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Claire Wolnisty
University of Kansas

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Austral Empires: Southern Migration to Central and South America, 1850-1877

Claire Wolnisty
University of Kansas

2014 Winner of the James Madison Award for Excellence in Historical Scholarship

Introduction

In his 1866 book, *Brazil: The Home for Southerners*, Reverend Ballard Dunn likened his fellow former Confederates to a family of field mice that had been spliced apart by a plowshare. The Civil War, according to Dunn, had done nothing but transform southerners into victims. The people left in the southern region of the forcibly re-United States were the war-worn soldiers, the bereaved parents, the oppressed patriots, and the homeless and despoiled. In the face of such total devastation, Dunn asked, “[W]hy should we remain in a country, where we find that there is neither present, nor prospective, security for life, liberty, and property?”¹ Dunn chose to find security for his life, liberty, and property in Brazil. Far from being the farcical scheme of a bitter man who fought for the losing side in a war, Dunn's book was a carefully researched plan for colonization. Furthermore, Dunn was among many authors who advocated for North American emigration to Latin American countries during the mid-nineteenth century. As early as 1854, Lieutenant Herndon of the United States Navy wrote *Exploration of the Valley of the Amazon*, a two-volume work which claimed that the Brazilian empire would welcome U.S. citizens and their slaves into its territory. In *Hunting a Home in Brazil: The Agricultural Resources and Other Characteristics of the Country*, Dr. James McFadden Gaston urged his fellow southerners to leave the “disturbed state of society” in the United States and begin new lives in Brazil.²

Approximately 4,000 southern emigrants traveled to countries in Latin America before, during, and, most importantly for the purposes of this article, after the Civil War.³ What some scholars have dismissed as an “anomalous quirk” in the history of the mid-nineteenth century United States actually marks a change in perceptions about North American expansion.⁴ This

¹Ballard S. Dunn, *Brazil, the Home for Southerners* (New Orleans: Bloomfield & Steel, 1866), 5.

² Lieutenant Herndon and Lardner Gibbon, *Exploration of the Valley of the Amazon, Made under Direction of the Navy Department* (Washington: Robert Armstrong, 1854) vol. 1, 264; J. McFadden Gaston, *Hunting a Home in Brazil: The Agricultural Resources and Other Characteristics of the Inhabitants*, (Philadelphia: King and Baird, 1867), 298.

³ Exact numbers of emigrants are difficult to pinpoint since travelers did not always need passports and often did not leave records of their travels. Estimates for the number of Confederate emigrants who moved to Brazil during the few years immediately following the Civil War range from 2,000 to 4,000 emigrants for the year 1865 (Dawsey, 18). Southerners traveled to other Latin American countries in addition to Brazil. Mexico and Honduras were two of those countries. The availability of sources means that I will focus on southerners traveling to Brazil in this paper.

⁴ Cyrus B. Dawsey and James M. Dawsey, eds., *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*

article argues that southern emigrants to Brazil between the years 1850 and 1877 embodied a distinct brand of North American expansionism.⁵ Southern emigrants from states such as Texas, South Carolina, Virginia, and Alabama grappled with questions about North American identities as they left the geographic confines of the United States during the mid-nineteenth century.

Historians have begun to move away from looking at the Civil War as a national unit of analysis by placing this conflict in a global context.⁶ What historians have done to a lesser degree is include Latin America in their definitions of “global context.” Examining competing nineteenth-century notions of expansionism through the lens of southern emigrants is important because this exploration re-frames the trajectory of American expansionism as ideology. In addition, the subject can be seen as a way to connect the Civil War era in North America to a larger global context which included the south’s object of becoming a beacon of racial truth for the world.

Travelogues, diary entries, and newspaper articles in periodicals such as *The Charleston Mercury* and the *Daily National Intelligencer* allow historians to fill in the story of U.S.-Latin American relations that official state documents do not tell. Confederate ambassadors to foreign countries were notoriously inept or absent and Confederate ambassadors to Latin America were no different in this regard.⁷ As a result of this lack of official ambassadors sent from the Confederacy to Latin American countries, the correspondence between William Seward, President Lincoln's Secretary of State, and ministers in Latin American countries such as Honduras and Nicaragua are the only extensive state sources that constitute U.S.-Latin American foreign relations at this time. Exploring how southern emigrants rejected the dominant antebellum ideas about North American expansionism, such as creating a slave empire through military conquest and “regenerating” local populations, requires moving away from international history, which emphasizes the role of state actors on a world stage. Employing a transnational approach to studying southern emigrants, in contrast to international history, highlights the agency of individual, often civilian actors.⁸

While southerners traveling to Brazil in the aftermath of the Civil War did not represent any official sovereign entity, they did embody two important aspects of nineteenth-century life in the Western Hemisphere: expansionistic ideologies and emigration. There was more than one expansionistic ideology in the antebellum United States at this time. Sectional interests, such as the perpetuation or abolition of slavery, interpretations of the Monroe Doctrine, or trade routes

(Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1995), 66, 67.

