

The Domestic Consequences of American Imperialism: Filibustering and Howard Pyle's Pirates

Robert E. May

Perhaps it bears no significance at all. In his introduction to an edited 1891 work on piracy (*The Buccaneers and Marooners of America*), the illustrious Wilmington, Delaware illustrator and author Howard Pyle inserted a curious passage within the context of explaining an upsurge in West Indian piracy following the Treaty of Ryswick (1697), which had ended the War of the League of Augsburg (1688-1697) between the European powers. Observing that the warring states had condoned “filibustering” against each other while the conflict was raging, Pyle reported that the buccaneering way of life had become so “thoroughly congenial” for its practitioners that they could not give it up when the fighting was over. The day of Edward Teach, best remembered as Blackbeard, had dawned.¹

Although there seems a dissonance in Pyle's use of a term for windy talking—“filibustering”—in a passage about behavior that most people associate with cutthroat violence, Pyle's language makes sense. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, Americans used the word to describe private military expeditions against foreign states and dependencies with which their own country was officially at peace. During the 1850s, when filibustering occurred every year and achieved temporary success with the Tennessee native William Walker conquering much of Nicaragua, the word almost always indicated private armed attacks on other countries. By the time Pyle was writing in 1891,

other meanings, especially lengthy speechmaking, competed for the term. Thus the Wilmington *Morning Herald* in Pyle's hometown noted that there had been "filibustering" during a recent political caucus. However, Americans still committed private aggression abroad in the 1870s-1890s, especially against Cuba, Mexico, and Central America. Filibustering's pre-Civil War meaning, as a result, persisted within Pyle's literary and artistic circles. Late-nineteenth-century popular authors such as Bret Harte, Richard Harding Davis, and Stephen Crane published short stories, novels, and even some non-fiction about filibustering, much of it inspired by the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, U.S. annexation of the Philippines, and the growing discourse in the press about the benefits and drawbacks of competing with European powers and Japan for overseas empire. Very possibly Pyle was familiar with a story in *Scribner's Monthly* illustrated by his friend Edwin A. Abbey that repeatedly applied the term filibuster for adventurers on foreign soil. At any rate, Pyle's usage was sound.²

Besides, the term's etymology can be traced to a Dutch word for freebooter ("vrijbouter"). It was no accident that foreign governments regularly vented their opprobrium of U.S. filibusters by damning them as pirates, sometimes citing that very epithet as justification for executing filibuster invaders on the spot without the benefit of trial. Thus in 1850, according to the U.S. consul in Havana, Spain's governing official in Cuba (or "Captain General") argued during an interview that "the laws against pirates held that they could be captured and punished wherever found." The next year, Spanish authorities on the island used that very logic to execute fifty-one filibusters from the United States just two days after they were taken into custody—an event that became front-page news in the United States, inciting a series of anti-Spanish riots on the Gulf Coast.³

This essay addresses what, on first glance, might seem a mere blip from filibustering's heyday in the 1850s—the flight of three male American youths, in defiance of their families' wishes, to William Walker's Nicaragua. But an account of their absence and return holds considerable interest for what it reveals about filibustering's appeal within America's mid-nineteenth-century mobile, expansionist public culture. That filibustering attracted youths in Delaware, a state invariably excluded from scholarship about the expeditions, is telling about its seductive reach in much of the United States during the expansionist 1850s. Recovering this story, moreover, is also revelatory of the tragedy that filibustering represented for many family circles. This essay proposes to probe filibustering's cultural power, and the familial horror of its social history. That even Howard Pyle, the sometimes reclusive and hardly adventurous Delaware artist, had a link, if tenuous, with America's filibustering epidemic, and its pathos, is telling. Pyle was less than three years old at the time of the incident at issue here. But a filibuster ghost from the days of William Walker would lurk in Pyle's matrimonial closet.

Our vignette concerns how at the very time of Walker's rise to power in Nicaragua, filibustering disrupted the lives of the descendants of Éleuthère Irénée du Pont de Nemours, founder of the Du Pont industrial empire in Delaware. An exile from revolutionary France, Irénée, as he was commonly known, had arrived in the U.S. with other family members in 1800. Starting in 1802 and over the following years, Irénée du Pont had established a manufacturing complex on Brandywine creek just north of Wilmington, Delaware involving gunpowder mills, a woolen mill, and a cotton factory. After Irénée died in 1834, his descendents carried on and expanded the operations, acquiring considerable landholdings and keeping what was known as E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company in the family. Thus Henry du Pont, one of Irénée's sons, served as company president starting in 1850, while son Alfred handled a lot of the company's finances and their brother Alexis managed many of the concern's daily operations.⁴

The du Ponts' brush with filibustering began in early 1856. On January 20, Sophie Madeleine Du Pont—wife of U.S. naval captain (and her first cousin) Samuel Francis Du Pont and one of the daughters of Éleuthère Irénée du Pont—noted that her sister Eleuthera's nephew Frank (Francis G.) Smith and Tatnall Warner, a fellow apprentice, had recently run off at night from their situations with a "Mr. Poole" (almost certainly John Morton Poole, the Wilmington machinist who maintained a workplace at the foot of Orange Street in the city), leaving Eleuthera miserable (fig. 1). Nobody knew their destination but Sophie suspected at first that their absconding had to do with an offer extended to them the previous summer to take positions on a Southern steamboat for \$300 and board. Dissatisfied for some time with the way that he had been treated by the "hard & disagreeable" Poole, Smith had begged his uncle, the nearby powder manufacturer Alexis I. du Pont (brother to Sophie and Eleuthera), to get him extricated from his apprenticeship. But Poole had persuaded du Pont that the youth would be better treated in the future and should remain with him. Now Frank had rebelled, causing his childless aunt Eleuthera a "great trial," by leaving for an unknown destination. Three days later, Sophie Du Pont added, in a letter to her brother Henry's son Henry Algernon, that Eleuthera's agony was all the greater because it had occurred at the particular time of the year that caused her to recall her "great affliction"—an oblique reference to the accidental poisoning and death four years earlier of Eleuthera's husband Thomas McKie Smith. Youths, Sophie dismally concluded, were far too prone to take the love they received from their elders for granted, and to feel little obligation in return.⁵

Unfortunately, Eleuthera du Pont's misery was only beginning. Over the next several days, the du Ponts learned that Smith and Warner had "eloped" to New York City. Sometime around January 25, Warner had left Smith and gone to his family's home in New Jersey, but after Warner's departure Smith had been joined by two other young male acquaintances from Wilmington: George Simmons, the seventeen-year-old son of Wilmington timber merchant and



Figure 1: Sophie Du Pont. Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library.

widower C. Joshua Simmons and his first wife Sarah; and one of the sons (either Stephen, approximately 21, or Samuel, approximately 16) of Wilmington printer Stephen Southard and his wife Sarah. Two years earlier, the boys had formed a secret society and pledged their loyalty to each other. Now the three youths intended booking passage from New York on an ocean-bound steamer. Sophie had the impression that they were on their way to California, a common destination out of mid-Atlantic Coast ports in that decade of the Gold Rush, an impression that Smith may have intended to foster when he wrote *Eleuthera* a

letter stating that he, Simmons and Southard were boarding together and planning an unspecified “undertaking” which they thought would secure their fortune in a few months. But from the beginning, the families of the runaways also worried that the youths might have William Walker’s Central American domain in mind. As early as January 27, after church, Alexis du Pont intimated to Eleuthera the extremely disturbing news that the youths really had their sights on Nicaragua. But confusion persisted. On February 3, mentioning information received from Warner via Warner’s uncle, Sophie reported confidently that it “was *California*, not Nicaragua, they were going to.”⁶

