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# The Rise of Confederate Radicalism in San Antonio

Matthew Reilly  
*Trinity University*

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The Rise of Confederate Radicalism in San Antonio  
Matthew Reilly

A DEPARTMENT HONORS THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE  
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Other:

### *The Rise of Confederate Radicalism in San Antonio*

On October 5, 1861, the *San Antonio Daily Herald* reported that Mr. Charles Anderson, a known Unionist who made a speech in favor of Lincoln and the Union at the Menger Hotel, had been captured while trying to flee the city with his family. Two years earlier Mr. Anderson moved to San Antonio from Cincinnati, Ohio. However, by October 1861, sensing the rising hostility toward Unionists, Mr. Anderson sold his property in San Antonio and attempted to flee, to Kentucky via a Southern route with his family. A Confederate general, Benjamin McCullough, sent a detachment under the command of Lieutenant Baltzell managed to capture Mr. Anderson's family, which they did 27 miles outside of San Antonio. *The Herald* reported that "it was deemed by our military authorities imprudent to permit such a man, under the existing circumstances, to leave this country and take up abode with the enemy."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Anderson managed to escape and the captain in charge of capturing Anderson was placed under arrest by General McCullough.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Anderson's family was given a small military escort to Brownsville. They arrived in Brownsville, Texas on October 24 to wait for transit to New York via Tampico or Havana. Mr. Anderson attempted to reunite with them by adopting the persona of a fictional person by the name of "Wilson," who "needed to pick up a large contract for the Confederacy" to ensure safe passage to Brownsville. He was spotted, however, by Mr. Clay Willis 140 miles from the Texas-Mexico border heading toward Brownsville. *The Herald* reported that "There is no doubt but Anderson was assisted in his escape by citizens of this place, and we are not without some hope that they may be discovered."<sup>3</sup>

How could a city whose newspapers once proclaimed "It has always been our opinion that the great majority are decidedly Union in their sentiments and will hurl down and trample

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<sup>1</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, October 5, 1861.

<sup>2</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, October 26, 1861.

<sup>3</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 2, 1861.

under foot the serpent that has acquired life and nourishment in the very bosom of our country, and now attempts to sting to the death our glorious Confederacy”<sup>4</sup> and endorsed a resolution of a political meeting in El Paso stating, “That we love and cherish the Union as bequeathed by our forefathers and are anxious to support it loyally”<sup>5</sup> evolve into a city intolerant of Unionist ideals and individuals like Mr. Anderson? What factors contributed to the rise of pro-Confederate radicalism in San Antonio and how would this trend evolve over the course of the Civil War?

Confederate nationalism, what I refer to as Confederate radicalism for reasons I will discuss in a moment, is defined by Drew Faust as “the South’s effort to build a consensus at home, to secure a foundation of popular support for a new nation and what quickly became a costly war.”<sup>6</sup> Scholars who have debated the root causes for Confederate nationalism, can be divided into two camps. The first group, including Frank Vandiver and Emory Thomas, argue that political institutions and the preeminence of the Confederate Army largely account for the growth of Confederate nationalism. As Vandiver argues, “by late 1862, the Confederacy existed in its armies, in its emissaries, and in the hearts of its people...”<sup>7</sup> The other camp, headed by Drew Faust, argues that ideology rather than institutions explains the manifestation of Southern nationalistic sentiment. A quasi-religious sentiment provided the foundation for the creation of a republic that was worthy of God’s blessing.<sup>8</sup> I neglect to use the term Confederate nationalism in favor of radicalism because the trends and behaviors that led to increasing support for the Confederacy in San Antonio do not fit either prevailing definition of Confederate nationalism. Rather than relying on institutions, ideology, or a combination of the two, San Antonio’s radicalism lends itself to a plethora of inputs.

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<sup>4</sup> *Alamo Express*, September 17, 1860.

<sup>5</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 12, 1860.

<sup>6</sup> Gallagher, Gary. *The Confederate War*, p. 66.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. 67.

The rise of Confederate radicalism in San Antonio has many root causes. Through an examination of two prominent San Antonio newspapers, the *Alamo Express* and the *San Antonio Daily Herald*, from August 1860 to September 1865, this paper will assess the influences of economics, social movements, frontier security, and military concerns that helped transform San Antonio from a pro-Union stronghold to a staunch advocate of the Confederate cause. This paper will argue the economic motive that increased radicalism in San Antonio stemmed from the Union blockade and capture of Brownsville in November 1863, which rendered Galveston economically impotent and enabled San Antonio to take on a larger and more profitable role in the Southern cotton trade via overland routes with Mexico. This paper also will examine the important role of well-organized pro-Southern Democrat political clubs during the election of 1860 and the eventual formation of numerous grassroots organizations chartered to benefit the Confederate cause. Finally, additional worries over frontier security due to the constant threat of Indian and bandit raids initially galvanized support for remaining in the Union so the fort network of the Federal Army would remain manned. After the expulsion of Federal troops and the resultant increase in raids on the Western frontier, pro-South forces painted “Unionist militias” as the culprit, which aided in garnering further support for the Confederacy. After the eventual defeat of the Confederacy, San Antonio once again looked to commerce to be the great pacifier.

### **The Election of 1860**

The 1860 presidential election demonstrated the large presence of pro-Union sentiment in San Antonio. Although the *Herald* and the *Alamo Express* endorsed different candidates, both papers saw their respective choice as the most viable option to sustain the Union. The *Herald*, the paper that would later develop strong anti-Union sentiment, endorsed John C. Breckinridge

for President and Joseph Lane for Vice-President of the Southern Democratic Party, which had severed itself from the Northern Democratic Party under Stephen Douglas.<sup>9</sup> Due to the massive territorial gains of Texas, Oregon, California, and New Mexico during the Polk administration (1841-49), the question of how to extend slavery into new territories prompted bitter debate in Washington. Democrats, who had once been united behind the doctrine of popular sovereignty (allowing the citizens of a territory to select whether slavery should or should not be permitted), split over varying interpretations. The Northern faction adopted a platform centering on the ideals of popular sovereignty. The Southern faction, however, endorsed a more extreme pro-slavery stance, arguing that the Constitution protect the institution of slavery and its spread into the new territories.<sup>10</sup> During the Democratic National Convention in April of 1860, these irreconcilable viewpoints prompted the Southern faction to walk out. It is by these measures that the Southern Democratic Party established itself as the more extreme faction, yet the *Herald* early on believed the Union's preservation remained with Breckinridge and that the primary issue of the campaign was the status of slavery.

An editorial that appeared in the September 12, 1860 *Herald* asserted that "We cannot but think that the salvation of the Union hangs upon the South uniting upon Breckinridge and Lane."<sup>11</sup> The next month, the editor argued that "The Breckinridge party is a Union party because the rights that it advocates are guaranteed by the Constitution, and because if it should triumph, there will be no occasion for dissolution."<sup>12</sup> Within that same issue, the editor asserted that slavery was the primary issue in the upcoming election. The *Herald* supported Breckinridge because they believed, like him, that slavery was protected under the Constitution and by

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<sup>9</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 18, 1860.

<sup>10</sup> Fite, E.D. *The Presidential Campaign of 1860*, pp. 92-116.

<sup>11</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 12, 1860.

<sup>12</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, October 27, 1860.

protecting the institution of slavery Breckinridge supporters viewed themselves as “Constitutionalists” that held the high moral ground by defending the Constitution. For example, under the headline, “Abolition Nonsense,” the editor seemingly offered a challenge of “Let the question be tested, whether slavery is, or is not, higher than the Constitution.”<sup>13</sup> This pro-slavery sentiment established a larger precedent of linking San Antonio to the Confederate movement despite the fact that San Antonio’s small slave population would seem to suggest otherwise. Indeed, slavery accounted for only a small percentage of San Antonio’s economy and in 1850, only 389 slaves resided within Bexar Country. While this number increased to 1,395 in 1860 it was still less than 10 percent of the population of the entire county.<sup>14</sup>

Newcomb and the *Alamo Express*, on the other hand, viewed the editorials in the *Herald* as anti-Unionist.<sup>15</sup> The *Alamo Express* attacked the editors of the *Herald* by calling them “sectionalists” and “disunionists.” In the first issue of the *Alamo Express* on August 18, 1860, Newcomb printed an editorial announcing “The *Alamo Express* is the title of a new weekly paper... This paper advocates the election of [Constitutional Union Party candidates] Bell and Everett...”<sup>16</sup> Newcomb, unlike the editors of the *Herald*, viewed the primary issue in the election as the continuation of the Union and considered any hint of disunion anathema. For example, on September 17, 1860, he stated that “We boldly proclaim to the world, that Texians are not ready yet for her fair escutcheon to be stained with foul blot of Secession and Disunion.”<sup>17</sup> This is why many of Newcomb’s columns attack Breckinridge and the Southern Democratic Party.

Newcomb states that “John C. Breckinridge, as a man, is not soley [sic] objectionable, but he it

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<sup>13</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 29, 1860.

<sup>14</sup> Long Christopher. *Bexar Country*. Retrieved from <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/BB/hcb7.html>

<sup>15</sup> *Alamo Express*, August 18, 1860.

<sup>16</sup> *Alamo Express*, August 18, 1860.

<sup>17</sup> *Alamo Express*, September 17, 1860.

[sic] put forward by a sectional, Secession party, and it is this that has caused the extraordinary falling off from his standard in the South and North. The upholding of such a party would be dealing destruction to the best interests of the whole country.”<sup>18</sup> In the same issue under the headline “Abominable Secession,” secession is called a “false and treasonable doctrine.”<sup>19</sup> The *Alamo Express* also referred to the Southern Democrats as a party “that in one community...is intensely Union loving, in another intensely fireating, and in another intensely freesoil” and a party whose “policy is to keep the members of their own party ignorant of the true merits of the issue.”<sup>20</sup> The debates between the *Herald* and the *Alamo Express* exemplified the tensions leading into the 1860 election.

Mirroring the divisive sentiments espoused by the opposing papers, many grassroots political clubs, supporting either party, formed around the time of the 1860 election. These clubs provided a foundation for the grassroots pro-Confederacy movement that occurred after the election. On September 10, the *Alamo Express* placed an ad in its newspaper publicizing the formation of a “Union Club.” Although this advertisement would persist, it is the only mention of a Union Club in San Antonio. This raises a few possibilities: either the pro-Union forces were not as well organized and therefore could not capitalize on a broad base of support, the pro-Union forces did not possess a sufficiently large base of support which would have been unlikely, or the large number of pro-Union citizens, mostly Germans, formed their own organizations and advertised in their vernacular newspapers. In contrast, the Breckinridge and Lane ticket possessed a large, well-advertised and well-documented grassroots movement. The success of these Confederate organizations and clubs foreshadow the eventual rise of a substantial pro-Confederate grassroots movement in San Antonio – a foundation the pro-Union forces lacked.

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<sup>18</sup> *Alamo Express*, October 15, 1860.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Alamo Express*, October 1, 1860.



On September 25, the *Herald* announced the formation of a ‘Breckinridge and Lane Club of San Antonio’ to assert the image of San Antonio as “truly national Democrats.”<sup>21</sup> The first meeting of the Breckinridge and Lane Club was attended by fifty people and another meeting was planned to meet at the Main Plaza.<sup>22</sup> A month later, another “large” meeting of the Breckinridge and Lane Club took place near Goliad on October 30.<sup>23</sup>

The *Alamo Express*, which opposed the Breckinridge and Lane Club, also mentioned its formation in San Antonio in the October 1 issue. While the paper mentioned that the Vice President of the club, Captain J.H. Beck was “a respected community man” and a nullifier who had fought against Jackson in South Carolina,<sup>24</sup> the *Alamo Express* also stated “Let every man in Bexar, who glories in being an American citizen, be careful not to sign any secession documents under the name of Breckinridge and Lane Club. It will be a reproach to you and your children and children’s children forever.”<sup>25</sup> The *Alamo Express* also mentioned a “Disunion Rally” lead by T.T. Tebel and Colonel Upson of Bexar County.<sup>26</sup> Overall, judging by the number of organizations, the Breckinridge supporters proved to be more organized and better backed than the Bell supporters.