⁵ Due to return emigration, the death of original emigration leaders, and loss of interest in colonial enterprises, most of the original southern “colonies” had dispersed by the year 1877, which is why I chose it as the ending date for my study.

⁶ For examples of this historiographical trend, see *The Union, The Confederacy, and the Atlantic Rim*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995), a series of essays edited by Robert E. May, *King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959) by Frank Lawrence Owsley, Sr., and *Debtor Diplomacy: Finance and American Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era 1837-1873* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) by Jay Sexton. Only inklings of ties between North and South America have appeared in short discussions about Lincoln's correspondence to the ministers from Granada and San Salvador. See Dean B. Mahin. *One War at a Time: The International Dimensions of the American Civil War* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1999), 264) as well as Jay Sexton's analysis of the Monroe Doctrine.

⁷ Nathan Ferris, “The Relations of the United States with South America During the American Civil War” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 21 vol. 1 (February, 1941), 52. The Confederacy's small lack of navy also made it hard for it to send ambassadors to almost any country, especially European nations such as England and France.

⁸ Ian Tyrrell, *Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 6.

connecting the Mississippi Valley to the Amazon Valley, outweighed notions about the United States expanding its national borders to the benefit of all states and regions.⁹ Like antebellum southern advocates for expansion, southerners immigrating to Brazil after the Civil War possessed motivations for traveling that were regional in nature. Unlike their expansionistic filibustering predecessors, however, southern emigrants to Brazil endorsed ideas devoid of nation-building rhetoric. Southerners promoted escapism and individual enterprise in Brazil instead of advocating for the creation of an Anglo-Saxon slave empire in the West and Latin America.¹⁰

The nineteenth century was a time of great population mobility in the Western Hemisphere. The influx of immigrants affected urban centers in the United States more than rural, as the populations in urban areas increased three times more quickly than the country's population as a whole. Both native-born and foreign emigrants moved west, as well as to urban areas, in an effort to make better lives for themselves.¹¹ Southern emigrants to Brazil, like other people emigrating within the Western Hemisphere, formed emigration societies, employed steamships, and encouraged families to emigrate together. In direct contrast to the majority of emigrants leaving cities such as New York and New Orleans before the Civil War, however, southern emigrants left the “dis-United States” altogether.¹² They did not seek the approval of southerners who remained in the south, and southern emigrants did not travel to regions of North America that fell under the North's jurisdiction in the aftermath of the Civil War. Southerners moving to Brazil bring attention to the fact that people emigrated out of the United States during the nineteenth century as well as to and within the United States.

The immediacy of the Civil War during the years 1861-1865 understandably took precedence over schemes to invade different geographic regions with personal armies for the purposes of creating new empires. It was not certain that the South would survive in its own geographic regions, let alone if it could flourish in other geographic areas. As a result of the need to simply survive the war, Robert E. May argued in *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire*, “The dream of a Caribbean empire became one of the first casualties of the Civil War.”¹³ Southern emigrants were still interested in expansionism after the end of the Civil War but they shunned the militaristic methods of their expansionistic predecessors.¹⁴ They had no desire to continue the

⁹ The Monroe Doctrine stated the United States' opposition to European intervention in the Western Hemisphere. Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire 1854-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1973); Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011); J. Valerie Fifer, *United States Perceptions of Latin America 1850-1930: A 'New West' South of Capricorn?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 7.

¹⁰ I use the terms “filibuster” and “filibustering” to refer not to long-winded speeches but to men who raised their own personal armies and annexed geographic regions regardless of whether or not they gained official government sanction for their actions. Robert May argued in *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire* that, “[D]reams of a Caribbean empire became one of the first casualties of the Civil War” (247). For an example of a filibuster who promoted the creation of a slave empire in Latin America see William Walker's *The War in Nicaragua*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985).

¹¹ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), xiii, 42-43; Robert E. May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 94-96.

¹² Qtd. In Andrew F. Rolle, *The Lost Cause: The Confederate Exodus to Mexico* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 115.

¹³ Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 247.

¹⁴ Filibusters such as William Walker required each of their male emigrants to register in a military muster roll. For filibusters, male emigrants and soldiers were one and the same.

devastation of war in a different country. Southern emigrants traveling to Brazil endorsed peaceful emigration efforts through fostering familial loyalties.