From the viewpoint of the du Pont circle, no sane American youth belonged in Nicaragua at that particular time. In May 1855, approximately two years after he had attempted an unsuccessful invasion of Mexico, the filibuster William Walker and fifty-six companions had slipped out of San Francisco harbor on the brig *Vesta*, intending to take advantage of a colonization contract offered them by one of the contesting factions—the Democrats (or Liberals)—in Nicaragua’s ongoing civil war, promising them land grants in the country if they bore arms in the Democratic cause. After arriving in Nicaragua, engaging in considerable fighting, and receiving additional reinforcement from California, Walker’s adventurers had helped the Democrats achieve an accord with the enemy Legitimist (or Conservative) faction, which ended in the creation of a coalition government with Walker serving as commander-in-chief of the Nicaraguan army. Following the execution on treason charges of his chief rival, the Legitimist Minister of War, in November 1855, Walker had gained virtual control of the government, ruling for the time being through the régime’s native Nicaraguan president Patricio Rivas. Before the month was out, on November 23, Walker, in an attempt to shore up his cause against internal and external Central American enemies, had promulgated a decree promising 250 acres of land to colonists from the United States and an additional 100 acres if the colonists brought their families with them.

Supposedly, such colonists would not have to fight in Walker’s army. Walker separately offered military salaries to his army recruits. However, Walker’s land decree included a stipulation that colonists would be exempted from military service, unless “the public safety shall otherwise demand.” Indeed, there would be little distinction between military service and colonization in Walker’s Nicaragua, since his régime would almost constantly be at war. As early as November 1855, Costa Rica’s president had issued an anti-Walker proclamation. In late February 1856 Costa Rica’s Congress increased the country’s army and authorized war on the filibusters. The next month El Salvador and Guatemala also turned against Walker. Although the filibuster’s forces were tiny compared to the armies that would fight a few years later in the American Civil War, they took comparably horrific losses in terms of the number of men engaged. Meanwhile, yellow fever and other diseases decimated Walker’s ranks. Not surprisingly, Walker manipulated the “public safety” loophole to impress intended

colonists into his army, generally upon their very arrival in the country. As he put it, obliquely, in his later autobiographical account of his Nicaraguan campaign, it became “requisite” to attract to his domain “a force capable of protecting” his régime.⁷

Had the du Ponts been partisans of their own country’s Democratic party, perhaps they would have tolerated the boys’ impulsiveness. For about two decades, the Democrats had been more stridently for territorial expansion than their political rivals—initially the Whigs and, as the Whig party gradually disintegrated in the mid-1850s, the nativist American (or “Know Nothing”) and antislavery Republican parties that emerged in its wake. Walker never announced any program to annex an Americanized Nicaragua to the United States; instead, he envisioned a kind of eventual Napoleonic conquest of Central America as a personal empire. That February, one of his lieutenants, temporarily back in the United States, confided to a Missouri politician traveling with him up the Mississippi river that Walker only needed one thousand men in his army “to *invade* Honduras which invasion he was preparing to make immediately.” But many Democrats either misunderstood or chose to overlook Walker’s individualistic imperialism, and regarded the filibuster’s cause as fulfilling the popular expansionist philosophy of “Manifest Destiny”—the idea that God preordained the United States to dominate the continent and perhaps the hemisphere. A pamphlet entitled “The Destiny of Nicaragua,” reportedly circulating “everywhere” for sale in Philadelphia for twenty-five cents at the time the Wilmington boys pondered sailing to Nicaragua, pandered to such beliefs. (fig. 2) Its anonymous author, identified on the title page as “An Officer in the Service of Walker,” argued that although the Central American states possessed considerable natural resources and a strategic geographical position, their peoples remained “miserable” because they lacked governmental forms adequate to ensure “progress,” something that Walker’s Caucasians from the north were in the process of providing them.⁸

Walker’s movement, to many Democrats, represented a natural outgrowth of the U.S. annexation of Texas, the Mexican-American War (which had resulted in an enormous land cession from Mexico), and the pushing westward of America’s Indian population. In the spring of 1856, the Democratic President Franklin Pierce even granted Walker’s government official recognition. That June, the Democratic National Convention’s party platform endorsed Walker as an agent of Central America’s regeneration.

But du Ponts had helped to found and lead the Wilmington faction of the Whig party, and in the 1850s the du Ponts circulated mostly in Whig-Know Nothing circles, with the naval officer Samuel Francis being especially vociferous about his partisan leanings. Years earlier, in 1849, Samuel crowed that Whig presidential candidate Zachary Taylor’s recent victory should teach the Democrats the dangers of acting “tyrannical,” and in 1852 he insisted that Whig leader Daniel Webster was more deserving of the presidency than “any man

THE
DESTINY OF NICARAGUA:
CENTRAL AMERICA AS IT WAS, IS, AND MAY BE.



GEN. WILLIAM WALKER.

The political condition of the country; its importance and resources; peculiarities of the people; striking incidents, with engravings of natural scenery.

A COMPLETE PICTURE OF THE COUNTRY; PORTRAITS OF WALKER AND KINNEY, THE SECRET EXPEDITIONS.

BY AN OFFICER IN THE SERVICE OF WALKER.

S. A. BENT & CO.,
No. 91 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON.
1856.

Figure 2: The title page of *The Destiny of Nicaragua*, one of many book-length accounts of fiction and non-fiction published about filibustering in the United States during the 1850s. This work related William Walker's imperialist ambitions.

living” other than perhaps his Whig rival Henry Clay. Three years later, du Pont was an unabashed Know Nothing, predicting that the party would “become national & triumphant” provided it found the right leaders and kept its ranks disciplined. Thus it was completely in character for du Pont to condemn filibustering well before the phenomenon touched his own family. In 1851, after many Americans died filibustering in Cuba, he contrasted the adventurers’ personal bravery with the “crime & delusion” of their cause. In 1854, reflecting on the surprisingly peaceful tone of President Pierce’s annual message to Congress, he lauded its absence of “filibustering” policies. Sophie’s nephew Henry Algernon du Pont, who matriculated at the U.S. Military Academy in July 1856, shared similar values, complaining from West Point about the Independence Day “filibuster” oration of cadet Henry C. McNeill of Texas.⁹ (fig. 3)