Both parties made efforts to court the German vote. For example, Breckinridge supporters attacked Bell as a Know-Nothing – a political party well-known for its anti-immigrant sentiments. This accusation may not have been unfounded in Bell’s specific case, but may have held ground when connected to the Constitutional Union Party as a whole. The Constitutional Union Party was formed mainly through the combination of conservative Whigs and Know-

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<sup>21</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 25, 1860.

<sup>22</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 28, 1860.

<sup>23</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, October 30, 1860.

<sup>24</sup> *Alamo Express*, October 1, 1860.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Alamo Express*, October 1, 1860.

Nothings. In this sense, because of the political party that nominated him, Bell's opponents hoped to connect him with a party with a component of anti-immigrant sentiment in an effort to discredit him to city with a German majority. In response, the *Alamo Express* printed a quotation from Breckinridge stating that, "It is natural for a man to prefer those of his own religious faith in voting, and he himself would vote for one of his own way of thinking in religion rather than for another, all other things being equal, just as he would vote for a native in preference to a foreign born citizen, other things being equal."<sup>27</sup> Although these efforts ultimately had little impact, the fact that both supporters of Bell and Breckinridge realized the importance of appealing to German immigrants demonstrated the immense influence people's perceptions of the German community carried.

In spite of their differences, both the *Alamo Express* and the *Herald* shared an intense hatred of Lincoln and viewed him as the certain route to secession and disunion. For example, in the October 27 issue, an editorial condemned Lincoln as a "disunionist."<sup>28</sup> The *Herald* also focused their attacks on the dangers presented by the Republican Party as a whole:

"[Breckinridge and Lane] have changed their political principles – not because they are disunionists; but because they see an unmistakable determination on the part of a fanatical party in the North [Lincoln's Republicans] to trample upon their most vital rights, and to treat their cause with derision and contempt."<sup>29</sup> The *Herald* warned its readers that "Should Lincoln be elected we apprehend very serious consequences..."<sup>30</sup> The *Herald* also stated that "It is obvious to any sane man, that the principles of [the Black Republican Party], if adopted by our government and carried into effect, would result in the dismemberment and the utter ruin of our

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<sup>27</sup> *Alamo Express*, October 8, 1860.

<sup>28</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, October 27, 1860.

<sup>29</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, October 27, 1860.

<sup>30</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 7, 1860.

hither unto flourishing and powerful Confederacy.”<sup>31</sup> The *Alamo Express* likewise condemned Lincoln as a “sectionalist”.<sup>32</sup> The *Alamo Express* also mentioned that “Our hopes are raised and conviction strengthened that Lincoln’s chances are becoming small by degrees and beautifully less.”<sup>33</sup> This attitude soon shifted on the eve of the election, however, into a more conquered tone:

Tomorrow, fellow-citizens, our country will be on the verge of revolution – one of the greatest shocks we has ever encountered will happen, and it is the duty of every good citizen to stand by the flag of his country, the Union and the Constitution – The only question before the Southern people and the people of Texas is secession or no secession? How will you decide? All other questions are mere blinds. The same party that was beaten in the last Gubernatorial election, have again raised the flag of disunion, and claims the right for a state to secede, which is treason...<sup>34</sup>

Despite San Antonio’s minimal slave population compared to the other Southern cities and its near absence from the cotton trade, even the Unionist *Alamo Express* identified the importance of connecting their candidate of choice with the South’s twin pillars of slavery and cotton. The *Alamo Express*, for example, presented and defended Bell’s views stating that: “[Bell] attributes the present prosperity of the country to the institution of slavery.”<sup>35</sup> The *Alamo Express* also noted that Bell “voted against the Kansas bill, because he understood...that it contained the doctrine of Popular (squatter) Sovereignty,”<sup>36</sup> and argued that “[Bell] is in favor of

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<sup>31</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 9, 1860.

<sup>32</sup> *Alamo Express*, September 24, 1860.

<sup>33</sup> *Alamo Express*, October 15, 1860.

<sup>34</sup> *Alamo Express*, November 5, 1860.

<sup>35</sup> *Alamo Express*, October 8, 1860.

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

the policy of a diffusion and extension of slavery in any new territory.”<sup>37</sup> The *Alamo Express* also made note that Bell was a slaveholder who “defends the institution of slavery as just and right.”<sup>38</sup> This trend of associating San Antonio with larger connotations of the South even though the city was largely removed from those influences would be repeated again by pro-secessionist forces in order to gain support for their secession movement.

On November 6, San Antonio voted overwhelmingly in favor of the Breckinridge and Lane ticket, suggesting a majority of citizens already possessed strong pro-Southern sentiment. Breckinridge pulled a 511 vote majority in San Antonio:<sup>39</sup>

	Breckinridge/Lane	Bell/Everett
First Ward:	331	158
Second Ward:	155	33
Third Ward:	239	23
Total:	725	214

Bexar County as a whole would support the Southern Democrats by a 693 vote majority (Breckinridge/Lane – 986, Bell/Everett – 293).<sup>40</sup>

Although the Southern Democrats enjoyed a strong support base evidenced by the founding of numerous political groups and the election results, most citizens still wished to save the Union. Most San Antonio citizens were opposed to Lincoln, who was not even on the ballot in Texas, on the view that his election would place the country on an irreversible course toward secession. In the weeks following Lincoln’s election, the *Herald* advocated a cautious and practical approach opposing any actions taken by “hot-headed” politicians: “Should Lincoln be

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<sup>37</sup> *Alamo Express*, October 8, 1860.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 9, 1860

<sup>40</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 13, 1860.

elected we apprehend very serious consequences – but we fully agree with the writer that cautious counsels should prevail, and that no rash act of excited politicians should be tolerated in the South.”<sup>41</sup> The *Alamo Express*, however, suspended publication after the election until February 4, 1861 and noted that the paper fears “the public may think that we too have become tired of [sic] the storm and turned our back on the Union – we are still devoted to its preservation and will continue so...”<sup>42</sup> It is in the fallout and dislocation caused by Lincoln’s election that the citizenry of San Antonio starkly divided into pro-Union and pro-Confederate camps. It is also in this period that San Antonio’s progression toward a pro-Confederate city acquired its first main characteristic – once the secessionist and pro-Confederate forces saw no hope of preserving the Union, growing opposition and disdain for Union supporters evolved quickly and fiercely.

### **San Antonio’s Secessionist Movement**

After Lincoln’s election, local Unionists rapidly became pilgrims in an unholy land. Under the headline, “Secession Ordinance Passed – The Reign of Terror Ahead,” the *Alamo Express* captured the fears of local Unionists. In the column, the paper noted individuals who were concerned with the possibility of putting in place a *viva voce* voting system when the delegates for the Texas secession Convention were to be elected and when the delegates would vote at the secession Convention.<sup>43</sup> These opponents felt that this system would be utilized “to intimidate and mark every man who votes for Union.”<sup>44</sup> The results of this system were evident in the final makeup of the secession Convention. Seventy percent of the delegates to the Convention were slaveholders who were overwhelmingly in support of secession which would

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<sup>41</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 7, 1860.

<sup>42</sup> *Alamo Express*, February 4, 1861.

<sup>43</sup> A ‘viva voce’ voting system is most simply a voting system where an individual must give their vote orally in a public location, usually a mass meeting. This would have kept numerous pro-Union voices from speaking out against secession.

<sup>44</sup> *Alamo Express*, October 8, 1860.

become evident in the eventual 166 to 8 approval of a secession ordinance on February 1. On February 4, Newcomb wrote his staff that he “solomly (sic) predicts the reign of terror and a state of things hitherto unknown to [Texas].”<sup>45</sup> These measures and comments came coupled a day later with the passage of a “new definition of treason.” The ordinance passed by the Texas State Legislature concluded that:

Resolved, by the people of the State of Texas in Convention assembled, that any person, whosever, not being an enlisted soldier, or regular appointed officer of some foreign government and acting under the orders of such Government, who shall be arms or military display, *oppose any resolution or ordinance of this Convention, or who shall in any manner give and or comfort to the enemies of this state* (italics added), or who being a member or officer of this Convention, or holding official derived from this Convention or committee thereof, shall betray to the enemies of this state, to the injury thereof, any information which may have come to his information by virtue of his official position, *shall be guilty of Treason against this State and conviction thereof, shall suffer death* (italics added).<sup>46</sup>

The attachment of a possible death sentence to any of the treasonous acts mentioned above prompted Newcomb to cultivate images of war and secessionist encirclement in his readers’ minds. Newcomb also attempted to convey the possible economic destruction a war could bring to an increasingly wealthy city: “Our city with its wealth and opulence will be a prominent mark, and it would be no pleasant picture to behold the U.S. cannon opening their dark mouths upon our peaceful homes and business houses, with a body of men behind them

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<sup>45</sup> *Alamo Express*, October 8, 1860.

<sup>46</sup> *Alamo Express*, February 5, 1861.

demanding money and provisions.”<sup>47</sup> In response to this measure, Newcomb asserted to his pro-Union supporters to “Remember the threats and menaces used to “coerce you into disunion; and that you are an American freeman.”<sup>48</sup> Newcomb also alluded to revolutionary sentiment when he further avowed “Remember Washington said he doubted the patriotism of those who seek the destruction of the Union.”<sup>49</sup>

Newcomb’s depictions of images of war and secessionist encirclement were seemingly validated with the reported rise in the formation of Confederate militias. On February 6, the *Alamo Express* reported that numerous Confederate militia-like companies had formed in North Texas posing as buffalo hunters for the purpose of seizing Federal property.<sup>50</sup> It was also reported by the *Alamo Express* in mid-February that roughly 200 troops were camped near Seguin for the purpose of “attacking” San Antonio to take possession of Federal property.<sup>51</sup> In the movement’s early stages, the pro-South forces preferred to attack Federal property rather than the individuals themselves. Indeed the first target “attacked” by secessionist forces in San Antonio was the Federal arsenal by a combined force of militia and agents of the Knights of the Golden Circle.

From the Confederate standpoint, secessionist sentiment escalated quickly with growing hostility toward individuals seen as friendly toward the Union, including the once-popular governor, Sam Houston. An editorial in the *Herald* remarked that “Perhaps [San Antonio has] more than an ordinary interest in seeing the Union preserved, but after reading the comments of the Northern Press, and observing that Mr. Lincoln has declined making any promise of

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<sup>47</sup> *Alamo Express*, February 6, 1861.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Alamo Express*, February 6, 1861.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Alamo Express*, February 13, 1861.

moderation or concession, we are unable to see how the Union is to be preserved.”<sup>52</sup> This sentiment resonated in the minds of many pro-South forces that saw no other alternative to the growing crisis of secession. Their position was compounded by a sense of identification with the Southern states that would ultimately form the Confederacy. The pro-Confederate forces in San Antonio quickly came to associate themselves with a national, rather than local movement. For example, in December 1860 the citizens of San Antonio soon formed a Southern Rights Club of Bexar County and called on Governor Houston to allow a secession conference asserting that “[San Antonio] does not want to get left behind in this movement.”<sup>53</sup> At first, Governor Houston, a staunch Unionist, refused to call the convention but ultimately bowed to pressure to convene the State Legislature on January 21.<sup>54</sup> The Confederate supporters took advantage of the existing support network of the organizations and clubs founded during the election. The *Alamo Express*, for example, noted after the passage of the secession ordinance that “The secessionists were well organized and worked hard, the Union Party was unorganized and did but little challenging, while the disunionists by their...and insulting challenging kept many away from the polls.”<sup>55</sup> With the continuing rise in influence of the Confederate supporters, many Unionists found it easier to tacitly support the Confederate cause or remove themselves from the political process altogether. External pressures from other cities like Houston augmented that trend.

