 1834, when events in Texas were becoming more volatile by the day, Butler was positively identified in Bexar before a revolt broke out. This leaves open the possibility that, assuming that he was absent from Mexico for several unexplained months around the Bexar incident, he might have been the cause of other revolts, as other revolts did break out at the time. When no action was taken on the independence motion by the Texas Convention, Butler urged military occupation of an area that the United States had pledged itself in 1819 to stay out of. As further indication of his lack of character or responsibility, he suggested himself as a logical choice for governor. More proposals
for bribery through either Zavala or Hernández were sent through regular diplomatic channels without even the use of a code. His conduct prior to his departure need not be reiterated—it obviously casts disgrace upon his own character and, indirectly, on his country.

By the time Anthony Butler left Texas, that province's independence movement had begun. By a coincidence, General Gaines of the United States Army had pursued a supported band of renegade Indians into Nacogdoches at the beginning of hostilities, and this was either an improbable coincidence, or he was sent to back up the Texans in case of emergency, as charged by Santa Anna. The independence of Texas followed shortly.

Events from the independence of Texas in 1836 to the outbreak of the Mexican War in 1846 are outside the scope of this paper. It has been shown that all maps from 1778 until 1845 listed the Nueces River as the southwestern boundary of Texas, a fact that even a Texas congressman admitted in 1836. As early as Butler's offer in 1835,


2There are many items which might be cited to show that the Texans were never sure of the justness of their claiming the Rio Grande as their southwestern limits. Letters from the government in Texas to representatives in the United States, and later in Mexico, show that they initially offered
the United States had made known that she wanted a port on the Pacific Ocean--San Francisco. Poinsett earlier had defined the territorial ambitions of the United States as including New Mexico and both Californias. It was then convenient in 1845, when Texas was annexed, to press for the Rio Grande as the boundary between the United States and Mexico, and when Mexico refused to acknowledge this untenable position, then General Zachary Taylor was ordered to the banks of the Rio Grande to provoke a fight which would begin the Mexican War.

The writer is aware that there were many factors involved in western expansion, such as the South's desire for additional slave territory, and the desire of the North to open up trading ports on the Pacific Ocean.

When President Polk declared war in 1846, he also mentioned the seriousness of Mexican debts owed to United

States citizen. Nevertheless, the actual hostilities in 1846 erupted over a boundary dispute—a dispute that had been brewing since the Louisiana Purchase and one which had been aggravated by the ministries of Joel Poinsett and Anthony Butler from 1825-1836. When the United States finally did incite Texas to rebel and declare for independence, the untenable position of claiming the Rio Grande River as the boundary line had no basis. As should again be pointed out, Texas had always acknowledged the Nueces River as her limits, and the state of Nuevo Santander (later Tamaulipas) both distributed land grants in the area and operated a customs house. It was Anthony Butler who first actively pressed for the Rio Grande as the boundary, and his policies, taken with those of his predecessor, alienated the Mexicans from discussing a possible future settlement. Once Texas was independent, it was only a matter of time before the United States and Mexico went to war.

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3Clayton Charles Kohl, *Claims as a Cause of the Mexican War* (New York: New York University Press, 1914), passim. This short pamphlet takes the view that although claims were always being protested, they never were sufficiently serious in themselves to constitute reason for going to war. Kohl also points out that the claims were exaggerated in some cases.
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Books


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**SECONDARY WORKS**

**Books**


Articles


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