Whether influenced by an antifilibustering political philosophy or not, the du Ponts and the boys’ other loved ones hardly waited passively to learn the truth. While the young men waited in New York for their ship to sail, Frank’s father sent him a letter beseeching him to come home. Eleuthera also took action, telegraphing an acquaintance in New York City, the merchant Peter Kemble, to try to persuade Frank to return to his home, and writing Frank a personal letter of her own trying to dissuade him from his plan. George Simmons’ father, moreover, believing rumors that the boys had decided to sail on February 9, traveled to New York in an effort to “catch his son,” even boarding and searching the suspected vessel to no avail. Very likely, as Sophie Du Pont later surmised, the boys were indeed already aboard but being hidden by the captain. Filibustering violated the U.S. Neutrality Act of 1818, which prohibited illegal private invasions of foreign countries, and steamer captains risked arrest and, of course, the loss of fares, if federal officials discovered such adventurers when searching their ships. Sophie, in fact, seems to have been aware of press reports that just such subterfuges had occurred on the ship’s most recent voyage to Nicaragua from New York the previous month, since she informed her husband how on that earlier occasion twenty to thirty filibusters had “*emerged* from invisibility” on the vessel once “all danger of pursuit was over,” frankly confessing their filibustering intentions. Indeed, as a New York correspondent of a Massachusetts paper explained in his report of the incident, a U.S. marshal had boarded the vessel prior to its intended departure on January 9 and made five arrests, but several others, who had been named in the warrant he carried, “could not be found.” All the passengers aboard, the correspondent observed, had tickets for their voyages.¹⁰

Most significantly, Eleuthera solicited the Maryland Know-Nothing congressman Henry Winter Davis, a longtime friend and associate of Sophie’s husband in the naval politics of Washington, to play sleuth. But Davis disappointed. Davis learned nothing about Eleuthera’s nephew or his associates. In fact, the only clue he reported was likely erroneous. A contact had told Davis



Figure 3: Henry Algernon du Pont. Courtesy Hagley Museum and Library.

a rumor that one of the boys had been offered a promising position as an engineer in Norfolk, Virginia. Davis helplessly consoled Eleuthera with the advice that “young men” at that particular time in history had become so accustomed to taking care of themselves and “hunting their fortunes” that parents should not worry a lot when such things occurred.¹¹

Unfortunately, while the du Pont circle stewed, the wayward boys slipped into the filibustering maelstrom. On Sunday, February 10, Eleuthera received a letter from Frank dated the previous morning, alerting her that he and his two companions were planning to take a steamer for Nicaragua that very day. Frank claimed that although the boys had intended to join Walker from the beginning, he had almost changed his mind after receiving his aunt’s letter warning him to consider Walker’s “character” and the kind of “enterprise” he was engaged in. However, no sooner had Frank told Simmons and Southard that he was backing out, than they had all been persuaded by another group of young men going to “cultivate land” in Nicaragua to join them, and that they had left with “this purpose” in mind. Apparently the three Delawareans had adhered to their intent, embarking on the *Star of the West*, a three-decked, 2-masted side-wheel steamer belonging to the transportation magnate Charles Morgan that departed from New York on February 9—a day after a correspondent of the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* reported that the U.S. district attorney in New York had been unable to discern if there were any “busters” aboard. Sophie observed laconically on the seventeenth that it had been “pretty much ascertain[ed]” that Smith had sailed the previous Saturday for Nicaragua. About the only consolation for the du Ponts was that Frank, unlike his two companions, had at least informed his family, if belatedly, of their plans. Now they could only hope that he would keep a promise in his last letter that would send a report back from Central America on the *Star of the West*’s return voyage.¹²

Whether or not Frank was dissembling about his group’s intention of cultivating land in Nicaragua (Sophie Du Pont reminded her husband that all three were “about as ignorant of everything relating to farming & cultivation as they are of alchemy”), they apparently either never tried to farm there or were impressed into Walker’s service and never got the opportunity. For in a letter dated June 29, 1856 to his father from Granada, then the capital of Walker’s government, George Simmons mentioned a six-month enlistment in Walker’s military service and his own particular engagement in the filibuster’s ordnance department. George’s letter mentioned nothing about being sick and thus seemed to put to rest rumors that Frank had earlier passed on in his own letters that spring of George’s having contracted yellow fever, but otherwise the letter could only have been calculated to cause worry back home. George expressed not only dissatisfaction with being in Walker’s military, but, also according to Eleuthera’s synopsis of it, doubt that the Delawareans would be discharged when their enlistments expired. George reported that he knew men who had been in Walker’s service for over a year yet had been unable to win discharges, a report

that comports with other information emanating from Walker's conquest. For instance, a Philadelphia newspaper on July 12 carried a report from Nicaragua saying that any American trying to leave Nicaragua lacking a signed pass from General Walker would be shot if caught, and that Walker was intercepting any letters from the soldiers home if they contained criticism of his régime. A former Walker recruit, in a reminiscence published a few years later, remembered that it was common for Walker to put muskets in the hands of any American males arriving in Nicaragua, whether or not they had previously enlisted, "and there he had kept them, fighting not for himself or his promises, but for life." Essentially, Walker impressed a good share of the army that was supposedly bringing liberty and American freedom to Central America. Likely this is why Frank Smith complained that he had been "deceived" in one of his letters home.¹³

The turn of events could hardly have been more shocking to the du Ponts and their circle. In fact, it would be difficult to identify a set of documents that better expose the social pathology of filibustering than the surviving du Pont correspondence. Adjectives for sadness and despondency at the behavior of the boys suffuse family letters and diary notations addressing the situation. For instance, Sophie Du Pont grieved especially for Mary ("Polly") Simmons, George's aunt and stepmother, because George, unlike Frank, had absconded directly from home and lacked any legitimate motive for forsaking his family equivalent to the alleged workplace mistreatment that Frank had endured. But Sophie also perceived the boys' sailing for Nicaragua as a "bitter trial" for her own sister Eleuthera. For her part, Eleuthera reported to her nephew Henry that she had received a "sad, sad letter" from Frank's father, and lamented pathetically: "O! how can children forget their parents so, & give them so much anxiety & sorrow!" When Frank alerted the family about George Simmons's possibly contracting yellow fever, Eleuthera reported that the entire family was "unhappy" and that they expected to hear news of George's death in the next steamer. Meanwhile, yet another family member could not help but be "sad" as he mused about how cheerful Frank had seemed as recently as New Year's Day, when he had been in the company of his aunt and sister. Little did his family dream that, "in but a few weeks, he would snatch himself away from them perhaps never to return."¹⁴

Grieving, however, hardly precluded renewed exertions to save Frank and his companions from their predicament. Fortunately for Smith, Southard, and Simmons, the United States government recognized Walker's régime in May 1856, which gave the du Ponts and their circle some leverage in trying to extricate the boys from the mess in which they found themselves. Walker needed U.S. support, partly because Great Britain, which had colonial and transit interests in Central America, supported his Central American enemies and occasionally interfered with vessels arriving at his ports. More important, Walker needed to attract more recruits from the United States, and ensure that U.S. officials did not try to prevent them from embarking from American ports. The du Ponts

were lucky in that they were seeking a favor from Walker during a brief window of opportunity, when the filibuster was at least somewhat sensitive to U.S. opinion. Once word reached the United States that Walker had seized power in a corrupted election in July 1856 and had himself inaugurated president on July 12, the United States responded quickly. Pierce broke relations with Walker by refusing officially to receive the appointee of Walker's new administration as minister to the United States.¹⁵