Perceptions of San Antonio across the State as an “abolition hole that ought to be ‘wiped out’”<sup>56</sup> prompted further radicalism from the pro-South forces. This perception was assisted by San Antonio’s large German immigrant population which was viewed across Texas as anti-

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<sup>52</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 20, 1860.

<sup>53</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, December 14, 1860.

<sup>54</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, December 19, 1860.

<sup>55</sup> *Alamo Express*, February 25, 1861.

<sup>56</sup> *Alamo Express*, February 6, 1861.



slavery and generally pro-Union in disposition. Union support persisted as late as the end of March in 1861. Newcomb noted that:

...on Thursday morning two more companies or regulars passed through our city. One company under the command of Maj. Sheperd, halted on the Main Plaza, where a crowd of people had spontaneously gathered, and played ‘auld lang syne’ with fife and drum, receiving the enthusiastic cheers of the people; from the Plaza they marched down main Street to the good old tune Americans delight in, ‘yankee doodle’ which will do to whistle, play and sing and just the thing for fighting. The people, carrying an American flag accompanied the troops to the edge of town, presenting them with the flag. This was a pleasant surprise to the troops and evidence that patriotism still dwells among us in spite of tyranny.<sup>57</sup>

The Union Club of San Antonio continued to meet through at least mid-February 1861.<sup>58</sup>

While organized Unionist activities dissipated after February and March 1861, Confederate supporters focused on external perceptions of San Antonio to augment anti-Union sentiment. The *Herald*, for example, published an article that claimed that San Antonio’s inability to furnish five full companies was embarrassing and a “problem.” The *Herald* blamed San Antonio’s large German population and other immigrants, who were initially exempted from service in companies meant for “natives.”<sup>59</sup> Other Texas cities, like Houston, viewed San Antonio sentiment as “disloyal to the Southern cause” due to the city’s inability to fill companies and the substantiated perception of San Antonio’s more “liberal” voting record.<sup>60</sup> In response, the *Herald* commented that “If these charges are true, then San Antonio deserves the execration

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<sup>57</sup> *Alamo Express*, March 29, 1861.

<sup>58</sup> *Alamo Express*, February 11, 1861.

<sup>59</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 24, 1861.

<sup>60</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 24, 1861.

of every patriot in the South”<sup>61</sup> and suggested that “The Government Depot should be removed from such a stronghold of treason.”<sup>62</sup> These attempts to sabotage San Antonio’s pro-Southern reputation prompted editors of the *Herald* to publicize the units composed of a number of German citizens<sup>63</sup> and the contributions of the city’s numerous grassroots aid societies in an effort to combat San Antonio’s image as a treasonous city.<sup>64</sup>

Pleas from Newcomb and the *Alamo Express* to Texans to support reconciliation with the Union focused on the benefits of Union government through Federal presence: “...the people of Texas should deliberate carefully upon this matter on account of the great blessings we have received from the Union and the untold evils that are too apt to follow its dissolution...”<sup>65</sup> The attitude of the *Alamo Express* typically reflected the possible concerns of Texas as inherent problems due to San Antonio’s position as a Federal arsenal and its *de facto* status as a frontier town:

Is it a trifle to us that millions are distributed yearly from the Federal exchequer for the support of the contractors, officers, and troops within our State? Is it a matter of no consequence to our farmers and stock raisers that other millions are paid every year for stock and produce to support an army on our frontier? Is it a matter of no importance that our Indian and Mexican frontier is to be abandoned by the U.S. troops? Is it a matter that concerns us not that we will be intolerably

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<sup>61</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 24, 1861.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Captain Hampton’s Victoria Company was composed of at least 17 German from San Antonio.

<sup>64</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 14, 1861. There was also an all-German company under the command of Captain Kampman.

<sup>65</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 14, 1861.

taxed to support a separate state government, or to assist a South Carolina Confederacy?<sup>66</sup>

San Antonio's rapid transition toward supporting the Confederacy occurred despite many factors that might suggest an alternative outcome. What then swayed San Antonio, a city with only about 10 percent of its population as slaves, towards the Confederacy?<sup>67</sup> Pro-secessionist forces, such as the *Herald*, realized this discrepancy and worked to associate San Antonio with the larger Southern economy with cotton and slaves as its two pillars. Indeed, the editorials in the *Herald* did their best to connect San Antonio to "the whole South" rather than focusing directly on the city. In one *Herald* article, focusing on the necessity of slavery read: "[Colonel Graham] showed how absolutely necessary to the prosperity of the nation, and particularly the whole South, is to the institution of slavery; and stated that the products of slave labor alone, amounted annually to the sum of \$220,000,000."<sup>68</sup> The *Herald* also asserted that "The whole civilized world must, and will have cotton, and other products of slave labor, and is willing to pay for them."<sup>69</sup> Slaveholding Texans and those that migrated from the lower south, who would overwhelmingly support secession, were mainly concentrated in the northeast, east, and southeast where the economy was more tied to agriculture and cotton that could be more easily transported into the larger Southern economy. West Texas and the frontier counties, on the other hand, composed a livestock-based economy that was largely devoid of the necessity of large numbers of slaves. Furthermore, the large immigrant population from Germany and the

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<sup>66</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 14, 1861.

<sup>67</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 1, 1860. This data was taken from the Census of 1850 numbers published in the *Herald*. According to the numbers published, San Antonio had a slave population of 1,396 out of a total population of 9,564 (the difference in population of 8,168 people only refers to the "White Population" which was not defined. Therefore, a small number of free blacks and possibly Mexican immigrants may not be fully included in that number.

<sup>68</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 18, 1860.

<sup>69</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, December 14, 1860.

Northeast states added an additional component that would arguably foster Unionism. San Antonio during late 1860 and early 1861 was a city that in many ways shared more commonalities with the frontier counties.

As the date for the popular referendum of secession came and passed on February 23, both pro-Union and pro-secessionist forces had cause to celebrate. Unionists in San Antonio rejoiced in the notion that San Antonio, by a reported 121 person margin, voted to stay in the Union. In doing so, San Antonio joined Austin (201 person margin), Boerne (79 person margin), Fredricksburg (323 person margin), and Castroville (38 person margin). These reports coincided with additional reports in the *Express* that Bandera and Uvalde were “sure for the Union.”<sup>70</sup> When all votes in Bexar County were counted, however, the majority favored secession. These reports accompanied additional accounts of intimidation at the polls in San Antonio:

...the disunionists by their close and insulting challenging kept many away from the polls making native Americans and men who had been citizens of the Republic of Texas and who have voted in our city for fifteen years swear to their votes, and compelled many foreigners to show their papers. The Mexicans, with a few honorable exceptions, were *corralled* for Disunion. On the whole, we think it is a glorious victory. San Antonio was persistently claimed by the secessionists.<sup>71</sup>

The pro-secessionist forces, however, obtained the ultimate victory with Texas voting to secede from the Union by a total vote of 46,153 to 14,747. Of 122 counties, only 18 cast majority votes in favor of remaining with the Union and only 11 additional counties cast more than 40 percent of their votes against secession.<sup>72</sup> On March 2, 1861, twenty-five years after the adoption

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<sup>70</sup> *Alamo Express*, February 25, 1861.

<sup>71</sup> *Alamo Express*, February 25, 1861.

<sup>72</sup> Buenger, Walter. *Secession*. Retrieved from <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/SS/mgs2.html>

of the Texas Declaration of Independence, the *Express* noted that Texas became the seventh state to secede from the Union:

...it is 13 o'clock on the 2d of March, 1861, the old Lone-Star flag which has been flying over Travis' old quarters falls to the ground – the ordinance which separates us from the embrace of the glorious Union that fostered us in our infancy goes into effect. How ominous. Do not Texans hold their heads in shame?<sup>73</sup>

Some elements of Southern nationalism did not wait for Texas' official secession to seize federal property. On the morning of February 16, a combined force of Texas cavalry under Colonel McCullough and the Knights of the Golden Circle surrounded the compound of General Twiggs' headquarters in San Antonio, who agreed to surrender all Federal property in San Antonio and agreed to the evacuation of all Federal forces from Texas soil.<sup>74</sup>

The growing secessionist movement in Texas paralleled the rise in influence of pro-secessionist forces in San Antonio – a city that had traditionally remained mostly isolated from such sentiments due to its relationship with the U.S. Army. The growing secessionist faction in San Antonio co-opted the Breckinridge and Southern rights clubs established during the election of 1860. These groups, when combined with the strong medium of the *Herald*, provided the framework for greater intimidation of their political opponents, ensuring the rise of Confederate radicalism. Although San Antonio remained a city friendly toward the Union, the evacuation of Federal forces under Gen. Twiggs, intimidation by secessionists, the eventual destruction of the dominant Union voice of the *Alamo Express*, and the flight of its editor James Newcomb the support structure of the pro-Union forces quickly evaporated. The demise of pro-Union voices

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<sup>73</sup> *Alamo Express*, March 4, 1861.

<sup>74</sup> Wooster, Ralph. *Civil War*. Retrieved from <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/CC/qdc2.html>

paralleled an increase in the number of grassroots organizations supportive of secessionist and pro-Confederate causes. The Union voices, due to intimidation similar to the *viva voce* system or the isolation caused by the evacuation of Federal forces, quickly faded or fled. The Confederate voices filled the resultant void with grassroots organizations with the support of a newspaper whose opinions turned from intimidation to aggression.

By mid-1862, many Confederates intimidated Unionists into silence, forcing them into leaving San Antonio to join the Union Army or simply to fleeing San Antonio to an area where the climate was not as hostile. For example, Newcomb received a letter from General R. Williams which he published in mid-April of 1861 which conveys the sense of growing insecurity felt by many Unionists shortly after Texas' official secession:

I will leave Texas in a few days for Kentucky; you will please send your paper to my address at Mr. Sterling, Ky. I must say that I can not reconcile my self to the loss of so loyal a paper to the Union and the Constitution. I am leaving Texas because it is too humiliating to submit to the insults which are offered me almost daily. I will go where I can express my devotions to the Union without being branded as an abolitionist. I was born in a Slave State, raised in one, and owned slaves from my infancy, own them now, and expect to own them the remnant of my life, and will resist any attempt at emancipation from quarter, it may; but I am not willing to be deprived of that protection which was given to us by our fathers as a legacy, constitutional protection.<sup>75</sup>

### **Grassroots Organizations-San Antonio's Popular Support Movement**

As evidenced by the election of 1860, grassroots organizations in San Antonio formed the basis for the eventual rise of pro-Confederate sentiment. Beginning during the 1860 election,

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<sup>75</sup> *Alamo Express*, April 17, 1861.

there were more pro-Confederate political organizations that were better organized and more publicized. Furthermore, pro-Confederate organizations unsurprisingly experienced significant success in Texas through groups like the Southern Aid Society, Ladies Sewing Society, and the San Antonio Supply Association. Furthermore, traditional San Antonio entertainment venues like Casino Hall and the Menger Hotel were utilized as primary locations for events sponsored by and benefitting pro-Confederate causes.

The Southern [Defense] Aid Society was among the first pro-Confederate organizations in San Antonio and quickly contributed to the Confederate cause. The *Herald* noted on September 14, 1861 that the Southern Aid Society contributed to Confederate troops roughly 100 head of cattle, 1,000 pounds of wool, and 100 bushels of corn.<sup>76</sup> On the same date, the *Herald* mentioned a meeting of San Antonio women at the Menger Hotel for the purposes of founding the San Antonio Ladies Sewing Society with the goal of making clothes for the benefit of Confederate troops.<sup>77</sup> On September 14, 1861 the *Herald* referred to the Ladies Sewing Society as “Pretty patriotic, is it not, for a town filled with Unionists and Patriots.”<sup>78</sup> The Ladies Sewing Society soon cemented its status as San Antonio’s preeminent Confederate grassroots organization. Two weeks later, the *Herald* noted that the Ladies Sewing Society, now with 170 official members, had made a total of 662 garments.<sup>79</sup> On November 9, the *Herald* noted that the Ladies Sewing Society contributed 1 bale of cotton, 16 shirts, 12 pairs of socks, 4 blankets, lint and bandages, and \$120 for the establishment of a hospital for wounded Texans in Richmond.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 14, 1861.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 14, 1861.

<sup>79</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 28, 1861.

<sup>80</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 9, 1861.

Such contributions and efforts did not go unnoticed by those in high positions of authority. On October 28, 1861, Brigadier General H.H. Sibley, for example wrote Mrs. A. J. Maclin, the President of the Ladies Sewing Society:

It is no less an imperative duty, than a highly appreciated pleasure which devolves upon me in my own behalf, and in behalf of the troops whom I have the honor to command, to express to you, and to the patriotic ladies of the Society over which you so gracefully preside, the great obligations which we owe, and the sincere and heartfelt thanks which we render the invaluable assistance afforded us by the Society.<sup>81</sup>

The Ladies Sewing Society also received thanks from General McCullough:

“The reception of these articles will save from suffering, and many from death, many a gallant Texas soldier, who will be exposed to the rigors of this cold climate by winter.”<sup>82</sup>

In addition, their continued contributions appear to have increased in pace and value. Between September and December 1861, the Ladies Sewing Society contributed 2400 drawers, 137 pants, 92 mattress cases, 140 pillow sacks, 23 blankets, 400 shirts, and 4 garrison flags.<sup>83</sup> The *Herald* also noted a large contribution of camp furniture and provisions worth \$377.31.<sup>84</sup>

The activities of the Society were not mentioned in the *Herald* from December 1861 until September of 1862. This, however, does not suggest a temporary cessation of the activities of the Society, but rather other more prominent news items, such as the imposition of martial law took greater precedence. The Ladies Sewing Society was credited with a donation for Captain

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<sup>81</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 16, 1861.

<sup>82</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, January 24, 1863.

<sup>83</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, December 7, 1861.

<sup>84</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, January 25, 1862.



Sibley's Brigade of \$1660.16, 446 garments, and 72 hats. Their contributions between July 25, 1862 and September 20, 1862 amounted to \$1893.41, 947 garments, and 72 hats.<sup>85</sup>

The Ladies Sewing Society was also among the first Confederate organizations in San Antonio to take advantage of public symbols such as the Casino Club and Menger Hotel, to hold meetings and benefits. The Menger Hotel, for example, continued displaying the Union flag until at least early December 1860.<sup>86</sup> The Casino Club, on the other hand, was established primarily by pro-Union German citizens for the purposes of providing entertainment. These venues, which can be arguably seen as symbols of Unionist sentiment were in effect commandeered by pro-Confederate forces for the purposes of advancing their cause. Public spaces, such as the Plaza and Menger Hotel, were also utilized as locations for mass public meetings and demonstrations of patriotism.<sup>87</sup> Colonel G.W. Carter of the Texas Lancers utilized the Plaza Hotel for a speech which carried a "large attendance even on a few hours notice."<sup>88</sup> On January 18, 1862, the *Herald* printed an advertisement of the Ladies Sewing Society for a concert at the Casino Hotel to raise funds for the establishment of a hospital for Texan troops in Richmond.<sup>89</sup> The "Tableaux and Concert" raised approximately \$500 from its attendees.<sup>90</sup> Casino Hall was also utilized by a group of Confederate minstrels.<sup>91</sup> In October 1862 *The Semi-Weekly News* reviewed that the group of Confederate minstrels sang "with that patriotism that characterized every Southern patriot" and noted that they gave "a great portion of the proceedings arising from their

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<sup>85</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 20, 1862.

<sup>86</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 20, 1860.

<sup>87</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, March 8, 1862.

<sup>88</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, March 1, 1862.

<sup>89</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, January 18, 1862.

<sup>90</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, January 25, 1862.

<sup>91</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, October 25, 1862.

entertainment to soldiers and soldiers' families."<sup>92</sup> In November 1862, Casino Hall hosted a lecture by Reverend T.B. Dalzell for the benefit of the Ladies Southern Aid Society.<sup>93</sup>

Another grassroots organization, the San Antonio Mutual Aid Society, was formed by Asa Mitchell, a planter and trader who fought in the Texas Revolution.<sup>94</sup> The Mutual Aid Society was formed to combat the economic concerns among San Antonio citizens. As inflation made products more expensive in late 1862 and early 1863, San Antonio citizens found it increasingly difficult to afford common necessities. The goal of the Mutual Aid Society and the San Antonio Supply Association was to "furnish its members and the poor of [San Antonio] with flour, corn meal, salt, sugar, &c., much cheaper than such articles can be purchased in any other portion of the State."<sup>95</sup> The *Herald* was supportive of the Mutual Aid Society proclaiming that "the plan upon which [The Mutual Aid Society is] organized and conducted works well; and in times like these, every city, and village, and settlement, should have a similar establishment for the protection of the people against speculation and extortioners."<sup>96</sup>

The San Antonio Mutual Aid Society also did its best to combat inflation by accepting donations of items and money and then reselling the items at a lower price. This act assisted local low income San Antonians as well as the Society's shareholders. The Mutual Aid Society later resolved to sell goods to the families of Confederate soldiers who were often dependent on soldier wages.<sup>97</sup> Local support for the Mutual Aid Society demonstrates people wanted to help alleviate deteriorating conditions for their neighbors. In one week, the Mutual Aid Society

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<sup>92</sup> *Semi-Weekly News*, October 20, 1862.

<sup>93</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 8, 1862.

<sup>94</sup> Brazoria County Historical Museum. *Genealogical Entry for Asa Mitchell*. Retrieved from <http://www.bchm.org/Gene/d0001/g0008754.html#l218>

<sup>95</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, February 14, 1863.

<sup>96</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, February 21, 1863.

<sup>97</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 26, 1863.

received over \$8000 in contributions.<sup>98</sup> The Mutual Aid Association grew much more rapidly than any other grassroots organization in San Antonio due at least in part to the economic benefits received from membership. As of late February 1863, the Mutual Aid Association included over 10,000 paying members and sold over \$20,000 worth of staple goods from January 5, 1863 to February 21, 1863.<sup>99</sup>

Other local organizations in addition to the Mutual Aid Society expressed concerns over speculation and extortion. The “Meat Association,” for example, consisted of a union of butchers who came together to try to lower prices for San Antonio citizens. The *Herald* noted that “A few weeks ago, this community was under the tyrannical rule of a few butchers. Meat was selling from 25 to 30 cents a pound, and a few butchers enjoyed an undisturbed monopoly of that business...”<sup>100</sup> The formation of and continued success of these grassroots support organizations confronting domestic economic concerns is a result of San Antonio’s growing status as a western economic hub.

With its isolation from direct military hardship on the Western frontier, San Antonio became a nexus of the Southern cotton trade and a commercial liaison between the Confederacy and Mexico. The concern over domestic issues of commerce such as speculation and extortion was rampant during late 1862, escalated throughout 1863, and was punctuated by the formation of these mutual aid organizations. The existence of these grassroots organizations is strong evidence of pro-Confederate sentiment and demonstrates a strong connection between commerce and patriotism. Efforts to devalue the currency, for example, were seen by locals as treasonous acts intended to harm the Confederacy. On the other hand, organizations that sought to alleviate the commercial stresses of a wartime society were deemed patriotic. Local papers consistently

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<sup>98</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 29, 1862.

<sup>99</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, February 21, 1863.

<sup>100</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, May 2, 1863.

rallied against people they considered unpatriotic. Incidentally, the papers seemed more concerned about commerce. For example, the *Herald* identified “speculators and extortioners” and “pimps and operators in money who seek to devalue the currency” as two of the four enemies of the Confederacy. The other two enemies, the “people and government of the United States” and “croakers,” (citizens that spread ill-news and were thought to be Union agents attempting to demoralize the Confederate cause) were mentioned as equals to those that interfere with proper commerce.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, the *Herald* published the martial law orders of Brigadier General H.P. Bee that included the statement that “All acts to depreciate the currency will be viewed as an act of hostility to the government.”<sup>102</sup> These mutual aid organizations hoped to both negate perceptions of extortion and speculation as well as aid San Antonio’s citizenry to a limited degree. Numerous other grassroots groups and organizations led by the Hospital Association adopted the establishment of a hospital in Richmond for wounded Texan troops as their primary goal. The Hospital Association, led primarily by women, sought funds mainly through holding entertainment events at public venues like the Casino Hall. Some of these events would coincide with holidays such as Mardi Gras.<sup>103</sup> The Mardi Gras entertainment event at the Casino Hall included a mime, dinner, dancing, and singing with a projected profit between \$1400 and \$1100 and cost only \$300 to sponsor.<sup>104</sup> So quick was their success that the Hospital Association announced another entertainment event to benefit the poor just a week later to take place on March 5.<sup>105</sup>

In many instances, women played the dominant role in grassroots organizations. In the cases of the San Antonio Ladies Sewing Society, the Hospital Association, or various un-

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<sup>101</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, April 26, 1862.

<sup>102</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, May 3, 1863.

<sup>103</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, February 14, 1863.

<sup>104</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, February 21, 1863.

<sup>105</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, February 28, 1863.

credited organizations, women assumed primary control of the organizations' goals and activities. In addition to the Ladies Sewing Society and Hospital Association, other women's groups conducted events and fundraisers. For example, in May 1863, a fair was held by the "women of San Antonio" that included dancing and dinner for the benefit of Pyron's Regiment to the total of \$1200.<sup>106</sup> The next month, local women conducted a fair that benefitted General Baylor's "guerilla" troops to the total of \$2,414.<sup>107</sup> In December 1863, other local women met at a Methodist church and made haversacks for Texas soldiers.<sup>108</sup> The increased participation of women in San Antonio's grassroots movements, however, is not entirely unexpected. With many men enlisted, drafted, or pursuing commercial ventures along trading routes both within Texas and across the border with Mexico, women knew firsthand the difficulties of war. Organizing offered women an opportunity not only to participate in the war effort and support their sons and husbands but also to come together with like-minded people.

In addition to the gender diversity, these organizations were ethnically diverse. Efforts to address the multiethnic population of San Antonio by pro-South sympathizers can be seen even prior to the election of Lincoln. Mr. Hord addressed San Antonio citizens on November 2, 1860 to suggest that the roots of the current conflict predated the Constitution and had their foundation in the debates between Jefferson and Madison over the proper scope of government. The *Herald* admired how Mr. Hord "addressed the Mexicans in their own language."<sup>109</sup> This is similar to previous efforts of Unionist forces to engage the German population by printing addresses of Sam Houston in both English and German.<sup>110</sup> In March 1862, the *Herald* noted a large public meeting held at the Plaza Hotel that was translated in English, Spanish, and German. The *Herald*

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<sup>106</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, May 9, 1863.

<sup>107</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, June 6, 1863.

<sup>108</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, December 26, 1863.

<sup>109</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 2, 1860.

<sup>110</sup> *Alamo Express*, March 22, 1861.

stated that “The audience [at the Plaza Hotel] without regard to nationalities manifested great enthusiasm.”<sup>111</sup> Other similar meetings also held in March at the Menger and Plaza Hotels brought similar enthusiasm: “The vast audiences manifested great enthusiasm in favor of the Southern cause.”<sup>112</sup> These multiethnic meetings speak to the diverse character of San Antonio and its relatively proportional split into three dominant ethnic groups. In order to become a successful grassroots movement, the pro-Confederate organizations sought to engage the entire population and ultimately mobilized traditionally disaffected groups such as women and immigrants.