Sometime that spring, probably in May, the du Ponts started using their influence in a bid to rescue Walker and his companions from their enlistments. The details remain hazy, but they apparently adopted a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, they asked the distinguished Philadelphia painter Thomas Sully, the father-in-law of John H. Wheeler, the U.S. minister to Walker's régime, to pull strings on the boys' behalf. In her letter of July 22 to her nephew Henry Algernon, Eleuthera du Pont noted that Frank had already received a letter of introduction from Sully to Wheeler, and that Frank had written in a letter dated May 28 that he (Frank) would tell Wheeler when he saw him that "the greatest favor he [Wheeler] could confer on him, would be to send him straight home!" But the family also used two prominent Wilmington public figures, U.S. Senator James A. Bayard and the attorney and former U.S. Representative George Read Riddle, as intermediaries with the U.S. Department of State, so that Wheeler would feel official pressure to intercede with Walker. That Bayard and Riddle were both Democrats would presumably bear some weight with the incumbent Pierce administration.¹⁶

Nothing seemed certain, at first. George Simmons reported in his letter of June 29 that Wheeler had already asked Walker to release Frank, and that he (George) expected Frank to be home soon. But Wheeler wrote his father-in-law a letter dated June 12, eventually shared with Eleuthera, stating that Walker had initially refused Wheeler's appeal on Frank's behalf, saying that the army was under marching orders—a strange excuse, from Eleuthera's perspective, since Walker's régime was at the time enjoying a respite from warfare against the other Central American states. Moreover, George was even less optimistic about his own prospects and those of Southard than Frank's, since Sully had only intervened on Frank's behalf. George suggested that his father hunt down Walker's chief of ordnance, a friend who had journeyed to New York City on a mission to purchase stores, and try to persuade the officer to sway Walker. Joshua Simmons followed up on his son's advice, though Eleuthera as late as July 22 had not heard anything about the interview.¹⁷

Eventually these efforts bore fruit, and the du Ponts' filibustering crisis resolved itself far more satisfactorily than might be anticipated, given what we know today about the odds of American filibusters returning in one piece from Walker's army. Sometime prior to August 10, U.S. Minister Wheeler provided Walker's government with a copy of a letter that Senator Bayard had submitted asking for the release of the three boys; and on August 10 Wheeler alerted the

state department that Walker's foreign minister had told him that the youths would be discharged if their parents or other interested parties sent enough funds to enable them to travel safely to the United States, or wherever else they desired to go. Subsequently, Joshua Simmons arranged the funding using Riddle as his intermediary with Wheeler, and the boys embarked on the steamer *Cahawba*, which anchored at New York on August 30. Some uneasy moments ensued, until the boys actually turned up back at Wilmington. Their names appeared on a published list of the *Cahawba's* passengers, but their loved ones could not be absolutely certain that the spirited boys would actually be willing to come home after their arrival in port. Thus Sophie Du Pont informed her husband on September 1, the day that the *New-York Daily Times* released the passenger list, that Polly Simmons had alerted Eleuthera to the appearance of the "runaways" in New York, and then two days later reported the nagging tension in the family:

The Nicaraguan volunteers have neither arrived nor have been heard from. . . . Eleu & Polly are kept in an exciting suspense [*sic*]—& I think there is some . . . anxiety lest they should embark in some new folly. However the vessel may have been quarantined.¹⁸

But all the worries were unnecessary. On Sunday, September 7, Sophie recorded in her diary that at church that day she had seen "poor Frank," who had arrived at Eleuthera's house two days previously. Sophie thought Frank gave the appearance of being ashamed by his lapse, but was herself far more grateful than censorious about his safe return: "Oh the mercy of God, in sparing them all, to return home!" A week later, visiting her diary again, she observed that Eleuthera had naturally been completely absorbed with her nephew since his arrival, and reflected, "Frank S. & George Simmons & Southard have got home from Nicaragua—wiser for life I trust." Meanwhile the antifilibustering West Pointer Henry Algernon du Pont rendered his own valedictory about the incident: "The three runaways have returned from Nicaragua . . . a good deal wiser than when they started, I presume."¹⁹

The family's timing was impeccable. In Guatemala on July 18, representatives from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador had signed an alliance against Walker, and in mid-September a major allied force would advance on Walker's troops holding Managua, Nicaragua. The filibusters' casualty rates would soon rise precipitately, with Walker taking especially high losses at Granada and Masaya on October 12-13. Had the three youths stayed in Central America a mere two months more, the du Ponts likely would have experienced a far less happy reunion. Eventually bottled up by enemy forces at Rivas, in Nicaragua's interior near Lake Nicaragua, Walker's men were kept under intermittent bombardment and reduced to killing and eating their own horses and mules until the filibuster chief put an end to their ordeal by

surrendering on May 1 to the U.S. Navy, in a deal brokered by a U.S. naval officer between Walker and Costa Rican general José Joaquín Mora. Over the next several months, Walker's survivors trickled back to the United States on various vessels. Commentators almost invariably remarked on their emaciated appearance, wounds and diseases, and tattered clothing. Some survivors died in transit or never got beyond their ports of disembarkation.²⁰

Nothing, in all this, seems to have changed the du Ponts' attitudes about filibustering, or made them empathize with their adventuring fellow countrymen. When, in 1858, William Walker returned to a hero's reception in the United States following a second attempt to conquer Nicaragua, Captain Du Pont could only denounce the filibuster as "a freebooter, who has shed innocent & unoffending blood—who has violated openly the laws of his country & brought dishonor on her flag." Du Pont was especially appalled at newspaper reports that the U.S. secretary of state would sink so low as to shake the filibuster's hand.²¹

What to make of this curious episode? Although a substantial literature treats the American filibustering epidemic of the 1850s, historians have been relatively hesitant about tracing its domestic social and cultural history, opting instead for the most part to address what the filibusters wrought abroad and how their invasions affected U.S. diplomacy, politics, and the controversy over slavery's expansion. This neglect seems to be waning, with considerable attention being given in recent years to how filibusters were portrayed within American print culture and the gendered, racist, and imperialist meanings that we might attach to such depictions. But scholars have yet to fully address just how intrusive filibustering became within American society—that is, how many U.S. families and people were actually affected by the filibustering decisions of a few. Not many Americans in terms of the nation's total population, really, filibustered abroad in the 1850s—perhaps, as I have argued elsewhere, only five thousand or so.²² But focusing only on the filibusters themselves tends to obscure from memory the surprisingly large numbers of additional Americans, some of them prominent public figures, who became drawn into filibustering issues as a side effect of the actual invasions.

The du Ponts' experience in 1856, in this sense, demands our attention not because it was significant in its own right, but for the very reason that it was *not* atypical. Rather, it becomes for us a microcosm or representation of situations and tragedies that innumerable other filibuster extended family circles faced in a period when the expansionist ideology of "Manifest Destiny" and the enhanced geographical mobility unleashed by America's market and transportation revolutions were transforming American life and attitudes. As Stephen Thernstrom and Peter R. Knights put it, it was not until the nineteenth century that America's obsession with "spatial mobility as the key to virtue and success came into full flower." And while it is common to recall the westward movement

as an example of American mobility, we often overlook mobility's urban side, a phenomenon with obvious implications for the Wilmington youths of our story. Antebellum Americans, most especially young males, simply did not stay put in pre-Civil War American cities. In Rochester, New York, for instance, only one in five of the 1849 residents were still there ten years later. And filibustering, surely a rejection of parental control and roots, represented one of many sirens summoning the day's young urban men. As Lawrence Kohl explains, in a time of such growing connectedness beyond one's own community, people's ties to their own kin became increasingly tenuous. Today, insofar as filibustering is concerned, we might well label such behavior "teen rebellion." Consider, for example, this letter from a California father in 1857 asking for the help of the U.S. Secretary of the Navy: "Sometime in the month of Nov last my son (who is a minor) left his home without my knowledge and went to San Francisco where he joined a company of recruits bound to Nicaragua to aid Walker in his filibustering expedition." From this father's perspective, the decision to filibuster seems to have boiled down to an instance of youthful defiance.²³

Recalling the elder du Ponts' plight, therefore, helps expose the hitherto hidden "home front" dislocations of filibustering. It is every bit as necessary for an understanding of these illegal invasions to recover what happened "behind the lines," as it is to integrate America's home front within comprehensive treatments of other chapters of American military history, including the Civil War, Vietnam, and the two world wars.

Virtually every element of the du Ponts' experience with filibustering is reiterated in other documents. Many filibustering American youths, and not just the Wilmington runaways, kept their loved ones in the dark about their adventuring intentions until they were already on their way, often to subvert the possibility of interference or complaints from parental or other authority figures. Cornelius Cook, who participated in an unsuccessful filibuster to Cuba in 1851, for example, alerted a brother as to his decision to enlist, but reasoned that "Ma & Lester" would be "torturd [sic] with groundless fears" if they learned what he had done and therefore should be kept in ignorance. Likewise, as was the case with the three youths in the incident under review here, many filibusters sent letters home once they were underway or arrived at their destinations. Thus according to a fellow participant in an 1850 invasion of Cuba, a Kentuckian on board one of the invading ships took a moment to write to his mother before his vessel sailed, explaining that by the time his letter arrived he might be "far away on the blue bosom of the Gulf of Mexico," imprisoned in Cuba, about to be executed, or "a patriot on the field of glory." While the James Callahan filibuster into Mexico was in progress during 1855, the former Texas Ranger and recent state legislator Henry McCulloch alerted his mother that he was one of twenty-four men who had signed up to rescue Callahan, then under siege at the Mexican town of Piedras Negras. Certainly filibustering youths sent missives home, as did Frank Smith and George Simmons, from Walker's Nicaragua. Joseph Hall,

for instance, contacted his mother and uncle from Granada in October 1856, saying that his health had been run down because he had to do picket duty every single night, and neither received any pay nor half the food that he craved. Months earlier, around the time that Smith tried to leave Walker's service, W. E. Muir, Jr. sent off letters to his father, begging that his father write to his old acquaintance then U.S. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, and ask Davis to try to get him out of Walker's army. Like George Simmons, Muir feared that Walker would not release him when his enlistment expired. When none of his letters were answered, Muir assumed that they had not gotten through and appealed directly to Davis.²⁴

Like Eleuthera du Pont, relations (and friends) of other filibustering youths tried to persuade them to abort their adventures before it was too late. In June 1854, a San Francisco newspaper reported that an Illinois woman with her five-year-old child had followed after her husband to California, but learned once there that he had already departed on a filibuster to Mexico. So she sent a letter to her husband pleading that he abandon the invasion and return to her, which resulted in his being executed for desertion when he attempted to comply. One wife of a prospective filibuster on the other hand, in 1855, simply hid a letter to her husband from the former Mississippi governor John Quitman, then planning an invasion of Cuba, in the hope that her spouse would not find out until it was too late the details of the planned embarkation. Like Joshua Simmons, other loved ones of filibusters tried literally to stop young men from boarding expeditionary ships. A newspaper correspondent in New York relayed the story to a paper in California that just prior to the *Star of the West's* voyage to Nicaragua in January 1856, a woman about eighteen-years-old visited the mayor's office in New York City in an unsuccessful attempt to get that official to prevent her brother from embarking to join Walker.²⁵

Like the du Ponts, many other families endured months of agonizing after receiving horrific reports about what conditions were like during these invasions, and tried to capitalize on influential contacts to get their young men extricated from their predicaments. Edmund H. McDonald, for instance, alerted his mother in a letter from prison in Havana following his participation in the unsuccessful 1851 invasion of Cuba that he had been "deceived" into enlisting, that the men prior to their surrender had been reduced to eating one meal a day of beef and corn, and that one of his close acquaintances in the expedition was presumably dead. She should try to get him "liberated" by contacting her cousin, U.S. Secretary of War Charles M. Conrad as well as U.S. Attorney General John J. Crittenden, an old friend, and several other influential figures that he specified. He even suggested that his grandmother should use her pull with William Preston of Louisville, then a Kentucky state legislator. Many families, indeed, attempted such initiatives, with mixed results, throughout the decade. The McDonalds, for instance, not only contacted Crittenden and Conrad, but also Lazarus Powell, governor-elect of their state, and the famous Kentucky senator Henry Clay.²⁶

But above all, surviving documents bring out the poignancy of diverse American families trying to cope with the knowledge that filibustering was a terribly dangerous business, and that they might not ever see their young men again—the trials, afflictions, sadness and unhappiness evoked in the du Pont correspondence. Elizabeth Marshall of Frankfurt, Kentucky, wrote her brother, who served for a while as Judge Advocate General at the rank of major in Walker's régime, that the family treasured his letters home but felt "very anxious and uneasy" about him given the dangers that he faced in Nicaragua and the bouts of fever he had suffered after arriving there. Eliza eventually learned that he had died, putting her under such an "affliction" that she could not correspond with her closest acquaintances for some time. Along similar lines, a man turned up at the New York City hotel where William Walker stayed following his return from Nicaragua in 1857, and told Walker that his wife was "almost distracted" by worry about their son, who had been serving with the filibusters. And the mother of a filibuster captured by Spanish authorities in Cuba, upon learning that he was to be sent to the coast of Africa for penal labor as a punishment, became "prostrated & unnerved" according to a press account.²⁷

That filibustering was a criminal enterprise, of course, made matters all the worse for the invaders' loved ones, perhaps explaining why the familial reaction against the expeditions seems to have been more alarmist than against other dangerous enterprises of the period—such as enlisting for the Mexican War or setting out in the California Gold Rush. Even filibustering's strongest supporters conceded its illegality; several times before the Civil War, congressional advocates of the adventurers actually introduced legislation designed to suspend the Neutrality Act, so as to legalize such invasions. And while American champions of the filibusters celebrated them as brave adventurers extending America's democratic institutions and progress into foreign lands, opponents concurred with the near universal opinion abroad that filibustering amounted to buccaneering. Thus New York lawyer George Templeton Strong reflected in his diary that Spanish officials had every right by international law to shoot captured Cuba filibusters on the spot since they were caught "red-hand in piracy," and U.S. Representative John Letcher condemned Walker as "no better than a Pirate" in one of his private letters. To have a family member engaged in an activity that not only risked death but also invited arrest was extremely upsetting to many Americans, who saw such behavior as not only illicit but virtually unpatriotic. So it was that one father opposed his son's joining the Henry L. Kinney filibuster to Central America of 1855, observing in a letter that the New York *Tribune* had exposed its "brigand" nature and shown that anyone affiliated with Kinney was "an outlaw." The co-editor of the *Washington Globe* felt so strongly that his own integrity had been compromised by press reports that his son had become a Cuba filibuster, that he issued a public statement in a rival newspaper disavowing filibustering as "illegal" and "unauthorized" and declaring that he

had nothing to do with his son's decision. He would even deny the invasion his prayers, he declared angrily.²⁸