Another organization, more national in its initial mission and scope, grew out of relative obscurity to become a powerful Confederate nationalist organization. The Knights of the Golden Circle (K.G.C.), initially a secret society composed of members under the leadership of George W.L. Bickley, declared the goal of creating a slave empire in the South primarily encompassing the Southern United States and Mexico with smaller interests in the West Indies and sections of Central America.<sup>113</sup> The K.G.C. enjoyed success in recruiting in Texas and established 32 “Castles,” or local branches similar in function to Masonic Lodges, throughout the State, including one in San Antonio. In mid-November of 1860, the *Herald* mentions the K.G.C. gaining support in San Antonio despite that “we know personally nothing about the order.”<sup>114</sup> As more details on the organization emerged, it became clear that Jas. Vance of Bexar County had statewide influence as the State Treasurer of the K.C.G. and John. A. Wilcox, also of Bexar County, was the Order’s Western Brigade Commander. The *Herald* also quickly published a resolution adopted by the K.G.C. at a convention stating “that if any, non-slaveholding

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<sup>111</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, March 15, 1862.

<sup>112</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, March 8, 1862.

<sup>113</sup> Long, Christopher. *Knights of the Golden Circle*. Retrieved from <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/KK/vbk1.html>

<sup>114</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 14, 1860.

government, power or people, attempt to establish a protectorate over the Republic of Mexico, such action shall be, and the same is hereby declared to be hostile to the rights and interests of the South and the K.G.C.” and “...any such action...is hereby declared to be, just cause of war on the part of the South and the K.G.C.”<sup>115</sup> Newcomb noted that the K.G.C. was aligned with other secessionist powers that augmented a powerful force “arrayed against the Union Party.”<sup>116</sup> Newcomb also considered the K.G.C. a primary reason for the secessionists’ greater organization and eventual success in securing Texas’ withdrawal from the Union. The K.G.C. was also instrumental in their role securing the Federal Arsenal as part of the secessionist militia that confronted Gen. Twiggs.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, James Newcomb, the editor of the *Alamo Express* (a known pro-Union paper), would also be forced to flee San Antonio in May of 1861 when his paper was destroyed by members of the Knights of the Golden Circle and members of the Confederate cavalry<sup>118</sup>. By December 1861, the San Antonio Castle of the K.G.C. included 225 individuals, 76 of whom were active in military service. Other members were involved in the field or temporary service and were “found on every line of operation from Virginia to Arizona.”<sup>119</sup> In spite of their surprising initial burst of popularity, the K.G.C. ultimately did not survive the war. In fact, by mid April 1861, one prestigious member of the Order, Ward, left the K.G.C. to join the Union Army.<sup>120</sup>

The initial burst of support for the K.G.C. in the wake of Lincoln’s election in late 1860 and the radical stance adopted by members of the secession convention in February 1861 seemed to be indicative of an initial, more impulsive, attitude toward secession, if not necessarily the

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<sup>115</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, March 23, 1861.

<sup>116</sup> *Alamo Express*, February 23, 1861.

<sup>117</sup> *Alamo Express*, February 6, 1861.

<sup>118</sup> Speck, Earnest. *Newcomb, James Pearson*. Retrieved from <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/NN/fne19.html>

<sup>119</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, December 14, 1861.

<sup>120</sup> *Alamo Express*, April 15, 1861.

Confederacy. As the secessionist movement achieved its objective and evaporated, so did the more radical organizations like the K.G.C. Many of the other grassroots organizations, however, were spiritual successors to the Breckinridge and Lane and State's Rights organizations that saw success during the election season and adapted their message to be supportive of the Confederacy and therefore achieved the longevity that the K.G.C. did not experience. The more radical organizations, like the K.G.C., likewise lost support to those organizations that focused on support and charity to Texans and San Antonians abroad as well as those who were struggling within the city limits. The less radical organizations that evolved from the pro-Breckinridge political clubs contributed to the Southern cause by adopting public venues as meeting and event sites transformed San Antonio society into one that wholly supported the Confederate cause and limited the possibility of dissent.

### **The Immigrant Question**

German speaking citizens outnumbered both Spanish and English speaking citizens in San Antonio until 1877.<sup>121</sup> As such, their opinions and attitudes commanded substantial influence and carried great weight. As a group, the Germans were viewed as largely pro-Unionist in sentiment, but like the rest of San Antonio, they exhibited clashing viewpoints. Comal County, for example, was home to many of the larger German settlements yet voted in favor of secession 239 to 86. Gillespie County, situated on the Indian frontier and also home to a large number of German immigrants, voted against secession 398 to 16. Although German immigrants as a whole did not possess a clearly unifying ideology, a number of counties that voted against secession had large concentrations of Germans, which led to the perception across Texas that Germans as a

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<sup>121</sup> Fehrenbach, T.R. *San Antonio, Texas*. Retrieved from <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/SS/hds2.html>



group opposed secession and by extension, the Confederacy.<sup>122</sup> The large German population owed its existence primarily to two waves of immigration into south-central Texas. The initial German immigrants to Texas, for example, were mostly small farmers who were forced off of their land due to the destruction of the potato blight and the introduction of mass production. Beginning in earnest in the early 1830s, they largely settled in German-centric communities like New Braunfels.<sup>123</sup> The second wave of immigrants, known as the “Forty-Eighters,” fled from revolution and persecution in Germany, bringing with them their ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity that echoed the Revolutions of 1848. It was the latter group of immigrants who largely influenced the perception of ethnic Germans as being decidedly pro-Union due to their aversion to slavery that can be attributed to their insistence on equality. Unionist attitudes seemed to be more of a result of geography rather than ideology. These ideological differences were made manifest through the many German organizations and clubs, most notably the Turnvereins (athletic clubs) that were formed in both Houston and San Antonio.

Two immigrants of the second wave, E.B.H. Schneider and Adolf Douai, became founders of these turnvereins in Houston and San Antonio, respectively. Many members of the Turnvereins in Germany were both ideological and military participants in the revolutions and were forced to flee. Schneider and Douai, while both Forty-Eighters, went in different ideological directions with the outbreak of the Civil War in Texas. Schneider, for example, would found the first Houston Turnverein and the Turner Rifles (a subsidiary of the Houston Turnverein), the first Houston volunteers for the Confederacy. Douai, on the other hand, established San Antonio’s first Turnverein, edited the *San Antonio Zeitung*, but was forced out of

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<sup>122</sup> Bailey, Anne. *Defiant Unionists: Militant Germans in Confederate Texas*. Essay located in Inscoe and Kenzer. *Enemies of the Country*, p. 209.

<sup>123</sup> Kownslar, Allan. *The European Texans*.

the city in 1856 due to his outspoken abolitionist sentiment.<sup>124</sup> The views of Forty-Eighters like Douai left an imprint on the minds of many San Antonio residents, who began to think of their German neighbors who remained in San Antonio throughout the Civil War as abolitionist spies.

Most German citizens attempted to refrain from intervening in controversial issues like secession for fear that they would be marginalized and alienated by native groups. With the passage of a banishment act in 1861 by the Confederate Congress, however, Germans were forced to take a loyalty oath or leave the country and all their possessions. Therefore, by tacitly supporting the Confederacy, many Germans were able to maintain their possessions.<sup>125</sup> Others, particularly those German immigrants in the Hill Country, resisted in an unorganized fashion that posed little legitimate threat to the State, but ultimately only served to justify perceptions that San Antonio was being encircled by hostile, Unionist militias that will be discussed later.

Mexican immigrants likewise would suffer from the same ideological split and external prejudices. Frederick Law Olmstead wrote in his diary, for example, that Mexicans “regard slavery with abhorrence and they are regarded by slaveholders with great contempt and suspicion, for their intimacy with slaves and the competition with their plantation labor.”<sup>126</sup> Numerous similar observations resulted in creating a stereotype of all Mexicans being abolitionists. In some cases, Mexicans suffered from prejudices stemming from the relatively recent Mexican-American War (1846-1848). Not all Mexican immigrants, however, fit into this stereotype. Santo Benavides, for example, became the Colonel of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Texas Cavalry. His cavalry invaded northern Mexico three times in response to pro-Union attacks.<sup>127</sup> It was certain, however, that the

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<sup>124</sup> LeCompte, Mary Lou. *German-American Turnvereins in Frontier Texas, 1851-1860*. p. 19.

<sup>125</sup> Bailey, Anne. *Defiant Unionists: Militant Germans in Confederate Texas*. Essay located in Inscoc and Kenzer. *Enemies of the Country*, p. 209.

<sup>126</sup> Quoted in Walter L. Buenger, *Secession and the Union in Texas*. pp. 84.

<sup>127</sup> Thompson, Jerry. *Mexican Texans in the Civil War*. Retrieved from <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/MM/pom2.html>

large immigrant population in Texas faced considerable suspicion from Americans that would manifest itself in an increasingly violent manner throughout the Civil War.

### **Military San Antonio**

Local papers noted arguments supporting the conscription acts across Texas as early as January 1862; these acts first saw passage later that April. The arguments for conscription and the resultant imposition of a conscription law serve as a strong gauge of pro-Confederate sentiment in San Antonio. Similar to the growth of radicalism in the wake of Lincoln's election, the initial conscription laws were greeted with a sense of patriotism and dedication. This heightened sense of duty, however, ultimately suffered from disillusionment and further calls for more troops were met with greater skepticism as individuals sought to provide for their families in the absence of many men. The San Antonio press, by comparison, followed suit and noted problems with successive calls for more troops.

The *Herald* noted the first militia law on January 11, 1862. The law called on all white males, ages 18-50, to enlist in local militias. The paper stated that "Not a county in the State is, or ought to be exempted. Every person must be enrolled, and contribute his portion toward the common defense."<sup>128</sup> These measures were sufficient temporarily, but Texas would be called on to supply 15,000 more troops for the Confederacy less than two months later. Some individuals, including substantial majorities of both the Alamo Rifles and Bexar Guards, voluntarily enlisted rather than wait for the coming draft.<sup>129</sup> These individuals were praised and the wartime fervor seemed to be shared by most although an unknown number of detractors still existed. The *Herald* noted that:

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<sup>128</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, January 11, 1862.

<sup>129</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, March 8, 1862.

The war spirit in our city and our county is fully aroused. Men of all ages and conditions are enlisting...But in the midst of this general enthusiasm – even in the State of Texas...in the goodly city of San Antonio, men may still be found with no particular business or responsibilities to restrain them, who refuse to take up arms in their country’s cause.<sup>130</sup>

Those who chose to evade enlistment and the coming draft were deemed enemies of the Confederacy and cowards. A degree of threat also existed in the relevant editorials:

Are they afraid? Are they indifferent as to success or failure of our armies? Whatever the cause of their apathy, their position at the close of the war, and when our independence and consequent prosperity shall have been established, will be far from enviable. Their course will be remembered and the lack of either bravery or patriotism will be accorded them.<sup>131</sup>

The first Conscription Law was passed in April 1862. The law sought to raise the number of Confederate troops across the Confederacy from 250,000 to 550,000 men and was mandatory for all white men ages 18-35. The *Herald* noted that “Under the new law, the hardships and dangers of the war will fall alike on all classes, including speculators, croakers, and resident foreigners, as well as those who are willing to enlist.”<sup>132</sup> In the minds of the editorialists, the new law was at once a measure of equality and a means to punish the “croakers” and “speculators” that were damaging the Confederate cause. The Conscription law also included foreigners, which would include a number of German and Mexican residents whose sentiments and allegiances did not lay with the South. Their reluctance to enlist caused many Texans to view them with

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<sup>130</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, March 8, 1862.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, April 19, 1862.

suspicion and in some cases, as agents of the North. As this sentiment escalated, warnings quickly gave way to threats:

Let them be remembered. Let them be compelled to do their full share toward the expense of the war, and in times of safety and prosperity be treated with the contempt which Tories deserve from patriots. But should danger menace our State...then it will be necessary to dispose of the lurking enemies in our midst. Fortunately there will be no difficulty in ascertaining who they are. Circumstances may render it necessary that the action of loyal citizens should be prompt and decisive.<sup>133</sup>

The *Herald* wrote that “We do not intend these remarks as threats...” but the message was clear to those who were seen as unpatriotic or evaded the draft and did not fulfill their necessary obligations to the South – they were not welcome and would be persecuted. The *Herald* wrote instead that their remarks were intended as “statements for the consideration of those misguided men, whose feet stand on slippery places – and who are not probably aware of the turpitude of their conduct, of the imminent peril of their position.”<sup>134</sup> The *Herald* continued that “They are known, and unless they immediately renounce their (sic) errors, and in good faith espouse the cause of their country, there is no telling how soon it may be deemed necessary to treat them as Tories, spies, and traitors are treated by all nations in times of war.”<sup>135</sup> The last statement in particular gave detractors and Union sympathizers cause to fear as the *Herald* references the death sentence, the punishment for spying during the Revolutionary War, as a penalty for their allegiances.