Filibustering especially threatened poorer American families. Wives living lives on the margins, or elderly parents dependent on their sons, could ill afford to sacrifice male breadwinners in such endeavors. Consider Eliza M. Dorr's situation, after her spouse left on the 1851 Cuba expedition without sufficiently providing for her and their six children. According to the New Orleans *True Delta*, Mrs. Door soon had all her furniture confiscated by a constable to satisfy a debt; she and her children escaped sleeping on the ground only because of a sheriff's charity. The San Francisco paper that reported the story of the woman who had begged her husband to leave the 1854 invasion of Mexico noted that she had become one of the "incidents [read: victims] connected with filibustering," as she was now stranded and "cheerless" in the city, lacking even a home. In the summer of 1857, the widow and female apple-seller Isabella Charters, a resident of New York City, located William Walker during his stay there following his return from Nicaragua, to discover the fate of her son who had been "seduced" into the filibuster army the previous year. Walker instructed her to contact one of his officers in New Orleans for information, which resulted in a telegraph revealing that her son had died in the fighting at Rivas in February. This news was too much for Charters. When numbers of Walker's surviving filibusters afterwards turned up in New York City after being dumped there by the Navy, she appeared "weeping bitterly" at City Hall Park, where many of the destitute men hung out while trying to raise funds to return home. Reportedly, Charters sobbed to one of Walker's officers that her son had been "a good boy, and behaved well to his poor mother." Around the same time, the *New-York Times* reported that an "old lady," one Mrs. Cowley, dressed in black, had turned up with her daughter at the park and scrutinized the men there hoping to discover her son. She had heard that the Costa Ricans had taken him captive, and she remarked that she could barely stand the suspense of waiting to learn his fate. Although the veterans told her that the Costa Ricans had executed their prisoners, she unselfishly wished them well. Possibly things turned out better for her than one might expect. Months later, the *Panama Star* reported that a James Cowle had deserted from Walker's service and was then at Puntarenas, Costa Rica, sick with fever.²⁹

But all classes felt filibustering's sting. Eliza Quitman, the wealthy wife of Cuba filibuster leader John Quitman, was stunned by rumors that her son Henry might filibuster with her husband. It was unfathomable, to Mrs. Quitman, that he might do such an ill-considered act. Pleading with Henry not to take filibustering's bait, she told him that it would "break your Mother[']s heart" if he actually embarked on an expedition. Eleuthera du Pont would have understood all too well.³⁰

Finally, we reach the issue of creative inspiration. Few turn-of-the-century writers or illustrators became better identified with piracy than did Howard

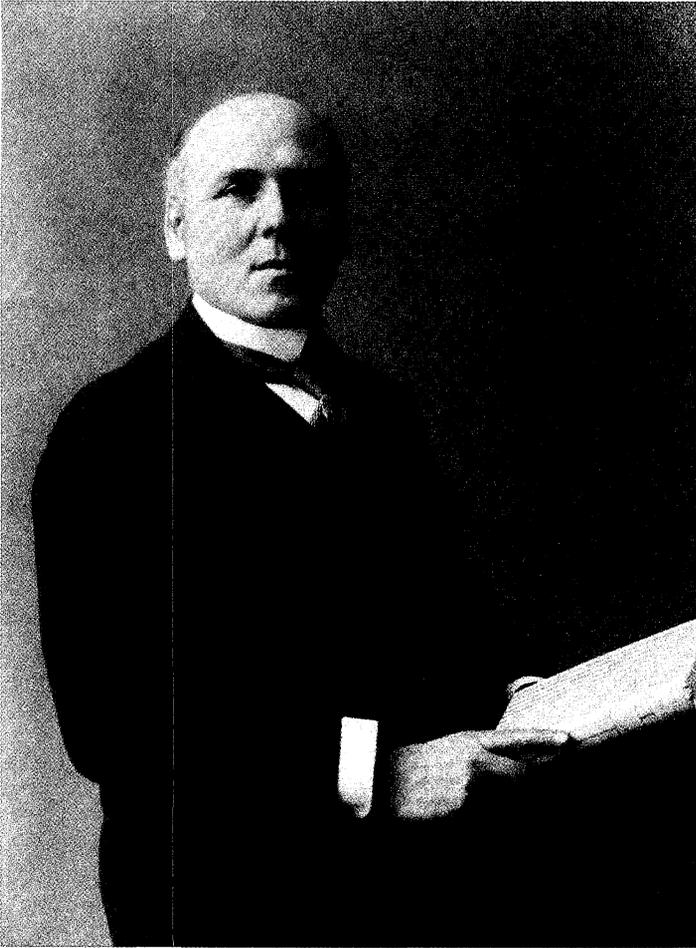


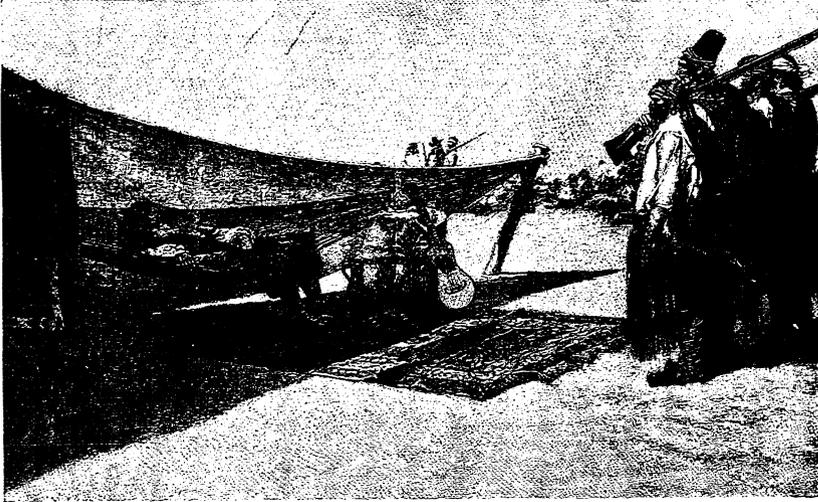
Figure 4: Howard Pyle. Courtesy Library of Congress.

Pyle, though his creative impulses spun out in eclectic directions, including fantasy, medieval chivalry, and early American history. (fig. 4) Nonetheless, Pyle authored, illustrated, and author/illustrated books, as well as magazine articles and parts of books, which concerned piracy in all or in part. In addition to his most famous work along freebooting lines, his edited *The Buccaneers and Marooners of America*, he also addressed piracy (and sometimes privateering) in such titles as *The Story of Jack Ballister's Fortunes*, *Stolen Treasure*, *Adventures of Pirates and Sea-Rovers*, and *Within the Capes*, as well as in articles for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, *Harper's Round Table*, *The Northwestern Miller*, *The Autograph*, and *Harper's Weekly*. Pyle's heart may well have been the most committed to his pirates. In January 1888, he alerted

the poet and literary critic Edmund C. Stedman that he was soon off on a journey to the West Indies to trace “his bloodiness” (the pirate Henry Morgan), and that he hoped that it would ultimately lead to “a novel which I wish to make the work of my life so far.” As one commentator put it not long after Pyle’s death, he “waved his brush and pirates grew.” Somewhat later, an art historian asserted that Pyle specialized in “the life of the buccaneer” and converted pirates into “lasting art expression.” Tellingly, the plot of Ernest Hemingway’s short story “A Day’s Wait” (1933) turned on a father’s reading of *Howard Pyle’s Book of Pirates*, a 1921 reissuing of Pyle’s work on buccaneers, to his seemingly dying son.³¹ (fig. 5)

What explains Pyle’s focus? Most likely, his attention to pirates primarily had to do with market concerns. Pirates were a topic of considerable interest to America’s reading public in the nineteenth century, and thus, of course, to publishers. Then, too, Pyle was probably influenced by the maritime environment in which he grew to manhood and never really escaped. Pyle lived in the port of Wilmington, Delaware most of his adult life; the only time he resided elsewhere prior to his trip to Europe in 1910, where he died in 1911, was in New York City—another port—where he lived for a while in the late 1870s. One can imagine, reasonably, that Pyle grew up hearing pirate tales and reading about buccaneers. Pyle mused in an 1895 letter that for his entire life, he had been fascinated by “pirates and highwaymen, for gunpowder smoke and for good hard blows.” Charles D. Abbott, Pyle’s authorized biographer, on the other hand, asserted that Pyle’s fascination with buccaneers was fostered especially by the fifteen or so summers that he spent beginning in the 1880s, following his marriage, at Rehoboth on the Delaware coast, where he became enthralled with the “spell of the sand dunes’ secrecy.” Soon after arriving at Rehoboth, Abbott explains, Pyle began accumulating a large library about pirates.³²

Still, Pyle’s use of the term “filibuster” in his *Buccaneers and Marooners* raises the possibility of additional influences. Pyle’s wife, Anne Poole, whom he married in 1881, was the daughter of J. Morton Poole, the very Wilmington machinist on Orange Street who employed Frank Smith at the time that Smith ran off to filibuster in 1856. Muddying the waters further, Pyle apparently had very close contact with Henry Algernon du Pont, who had followed closely the Frank Smith incident of 1856 and condemned filibustering in his personal correspondence. In 1897, when asking Stedman to join him for a meal at a dining club in Philadelphia, Pyle alluded to du Pont’s being one of the other men belonging to the group. On a later occasion, in 1908, Pyle asked the influential architect Cass Gilbert whether du Pont (then U.S. Senator from Delaware), whom Pyle described as a “very valued personal friend,” might be invited to a memorial meeting in honor of the famous sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens (who had died in 1907) being held by the American Institute of Architects. In this letter, Pyle mentioned du Pont’s intelligence, his attractive Wilmington residence, and his interest in art. Just possibly, the Pooles or the du



MORGAN RECRUITING FOR THE ATTACK ON PORTO BELLO.
(From a *Frontispiece* by Howard Pyle.)

Figure 5: Howard Pyle's Frontispiece for *The Buccaneers and Marooners of America*.

Ponts, somewhere along the line, told Pyle about the three Wilmington youths who went off filibustering to Nicaragua to join the "pirate" William Walker in the winter of 1856. Just possibly, too, Pyle felt a connection with this story, which was so profoundly disturbing to the du Ponts if not also to the Pooles. We probably will never know, for sure, how often Frank Smith's lapse came up afterwards in family discussions. But it is hard to believe that the du Ponts or the Pooles did not reference it around Pyle, at one time or another. And if they did, it might possibly have helped to influence the direction of Howard Pyle's art and prose.³³

Notes

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1. Howard Pyle, ed., *The Buccaneers and Marooners of America: Being an Account of the Famous Adventurers and Daring Deeds of Certain Notorious Freebooters of the Spanish Main* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1891), 33-35.

2. Robert E. May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), xi-xvi, 19-58, 219; (Wilmington, Del.) *Morning Herald*, Dec. 14, 1875; *The Oxford English Dictionary* 1933; rpt. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1961), 212-13; E. E. Hale, "Philip Nolan's Friends: Or, 'Show Your Passports!'," *Scribner's Monthly*, 11 (Jan.-April 1876 issues): 412, 505, 516, 517n, 518; Howard Pyle to his mother, Nov. 3, 1878 (about Abbey), in Charles D. Abbott, *Howard Pyle: A Chronicle* (New York

and London: Harper & Brothers, 1925), 55-56; Rodrigo Lazo, *Writing to Cuba: Filibustering and Cuban Exiles in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 27-28, 35. Lazo notes that filibusters and pirates were sometimes linked in nineteenth-century Latin American historical romances in the sense that both represented attempts to defy “the constraints of oppressive political order and restrictive social conventions;” and Lazo adds that the Filipino nationalist José Rizal published *El Filibusterismo*, which explored the filibustering/piracy symbiosis, in 1891 (the same year that Pyle published his *Buccaneers and Marooners*). For late nineteenth-century literary portrayals of filibustering, see especially Brady Harrison, *Agent of Empire: William Walker and the Imperial Self in American Literature* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 80-143.

3. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1933; rpt. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1961), 212-13; Captain General José de la Concha’s comments, as reported in Robert B. Campbell to John M. Clayton, June 19, 1850, William R. Manning, comp., *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States: Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860*, 12 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1932-39), 11: 498; Charles H. Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny: The Lives and Times of the Filibusters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 80, 87, 89-90. Summary executions, however, defied provisions in international law specifying that pirates be given the benefit of trial. William Edward Hall, *A Treatise on International Law*, ed. J. B. Atlay (1909; 6th ed., London: Henry Frowde, 1909), 260.

4. Margaret M. Mulrooney, *Black Powder, White Lace: The du Pont Irish and Cultural Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2002), 13-20, 25, 27-28.

5. Sophie Du Pont to “My Dear Clema” (Clementina Smith), Jan. 20, 1856, Mrs. Samuel Francis du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware; U.S. Census, *Seventh Census*, Manuscript Schedules: 1850: Delaware, New Castle County, Christiana Hundred; Constance J. Cooper, Manuscript Librarian, The Historical Society of Delaware, to Robert E. May, Apr. 20, 1999 (in possession of the author). Tatnall Warner was almost certainly Edward Tatnall Warner II of Wilmington, who would have been twenty years old at the time of the incident. See [http://www.gencircles.com/users/mmolenar/4/data/2197\(12/31/2004\)](http://www.gencircles.com/users/mmolenar/4/data/2197(12/31/2004)). Clementina Smith was the daughter of Philadelphia businessman Richard S. Smith and a close friend of Sophie’s. Not only had Richard S. Smith’s former firm functioned as agent for the Du Pont gunpowder works, but his brother, Francis Gurney Smith, had also acted as agent for the du Ponts. Frank Smith was Francis Gurney Smith’s grandson, and the son of Daniel Smith, according to a genealogical chart of the Richard Smith family at the Hagley Museum and Library. Marjorie McNinch, Reference Archivist, Hagley Museum and Library, to the author, email of Jan. 25, 2005. Frank Smith was Eleuthera du Pont’s nephew by virtue of Daniel Smith being the brother of Thomas MacKie Smith, Eleuthera’s husband. In addition, since Daniel Smith’s sister Joanna Maria Smith had married Eleuthera’s brother Alexis, Frank was also nephew to Alexis I. du Pont. Samuel Francis was the only du Pont who spelled his name Du Pont. Sophie’s surname took that form when she married Samuel. John Beverley Riggs, *A Guide to the Manuscripts in the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library* (Greenville, Delaware: Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, 1970), xix.