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<sup>133</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, March 22, 1862.

<sup>134</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, March 22, 1862.

<sup>135</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, March 22, 1862.

The conscription law of April 1862 passed by the Confederate Congress was amended that September to include all white men from ages 18-45 and would be altered once more in February of 1864 to include all white men ages 17-50 as the Confederate government called for increasing numbers of troops and the 18-35 demographic had been all but exhausted.<sup>136</sup> The continuing calls for greater numbers of troops ultimately diminished the initial optimism and radicalism that accompanied previous calls to service. Instead, the *Herald* noted that the Governor had the best interests of the South in mind by calling for more troops, but argued that severe consequences for agriculture would follow the further depletion of the region's manpower. The *Herald* wrote:

We know that our Governor, in ordering a draft, is influenced by no motives but those of the purest patriotism...In portions of the State, there are negroes enough to cultivate the ground – but this is not the case in many of these Western counties upon which the Governor has made a call for additional men. In these counties the ground must go uncultivated, and the inhabitants must subsist upon public or private charity – or starve...The Conscription Act still reduced the number of those who were left to protect the women and children, take care of the prosperity of those in the field, and cultivate a crops for the subsistence of citizens and soldiers.<sup>137</sup>

The imposition of martial law in Texas in May of 1862 by order of Brig. Gen. H.P. Bee, commander of the military department of Texas, also followed a similar lifecycle of immediate support, succeeded by reluctant acceptance, and finally by outright questioning. Gen. Bee appointed numerous Provost Marshals and gave them near limitless powers creating laws,

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<sup>136</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, February 14, 1864.

<sup>137</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, January 24, 1863.

enforcing laws, and punishing those who broke the laws in their area of jurisdiction. Mainly due to increased fears of insurrection in frontier counties, the imposition of martial law required men 16 years old and over to report to the Provost Marshall, J.R. Sweet in San Antonio, and swear an oath of allegiance to the Confederacy. The military, under Gen. Bee, essentially took over the State government and suspended citizens' normal legal rights. The *Herald* wrote that "Since Monday morning last our city has been under Martial Law – a thing which although quite unusual to most citizens, is beginning to feel quite natural, and to be productive of much good."<sup>138</sup> These optimistic and supportive attitudes in favor of martial law started waning in response to difficulties with initial enforcement.

It did not take long before reports surfaced that the authorities imposing marital law had done so not without incident. On May 3, 1862, the *Herald* wrote that "These reports, we learn, are to the effect that citizens have been arrested, imprisoned, and maltreated without cause."<sup>139</sup> Additional concerns surfaced in areas surrounding San Antonio. On June 7, a rumor that a member of Captain Duff's regiment killed a woman while establishing martial law in Fredericksburg was reported.<sup>140</sup> Even with the rumor, the *Herald* still asserted that "Martial law in this city is working admirably."<sup>141</sup> Other advocates of martial law suggested that "Let us consider these things for the good of our country, and sacrifice liberty and life too, rather than submit to the accursed yoke of the vandal Yankees who rejoice when they hear of discontent and

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<sup>138</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, May 3, 1862.

<sup>139</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, May 10, 1862.

<sup>140</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, June 7, 1862.

<sup>141</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, May 24, 1862.

disaffection in an part of our country...”<sup>142</sup> Martial law established a sense of security and in some cases, acted to stabilize the currency and regulate prices.<sup>143</sup>

After months of enduring the inconveniences of martial law and frustrations over petty actions of the Provost Marshal, patriotic sentiment waned and citizens questioned the continued presence of martial law:

When Martial Law was proclaimed to exist throughout the State of Texas, it was no doubt necessary...There were many traitors in the country...It has accomplished the objectives in view, and the people have submitted to its necessary, - and in some cases, unnecessary inconveniences, with the fortitude of becoming patriots. But is it necessary longer to continue the system in Texas? There are no Yankee armies in our State, and our people are loyal...In this city the establishment of martial law worked like a charm at first, by frightening and punishing traitors, and defeating their iniquitous plans – but that time has passed. We can see no good the system is now doing in this city.<sup>144</sup>

Marital law was repealed by Gen. Herbert in early October of 1862. Its presence, however, spoke to the people’s immediate acceptance of acts that were deemed patriotic, as well as their reluctant questioning of laws like conscription when the consequences became too inconvenient or harmful. It was clear that many San Antonio citizens feared an impending insurrection of pro-Union forces and further believed that the imposition of martial law had remedied the situation. The citizens of San Antonio had become patriots of the South, but only when greater sacrifice was not demanded of them.

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<sup>142</sup> *Semi-Weekly News*, July 2\_, 1862. The absence of the last digit is due to a unreadable portion of the microfilm containing this specific date.

<sup>143</sup> *Semi-Weekly News*, June 16, 1862.

<sup>144</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, October 4, 1862.



## **The Economics of Secession**

Just prior to the start of the Civil War and at the war's inception, San Antonio was mainly a supply depot for the Federal Army and supply center for the Western frontier.<sup>145</sup> Local commerce was built on shops providing essential supplies and other general stores. This initial link between commerce, the frontier, and the Federal Army ensured that many frontier Texans, developed a strong bond toward the Union. But the Union Army's blockade of the South's most lucrative ports starting in July 1861, including Texas's primary outlet for its cotton crop, Galveston, had major ramifications. Galveston's blockade left only two options for Texan cotton farmers and merchants to transport their goods: either they could transport their bales to Brownsville, the only Texas port free from Union intervention for the time being, or they could transport their crop overland to Mexico via the border town of Eagle Pass and then to the Mexican towns of Matamoros and Monterrey<sup>146</sup>. Both options meant greater participation by San Antonio in the South's cotton trade. Interestingly, it appears that this led to a Confederate allegiance.

The importance of cotton to the Confederacy was not only key for continued commercial independence and growth within the Southern States, but it was also seen by Jefferson Davis as necessary for ensuring European intervention against Union forces in exchange for the continuation of the cotton trade to supply European textile mills. European powers, particularly Great Britain, did not immediately intervene, which led Davis and his cabinet to elect to withhold Southern cotton from the international market.<sup>147</sup> This decision was unpopular with many Texans who wished to continue their lucrative cotton trade with Mexico. Realizing the

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<sup>145</sup> See Fig. 1 (Texas Frontier 1852-1861).

<sup>146</sup> See Fig. 3 (Texas Cotton Routes).

<sup>147</sup> Information from Tyler, Ronnie C. "Cotton on the Border, 1861-1865." *Southwest Historical Quarterly*. April 1970, pp. 456-477. The article was accessed via the Texas State Historical Association website with page numbers ranging from 211-232. < <http://www.tshaonline.org/publications/books/LSBaGEssay9.pdf>>

strategic possibilities of Mexico as one of the only avenues to get Southern cotton on the world market, Davis permitted the cotton trade between Texas and Mexico to continue. The *Herald* reported in late January of 1862 that "...the Governor of Texas has been [sic] given his consent to the Agent of the Confederate States to take to Mexico any amount of cotton he may require in the purchase of arms, powder, & c."<sup>148</sup> Concerns over the cotton trade still persisted which caused the *Herald* to respond: "The policy of selling cotton to Mexico, and receiving from that country such indispensable articles as guns, powder, blankets, coffee, & c., will not be questioned by those who reflect upon the necessities of the country, and know that the cotton is all used in Mexico – not a bale of it going to the U.S."<sup>149</sup> Through the first half of the war, cotton primarily went through Alleytown, a town East of Houston where the railroad terminated, and then on to Brownsville. The other route, an overland journey through San Antonio to Eagle Pass, was much slower and more cumbersome.<sup>150</sup> At one time, however, numerous rumors circulated that suggested a possible railroad connection between San Antonio and the port of New Orleans.<sup>151</sup> With the Federal capture of Brownsville in November 1863 and the stationing of the U.S.S. Montgomery off the Brownsville coast, San Antonio quickly became the Northern nexus of the Southern cotton trade with Mexico.<sup>152</sup>

The impact of the cotton trade with Mexico was evident. Mrs. Eliza Moore McHatton Ripley noted that "Hundreds of huge Chihuahua wagons were...seen 'parked' with military precision outside" San Antonio "waiting their turn to enter the grand plaza, deliver their

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<sup>148</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, January 25, 1862.

<sup>149</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, April 19, 1862.

<sup>150</sup> See Fig. 3, THC

<sup>151</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 13, 1860.

<sup>152</sup> Ronnie C. Tyler. "Cotton on the Border, 1861-1865," 220.

packages with goods, and load with cotton” for the return trip to Mexico.<sup>153</sup> In May 1863, the *Herald* reported that “Our streets are crowded with trains of mules and Mexican carts, loaded with cotton for Mexico, or with ropes, bales, tobacco, and very little else from that country. Our patriotic merchants are daily disappearing, and turning up in some interior town in Mexico...”<sup>154</sup> The *Herald* observed that “War has enriched our citizens, and infused new life in our community. Our public balls and private parties are distinguished by gayety and pleasure – care seems to be banished from our people, and fashion luxury, ease and enjoyment everywhere overall.”<sup>155</sup>

Merchants in Eagle Pass, like Adolfo Duclos, also intended to take advantage of the large increase in volume of cotton traffic through Eagle Pass since the effective closure of Brownsville and Laredo due to the effects of the Union blockade. Originally, Duclos’ business consisted of receiving cotton from planters and merchants then transporting the bales to Mexico where he would sell the crop for a commission. With the increase in cotton traffic through Eagle Pass in which the customs inspector Jesse Sumpter noted that in Eagle Pass “there was scarcely a day that hundreds of bales were not unloaded...and crossed [over]...as fast as possible,”<sup>156</sup> Duclos was able to expand his business to include selling basic quartermaster supplies and a general store in addition to his foundation of cotton trafficking.

In addition, Eagle Pass, because of its newfound importance as a hub for the cotton trade, quickly became a site fraught with contention and rumors concerning traitors and speculators. Eagle Pass served as an example of the contention that arose when overwhelmingly pro-Union interests and starkly pro-Confederate supporters met. During Texas’ popular referendum on

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<sup>153</sup> Quotation from Eliza Moore McHatton Ripley. “From Flag to Flag: a Women’s Adventures and Experiences in the South During the War, in Mexico, and in Cuba.” New York. 1889. Retrieved from Ronnie C. Tyler. “Cotton on the Border, 1861-1865,” 217.

<sup>154</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, May 16, 1863.

<sup>155</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 29, 1863.

<sup>156</sup> Quotation from Jesse Sumpter, “Paso del Aguila: A Chronicle of Frontier Days on the Texas Border,” ed. By Ben E. Pingnot (Austin, 1969), 87. Retrieved from Ronnie C. Tyler. “Cotton on the Border, 1861-1865,” 219.

secession, the town of Eagle Pass voted overwhelmingly against secession 80-3.<sup>157</sup> Over the course of the war, the importance of trade made Eagle Pass a location for a trade depot for the Military Board of Texas. Indeed, Eagle Pass evolved from an isolated haven for slave hunters and outlaws with only a stage line connecting to San Antonio (finished in 1851) to the only overland “port” for the Confederacy’s cotton trade with Mexico. The *Herald* mentioned that “Twenty-two traitors...who had left Texas for Mexico, to avoid the Conscript law, or to show their veneration for old Abe’s government, recently recrossed the Rio Grande, near Eagle Pass, and attacked a portion of Capt. Rabb’s Company. Twenty of the renegades were killed, only two escaping to tell the tale. Rabb lost all but two men.”<sup>158</sup> A week later, the *Herald* noted additional murders in Eagle Pass.<sup>159</sup> Periodic “progress reports” detailing hostilities in Eagle Pass were printed in the *Herald* at least until early 1864 in which it was mentioned that “All Quiet in Eagle Pass.”<sup>160</sup>

Merchants like Duclos advertised in San Antonio newspapers in hopes of procuring cotton while other merchants, like H.M. Smith, advertised “Mexican Goods” for sale which would be used to purchase cotton. Another merchant company, H. Mayer & Company, advertised for Mexican flour which would be traded for cotton products for transport into Mexico.<sup>161</sup> As early as March of 1862, the *Herald* took note of 52 wagons carrying supplies from Mexico for the purpose of purchasing cotton in the city.<sup>162</sup> Another column discussed the massive quantities of Mexican coffee entering San Antonio that was exchanged for cotton.<sup>163</sup>

The Texas government noticed the profitability and necessity of the cotton trade between Mexico

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<sup>157</sup> [http://www.mrgdc.org/cog/cog\\_region/maverickcounty.php](http://www.mrgdc.org/cog/cog_region/maverickcounty.php)

<sup>158</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, October 11, 1862.

<sup>159</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, October 17, 1862.

<sup>160</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, February 20, 1864.

<sup>161</sup> Ronnie C. Tyler. “Cotton on the Border, 1861-1865,” 217.

<sup>162</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, March 15, 1862.

<sup>163</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, December 7, 1861.

and San Antonio and reduced tariffs on imports to increase the volume of trade: “It affords the editor great pleasure to inform the trading community that the tariff heretofore imposed upon foreign goods exported from Matamoros to Texas, has been reduced three-fourths, and what formerly paid 100 per cent, now pays only 25 per cent.”<sup>164</sup> Other individuals, including Gen. Bee, sought to facilitate the cotton trade and to make it more lucrative in order to strengthen the financial standing of the Confederate Army. The *Herald* noted that “We have been informed and take pleasure in stating, that Gen. Bee is giving permits to planters and farmers to take their cotton to Mexico and purchase supplies for their plantations and families, without requiring bonds – This is as it should be.”<sup>165</sup>

San Antonio’s cotton trade was so important that the dominant news coverage shifted from general war news to matters concerning commerce and cotton by 1862. San Antonio’s growing preoccupation with commercial matters led to heightened concern over any individual suspected to be interfering with proper commerce. The martial law orders published on May 3 of 1862 included the order that “All acts to depreciate the currency will be viewed as an act of hostility to the government.”<sup>166</sup> The following August, three individuals, P. Braucbach, J. Schlickum, and F.W. Dibbler, were arrested in San Antonio by military authorities “upon the charge of disloyalty, depreciating the Confederate currency, and a veneration for Lincoln’s government.”<sup>167</sup> Two of the men were sentenced to imprisonment for an unspecified time during the war. All three, however, were able to escape. Growing resentment also focused on the great price fluctuations that occurred due to the growing trade, which gave cause for the forming of organizations such as the Mutual Aid Society and San Antonio Supply Association. As trade

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<sup>164</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, October 4, 1862.

<sup>165</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, October 4, 1862.

<sup>166</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, May 3, 1862.

<sup>167</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 9, 1862.

with Mexico increased and more goods were brought into the city to trade for cotton, prices temporarily decreased due to the increase in supply. The *Herald* noted “It is astonishing how cheap dry goods and provisions are getting in this city” and that “There is an abundance of provisions in the county.”<sup>168</sup> Flour sold at \$20 per sack, corn meal sold at \$21 per bushel, calico sold at 75 cents per yard, and shoes sold from \$8-\$10.<sup>169</sup> From August of 1862 to October of 1862, San Antonio’s status as a “cheap” city had evolved into one of the most expensive cities in Texas due to the increased trade with Mexico. This spawned a number of demands for authorities to lower prices and crackdown on speculators. Furthermore, the notion of forgoing luxury items was publicized as an act of patriotism toward the Confederacy.<sup>170</sup>

### **The Frontier and the Notion of Encirclement**

Much of San Antonio’s Union sentiment before the Civil War stemmed from its geographic position as part of the Western frontier.<sup>171</sup> Not only did San Antonio receive Federal support due to its position as a supply and military depot for the Federal Army, but the city, along with other frontier towns such as Uvalde and Comfort, owed their protection and sense of security to the presence of the Federal Army and their network of forts. With the eviction and expulsion of the Federal Army in early 1861 and the resultant abandonment of the forts, fears concerning security against Indian attacks were prevalent in many frontier counties surrounding San Antonio. These worries, combined with the fact that some frontier settlers owned slaves<sup>172</sup> and had cultural roots outside of the deep South, contributed to a strong anti-Confederate sentiment, which in turn allowed pro-South forces in San Antonio to garner support by asserting that the city was surrounded by Unionist forces poised to invade the city. These attitudes

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<sup>168</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 2, 1862.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *Semi-Weekly News*, October 6, 1862.

<sup>171</sup> See Fig. 1.

<sup>172</sup> *Alamo Express*, March 15, 1861.

demanded a constant state of vigilance from the population of San Antonio, resulting in continual persecutions against suspected Unionists, and it created an atmosphere of fear.

The threat of Indian and bandit raids remained constant prior to and during the Civil War. From September 21 to December 19 of 1860, major Indian and bandit raids were noted five times in the *Herald*.<sup>173</sup> The *Alamo Express* called to mind stark images of raiding Indians shortly after the referendum on secession in an attempt to corral the last vestiges of Union support:

Large parties of bold, bloodthirsty Indians scour the country, committing murder and rapine, being emboldened by the withdrawal of the Federal troops...the fostering arms of the Federal government has been withdrawn, and in their extreme necessity [the frontier settlers] hardly know where to look for relief. The State government has been crippled and ignored by an arrogant, grasping convention, which has sprung into power by deceiving the people, and in its eagerness to grab Federal property.<sup>174</sup>

The raids continued after secession and became a greater cause for concern. The *Herald* mentioned an Indian raid in Boerne, less than 35 miles north of San Antonio in which five people were killed.<sup>175</sup> Boerne was located within the radius of protection offered by the Federal Army during its tenure in Texas, which led many to believe that the frontier had been pushed eastward and that San Antonio was now on the “frontier.” The continuation of these raids when combined with the perception of pro-Union sentiment in frontier counties prompted disdain from pro-Confederate forces in San Antonio:

Some of the citizens of the frontier counties saem (sic) not yet to have learned that the state has seceded from the Union. They claim to be loyal subjects of Abe

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<sup>173</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 21, September 25, September 28, November 9, December 19, 1860.

<sup>174</sup> *Alamo Express*, March 13, 1861.

<sup>175</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, January 25, 1862.

Lincoln's government...They refuse to be enrolled under the Conscript law and to take the oath of allegiance to the government. They are generally men of neither intelligence, property, nor character, and evade the penalties due to their conduct by a migratory way of living, which renders their capture difficult and uncertain. Since the escape of some of their leaders to Mexico, they have assembled in small parties, threatening and evading our military authorities, thus exhibiting the characteristics of their class – arrogance and cowardice.<sup>176</sup>

These attitudes toward Unionists were continually reinforced due to the trials that were conducted against suspected Unionists in other counties surrounding San Antonio. The *Herald* mentioned one such case where seven people, five Germans and one Frenchmen who were led by an American, were brought to San Antonio from Comal County for their trial on charges of treason due to the suspicion that the men were forming a pro-Union militia company.<sup>177</sup>

Hostility toward frontier Unionists hit a peak in mid-1862, perhaps due to the necessity for Confederate advocates to produce a tactile enemy in the absence of the actual Union Army. Confederate supporters needed to create a sense of encirclement to produce the fear required to maintain a heightened sense of readiness and patriotism. These worries were compounded by the observation of events in the frontier counties. The *Herald* noted that the citizens of Medina County, who had voted overwhelmingly against secession by a total of 207 to 140,<sup>178</sup> elected for the positions of Chief Justice, District Clerk, and County Commissioner, individuals who were held in San Antonio as prisoners of war for a period of two to three months.<sup>179</sup> Elsewhere, the *Herald* noted fighting between militia and pro-Union forces in the vicinity of Fort Clark, 120

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<sup>176</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, July 28, 1862.

<sup>177</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 21, 1861.

<sup>178</sup> <http://www.amtour.net/downloadable/TexasSecessionVote.pdf>

<sup>179</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 16, 1862.



miles west of San Antonio. The militia reportedly lost two men while the “traitors” lost thirty-three.<sup>180</sup> These events, combined with the continuation of Indian raids, contributed to the sentiment that many of the frontier counties were unpatriotic and needed to be suppressed:

From information received at the military headquarters, San Antonio, a few weeks back, it was believed that a portion of the citizens of the frontier counties were in a state of rebellion against the Confederate States, and that an absolute necessity existed for an armed force to be sent to certain counties for the purpose of suppressing the same.<sup>181</sup>

By the end of 1862, the popular perception conveyed in the *San Antonio Herald* was that organized resistance in the frontier counties was diminishing. The militant attitude, however, remained:

They are known, and will be remembered. Their numbers were small at first, and they are becoming everyday less. In the mountains near Fort Clark, and along the Rio Grande, their bones are bleaching in the Sun, and in the counties of Wise and Denton, their bodies are suspended by scores from black jacks.<sup>182</sup>

Other individuals, however, utilized this fear of encirclement to facilitate the continual calls for greater numbers of troops. One editorial in the *Semi-Weekly News*, another San Antonio paper, states that “We have hostile Indians on our frontier; treacherous friends on our border, and are...to invasion by our common enemy on our whole Northern and Western border – from the Southeast by the same enemy...The principle [sic] harbor and commercial city of our State has

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<sup>180</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 28, 1862.

<sup>181</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 30, 1862.

<sup>182</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, November 15, 1862.

been given up without a struggle and we are this winter threatened and have unmistakable testimony of an invasion of our State.”<sup>183</sup>

Other factors, such as the departure of Confederate Maj. Gen. Magruder, commander of the District of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, caused many to speculate that San Antonio was left exposed to bandits from Mexico and Unionists in the frontier counties.<sup>184</sup> Further rumors of a Union invasion persisted into 1863: “It is again rumored in the city that about 12,000 Federals, on their way to San Antonio, have reached Fort Stockton.”<sup>185</sup> Other rumors focused on the Federal steamer, the “Clifton,” that was supposedly carrying 15,000 men, 1,500 cavalry, a “large quantity of artillery, and “a number of wagons and mules”<sup>186</sup> for an imminent invasion of Texas. These reports were accompanied by an editorial warning: “To the People of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas: Your homes are now in peril – vigorous efforts on your part can alone save portions of your State from invasion. You should arrest the advance of the enemy at every thicket, gully, and stream; harass his rear and cut off his supplies.”<sup>187</sup>

These reports echoed prior reports in 1862 of rumors of a large Federal force to be sent to Texas for the purposes of colonizing Texas with large amounts of free labor. This rumor was printed alongside a clipping from the New York Times which wrote:

It is known that the rare and beautiful pastoral lands in Western Texas have been invaded by a large number of Northern men, Germans, and some French, to the extent, perhaps of 50,000 altogether; and this population is prospering by cultivating cotton in small patches, raising sheep, building factories, planting vineyards, making wine, and trading with the Northern states of Mexico, from

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<sup>183</sup> *Semi-Weekly News*, November 13, 1862.