There were ties between the du Ponts and the Pooles. J. Morton Poole’s earlier travels to study other machine shops had been financed in part by a loan from Charles du Pont, son of one of Irénée du Pont’s brothers—Victor. Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Rockdale: The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution* (1972; rpt. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980), 4, 17-18, 101-102, 217.

6. Eleuthera du Pont Diary, Jan. 25, 27, 28, 1856, Daughters of E. I. du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum and Library; Sophie du Pont to Samuel Francis du Pont, Jan. 31, Feb. 3, 6, 12, 1856, Mrs. Samuel Francis du Pont Papers; <http://pennock.ws/surnames/fam/fam02297.html>; U.S. Census, *Seventh Census*, 1850 Manuscript Schedules: Delaware, New Castle County, Wilmington. Sophie’s letter of Jan. 31 noted that “Mr. Warner” had “heard from his nephew, who is in New York, intending to sail the 5th [of February] for Cala. . . .”

7. Decree of the Supreme Government of Nicaragua, Nov. 23, 1855, in “Register Book—New Orleans Agency of Nicaraguan Emigration Company,” Callender I. Fayssoux Collection of William Walker Papers (Box 3), Latin American Collection, Howard Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans; Alejandro Bolaños Geyer, *Favored of the Gods: Biography of William Walker* (Masaya, Nicaragua: Privately Printed, 2002), 73, 75, 81; John S. Brenizer to “Dear Brother in law & Sister,” Oct. 27, 1855, John S. Brenizer Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives; May, *Manifest Destiny’s Underworld*, 200-202; William Walker, *The War in Nicaragua* (1860; rpt. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 156.

8. Thomas Harney to John A. Quitman, Mar. 7, 1856, John Quitman Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson; *The Destiny of Nicaragua: Central America as it Was, Is, and May Be*, “By an Officer in the Service of Walker” (Boston: S. A. Bent & Co., 1856), 7, 14; Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, Feb. 4, 1856.

9. Mulrooney, *Black Powder*, 25, 30; Samuel Francis Du Pont to Charles Henry Davis, Sept. 10, 1851, Du Pont to Sophie Du Pont, Dec. 5, 1854, Du Pont to Henry Winter Davis, Mar. 7, 1852, Nov. 8, 1855, Samuel Francis Du Pont Papers; Henry A. du Pont to Samuel Francis Du Pont, July 7, 1856, Henry A. du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum and Library; George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy*. . . , 2 vols. (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1868), 2: 462, 520.

10. Sophie Du Pont to Samuel Francis Du Pont, Feb. 3, 4, 12, 1856, Mrs. Samuel Francis Du Pont Papers; Springfield *Daily Republican*, Jan. 11, 1856. The January 9 departing steamer was notorious for having on board the Democratic New York City councilman and never-indicted notorious murderer of the sporting figure Bill Poole, Jame E. Kerrigan, who had a lieutenant's commission in Walker's army. Tyler Anbinder, *Five Points: The 19th-Century New York City Neighborhood That Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World's Most Notorious Slum* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 274-77; Elliott J. Gorn, "'Good-Bye Boys, I Die a True American: Homicide, Nativism, and Working-Class Culture in Antebellum New York City,'" *Journal of American History* 74 (Sept. 1987): 388-410.

11. Henry Winter Davis to Eleuthera du Pont Smith, Jan. 31, 1856, E. I. du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum and Library; U.S. Census, *Seventh Census*, 1850, Manuscript Schedules: New York, New York City, the Western Half of the 15th Ward; Henry Winter Davis to Samuel Francis Du Pont, Nov. 28, Dec. 29, 1851, Jan. 3, 1852, Samuel Francis Du Pont to Sophie Du Pont, Dec. 3, 1851, Dec. 3, 10, 1855, Samuel Francis Du Pont Papers.

12. Sophie Du Pont to Samuel Francis Du Pont, Feb. 12, 1856, Sophie Du Pont Diary, Feb. 17, 1856, Mrs. Samuel Francis Du Pont Papers, Eleuthera du Pont Smith to Henry A. du Pont, 1856 (no exact date), Daughters of E. I. du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum and Library; John Haskell Kemble, *The Panama Route, 1848-1869* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 247-48; David I. Folkman, Jr., *The Nicaragua Route* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1972), 156; report of Feb. 8 in Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, Feb. 9, 1856.

13. Eleuthera du Pont Smith to Henry A. du Pont, July 22 postscript to July 20, 1856 letter, Daughters of E. I. du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum and Library; Philadelphia *Saturday Evening Post*, July 12, 1856; [David Deaderick], "The Experience of Samuel Absalom, Filibuster," *The Atlantic Monthly* 4 (Dec. 1859), 5 (Jan. 1860), 5: 653, 659-60.

14. Sophie Du Pont Diary, Feb. 17, 1856, Sophie Du Pont to Samuel Francis Du Pont, Feb. 12, 1856, Mrs. Samuel Francis Du Pont Papers; Eleuthera du Pont Smith to Henry A. du Pont, February [no exact date] 1856, Daughters of E. I. du Pont Papers; Charles I du Pont Breck to Henry Algernon du Pont, Feb. 10, 1856, Henry Algernon du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum and Library. Charles I. du Pont Breck was the son of William Breck, who had married the daughter of Amelia Elizabeth du Pont de Nemours. The latter was the daughter of Victor du Pont, brother to Sophie and Eleuthera's father. Henry Algernon du Pont, *The Early Generations of the du Pont and Allied Families*, 2 vols. (New York: National Americana Society, 1923), 1: 383-93.

15. Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861* (1973; rpt. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 86-88, 99-105; May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, 238-40.

16. Eleuthera du Pont Smith to Henry A. du Pont, July 22 postscript to July 20, 1856 letter, Daughters of E. I. du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum and Library; <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/wheeler/wheeler.html> (1/5/05); John H. Wheeler to William L. Marcy, Aug. 10, 1856, General Records of the Department of State, Despatches from U.S. Ministers to Central America, 1824-1906, M219, Roll 10, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-1989* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1989), 591, 1717. Wheeler was married at that time to his second wife, Ellen Oldmixon Sully. See Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed., *The Bondwoman's Narrative* (New York: Warner Books, 2002), xlv.

17. Eleuthera du Pont Smith to Henry A. du Pont, July 22 postscript to July 20, 1856 letter, Daughters of E. I. du Pont Papers.

18. John H. Wheeler to William L. Marcy, Aug. 10, 1856, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, Despatches from U.S. Ministers to Central America," M219, Roll 10; *New-York Daily Times*, Sept. 1, 1856; Sophie Du Pont to Samuel Francis Du Pont, Sept. 1, 3, 1856, Mrs. Samuel Francis Du Pont Papers; Folkman, *Nicaragua Route*, 156.

19. Sophie Du Pont Diary, Sept. 7, 14, 1856, Mrs. Samuel Francis Du Pont Papers; Henry A. du Pont to Sophie Du Pont, Sept. 6, 1856, Henry A. du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum and Library.

20. Bolaños, *Favored of the Gods*, 108-16; Charles H. Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny*, 404-407; May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, 183-85, 211-13.

21. Samuel Francis Du Pont to Sophie Du Pont, March 24, 1858, Samuel Francis Du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum and Library.

22. For some of the recent works probing filibustering's cultural meaning, see: Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Tom Chaffin, *Fatal Glory: Narciso Lopez and the First Clandestine*

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