<sup>184</sup> *Semi-Weekly News*, January 26, 1863.

<sup>185</sup> *Semi-Weekly News*, March 16, 1863.

<sup>186</sup> *Semi-Weekly News*, October 1, 1863.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

which they got bars of virgin silver in exchange for their products. This population of Texas is loyal though overawed by treason. Its labor is free – few slaves exist in their midst.<sup>188</sup>

The inclusion of the editorial seemed to have the goal of persuading Texans that many Unionists lived in the frontier counties. This belief had been substantiated to some effect by news received from Gainesville a few weeks prior in which 29 suspected Unionists were caught and hanged for crimes of treason. Two other individuals were shot as they tried to escape. The paper speculated that these individuals were part of a Unionist militia numbering 400-500 people in strength whose goal was to raid and kill secessionists. Most that were killed in what became known as the Great Hanging of Gainesville were innocent of the crimes leveled against them and few actively conspired against the Confederacy. At the time, however, this incident only substantiated the fears of pro-Confederate citizens, who then demanded a higher state of vigilance. To heighten the effect, the paper added that “they [Unionist militias] are said to exist in all frontier counties.”<sup>189</sup> Statements like this compounded the sense of encirclement felt by Confederate sympathizers who grew more unsettled by reports that Union troops would soon invade the State and incite uprisings in counties perceived to be friendly toward the Union.

Further reports indicate a fear that Texas was to be “abolitionized” and that the North felt that large enough numbers of Unionists are simply waiting to be freed from the Confederacy and would support regime change in the Southern states. These reports had some foundation because they coincided with the departure of Maj. Gen. Banks from New York, who they incorrectly suspected would invade Texas.<sup>190</sup> The *Herald* responded to these assertions by printing that:

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<sup>188</sup> *Semi-Weekly News*, November 10, 1862.

<sup>189</sup> *Semi-Weekly News*, October 25, 1862.

<sup>190</sup> *Semi-Weekly News*, November 27, 1862.

Many of the wealthy planters, who had done nothing toward defending the [Confederacy], professed, upon the approach of the Yankees, to be good and loyal Union men and demanded protection under the ‘glorious old flag.’ In every case, their negroes, their houses, and money, were taken from them, and their plantations stripped of everything valuable, according to the most approved style of Yankee malevolence. Their Unionism, or rather traitorism, did not pay.<sup>191</sup>

Eventually, the *Semi-Weekly News* would “learn from private sources, that there is no danger of an invasion of our State by Banks.”<sup>192</sup>

Indian raids, as well as unorganized raids by “renegades” persisted through 1863 and throughout the rest of the war, but they did not draw the same attention and were not as numerous as those in the latter half of 1862. Indians raided in Kendall and Kerr Counties, killed two women (a Mrs. Joy and her daughter), and resulted in the theft of a number of horses.<sup>193</sup>

Along the Nueces River at ‘Patricios,’ a battle between militia and pro-Union forces resulted in 5 dead and 12 wounded.<sup>194</sup> Indians were also noted in Gillespie and San Saba counties where they killed one man and wounded another.<sup>195</sup> Texans pursued these Indians and killed at least one.<sup>196</sup> Another rumor circulated in April of 1863 that 2,500 Indians dressed in Federal uniforms were on their way to Texas.<sup>197</sup>

The frontier and the notion of encirclement enabled pro-Confederate forces to capitalize on the insecurity and fear brought about by constant Indian and bandit raids. Rather intelligently, these forces who in the past sought to expel the Federal troops and who therefore could be

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<sup>191</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, June 27, 1863.

<sup>192</sup> *Semi-Weekly News*, May 28, 1863.

<sup>193</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, December 24, 1864.

<sup>194</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, March 19, 1864.

<sup>195</sup> *Semi-Weekly News*, March 19, 1863.

<sup>196</sup> *Semi-Weekly News*, March 23, 1863.

<sup>197</sup> *Semi-Weekly News*, April 17, 1863.

blamed for the instability utilized the media to frame “Unionist militias” as the cause for the attacks, therefore further alienating individuals who supported the Union.

### **Conclusion**

On July 5, 1862, Edwin Tremble published a column in the *San Antonio Herald* as part of his campaign to be elected as a Judge. To the voters of the 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, Tremble wrote that, “Upon the election of Lincoln, I took, open and decided ground in favor of immediate separation from the North and advocated secession, voting for it on an open ticket.”<sup>198</sup> Tremble’s campaign position is indicative of the dramatic shift of allegiances in the San Antonio population. During the election of 1860, both sides of the political spectrum in San Antonio, whether favoring Breckinridge or Bell, agreed upon the importance of saving the Union and the importance of compromise. Less than two years later, a prospective judge campaigned on his position as a secessionist and saw widespread support.

Views toward Unionism in San Antonio changed primarily because of San Antonio’s position as a key economic participant in the Confederacy’s cotton market due to the effects of the Union blockade. San Antonio was not only a city within the Confederacy, but it was also a city that depended on Confederate trade. Additional worries over frontier security that had historically kept many citizens loyal to the Union were now utilized by the pro-South papers like the *Herald* as further reasons to switch loyalties to the Confederacy. Indian raids still occurred, but to the writers and readers of the *Herald*, the main threat on the frontier came from infiltrated Unionists who sought to destroy the city’s commerce and people. Furthermore, as more male citizens left for war due to voluntary enlistment or draft, the female citizenry looked to support their husbands and brothers through charitable organizations with sponsored events in San Antonio that changed the sentiment of the city. In addition to the other burdens of Unionist living

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<sup>198</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, July 5, 1862.

in San Antonio, the elimination of the main pro-Union newspaper the *Alamo Express* and its editor James P. Newcomb, left many Unionists without a voice and many chose to simply flee.

Eventually, San Antonio's more radical stance toward Southern ideals would be tempered by mounting inconveniences caused by martial law and temporary commercial hardship. With the end of the war, San Antonio's staunchest supporter of the Confederacy, the *Herald*, sought to be incorporated into the Union stating that "Our people have returned to their allegiance" and asked for a universal pardon.<sup>199</sup> When oaths of amnesty were first administered, 402 San Antonioians immediately took the oath.<sup>200</sup> The San Antonio soldiers that fought in the Confederate Army were treated well by both Union occupiers and citizens alike. But, just as commerce served as the impetus for change in the minds of San Antonio citizens, they once again looked to "Commerce [as] the great pacificator after all" and argued that, "We must look to it again to heal the wounds of the late revolution."<sup>201</sup>

Ultimately, San Antonio's brand of Confederate radicalism presents a new paradigm for discussing the political, social, and economic dynamics of the city's experiences in the Civil War. It is neither dependent solely on political institutions nor the Confederate military, from which San Antonio was largely removed, or explained entirely on ideological grounds. Rather, San Antonio's radicalism during the Civil War presents a case in which an amalgamation of forces, including economic motives derived almost entirely from self-interest and ideological concerns exemplified by the number of grassroots organizations, were allowed to take shape in a laboratory removed from many external variables caused by the destruction of the Civil War in other Confederate states. Discussions of San Antonio experiences in the Civil War, therefore, must be viewed in a context separate from other major Confederate cities. The dynamics of pro-

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<sup>199</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, June 24, 1865.

<sup>200</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 7, 1865.

<sup>201</sup> *San Antonio Daily Herald*, June 24, 1865.

South radicalism in San Antonio illustrate a truly unique-if often underrepresented-chapter in the history of the Confederacy.

Texas Frontier (1852-1861)



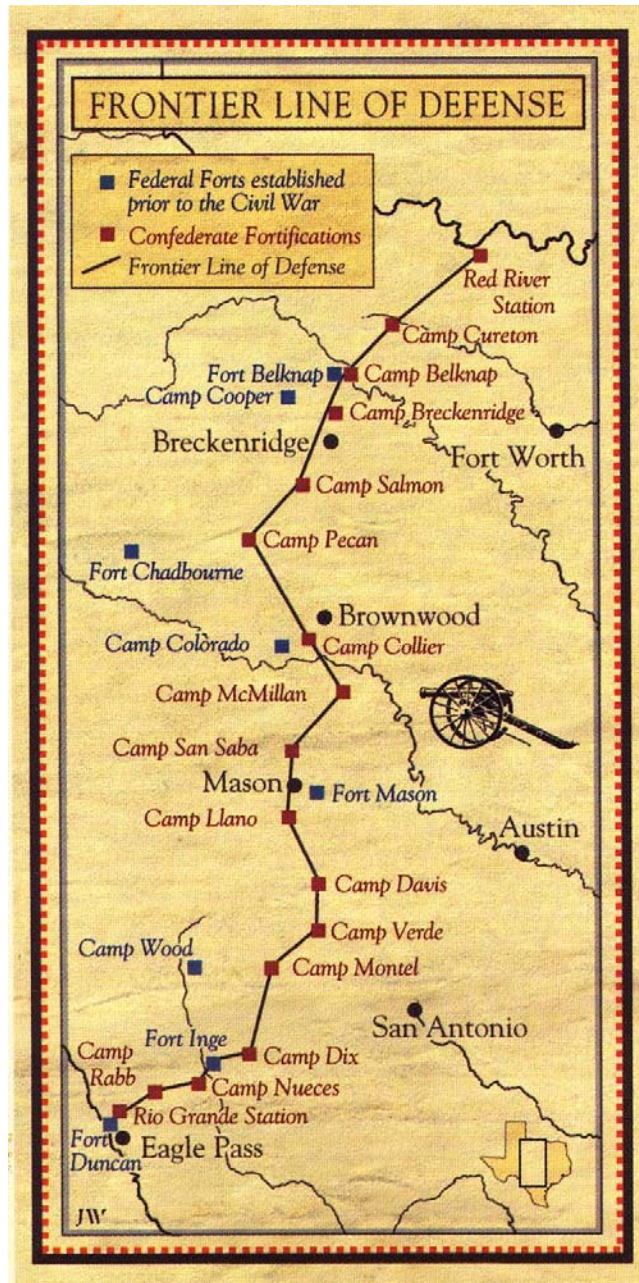
(Fig. 1)

This map illustrates San Antonio’s position relative to the western frontier of Texas. Comfortably inside the population area, San Antonio’s larger population and important position along trade routes ensured a commercial link to the western frontier areas as a supply hub. This important economic relationship foreshadowed the more dominant role San Antonio acquired in the Southern cotton trade.

<sup>202</sup> All maps obtained from a pamphlet published by the Texas Historical Commission. *Texas in the Civil War*. Austin, 2002.



Texas Frontier Defenses



(Fig. 2)

This map offers a more detailed illustration of San Antonio's proximity to the network of frontier forts that provided security from Native American raids and bandits. As stated above, San Antonio's location ensured its commercial connection with the westward network of forts. Also note the retreating line of Confederate forts compared to the Union forts prior to the Civil War.

## Texas Cotton Trade Routes



(Fig. 3)

This map offers an illustration of the primary cotton routes of Southern Texas during the Civil War after the effective closure of Brownsville and Galveston. In the context of this paper, the route between San Antonio and Eagle Pass is the most significant connections, exemplifying San Antonio's larger role in the overland cotton trade.

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<sup>203</sup> To lessen confusion, the *San Antonio Daily Herald* was used as the footnote citation throughout the paper. Because of the rising costs of publication during the war, however, the *San Antonio Daily Herald* changed how often it was printed. The *San Antonio Daily Herald* became the *San Antonio Weekly Herald* on July 6, 1861 and became the *San Antonio Herald* on November 2, 1861. The title changed back to the *San Antonio Weekly Herald* on June 28, 1862 and became the *San Antonio Tri-Weekly Herald* as production costs decreased following the end of the war. Throughout these changes, the editors remained unchanged.

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<sup>204</sup> This site was used for both the bibliographies accompanying specific topics and general summaries.