Lives in Brazil

While the majority of white southerners may have eventually been deprived of their identities as slaveholders after they moved to Brazil, they still tried to distinguish themselves from the Brazilian population by highlighting what they saw to be distinctly southern contributions to Brazilian culture. Southerners embraced new roles as reformers and social progressives. They targeted Brazilian understandings of gender roles, religious customs, medical practices, management of slaves, and mechanizing agriculture when identifying what they needed to improve.

Some southerners identified gendered social norms as needing reform. According to Julia Louisa Hentz Keyes, a woman who traveled to Brazil with her immediate family, Brazilian women did not have nearly the same number of opportunities that North American women had, and more often than not rarely left the confines of their homes. If women did move out of the home and into more public streets, Keyes explained, they always traveled with a cohort of servants or in the company of a man.¹⁵

Keyes considered such gendered practices of movement to be restrictive. Furthermore, she assumed that Brazilian women would want the same freedom of movement that she experienced when she built up her home in Reverend Dunn's colony. She furthered this notion when she claimed that Brazilians wanted more education for their women after seeing their newly emigrated American counterparts. The purpose of this education was to make Brazilian women more like the women of North America.¹⁶ Keyes was not alone in assuming that Brazilian women coveted the freedom of North American women. George Scarborough Barnsley, a southerner himself, claimed that it was so rare for Brazilian women to leave their homes that Brazilians would stare at the North American women with envy as they went about doing their shopping in public street markets.¹⁷

Southern immigrants also dismissed Brazilian religious practices as comparatively unenlightened. As George Barnsley concluded about the state of religious affairs in Brazil during the mid-nineteenth century, "[I]n general there is much stupidity and much apathy."¹⁸ The dominance of Catholicism in Latin America was a serious concern for the predominantly Protestant southerners. James Gaston worried about keeping the Sabbath and finding a Protestant service in "this papal dominion" when he explored various tributaries of the Amazon. American expansionists worried about the negative influences of Catholicism on a people, claiming Catholics were "in the most hopeless darkness" and that Catholicism "induces a worse state of the heart, in

¹⁵ "Our life in Brazil" in the Julia Louisa Hentz Keyes Reminiscence #1672-z, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

¹⁶ "Our life in Brazil" in the Julia Louisa Hentz Keyes Reminiscence #1672-z, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

¹⁷ "Original of reply to a Circular asking for information of the Ex-confederates emigrants April 1915 by Dr. George Scarborough Barnsley" in the George Scarborough Barnsley Papers #1521, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

¹⁸ "Notes on Brazil during the years of 1867 to 1880 by George Scarborough Barnsley M. D." in the George Scarborough Barnsley Papers #1521, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

regard to holy things.”¹⁹ Spectacle elements of Brazilian Catholicism, such as parades and public celebrations commemorating feast days, belittled the local religion in the eyes of southerners. Julia Louisa Hentz Keyes judged Catholic Brazilians in a June 28, 1868 letter: “The religion, as we see it, consists in priests, procession tinsel show, shooting fire crackers, and making other pyrotechnic displays.”²⁰ For many North American expansionists, Catholicism and Spanish colonies in Central and Latin America went hand in hand. Catholicism, in addition to racial mixing, defined the decline of the Spanish Empire.²¹

Southerners told themselves that Brazil was not in danger of declining like its neighboring former Spanish colonies, however, because it was enlightened enough to practice religious tolerance.²² William Scully, one of the first southerners to explore Brazil as a possible home, reported, “Religious opinions of all kinds are respected, and though a Roman Catholic country, the Government pays Protestant clergymen for the benefit of the German colonists.”²³ Such religious tolerance was especially important to congregations following emigration leaders like the Baptist Reverend Ballard Dunn, because some Baptists saw religious tolerance among upper-class Brazilians as the first step towards conversion.

Southerners could not ignore the Catholicism of Brazil but they could emphasize that Brazilians were religiously superior to their Latin American neighbors, in that Brazilians were tolerant of Protestant religious practices and separated Catholicism from their code of law. As slave trafficker Major Robert Meriwether explained about the relationship between religious toleration and conversion, “The Portuguese translation of the New Testament is, if possible, more emphatic in describing baptism than the English translation. The presence of our people here had had, and is having, a salutary influence upon the feelings and opinions of this people.”²⁴ Meriwether thought that Baptist religious ideas were superior to Catholic ones, but he was also willing to acknowledge religious accomplishments in Brazil, such as a translation of the Bible.

Southerners frequently critiqued medical practices in Brazil as well as religious and gendered practices. George Scarborough Barnsley had firsthand knowledge of medical malpractice. When George went to a Brazilian dentist because he had a toothache, the dentist pulled the wrong tooth.²⁵ In an understandably vindictive mood, George claimed that Brazilian doctors really did not know that much about medicine and that they were more likely to murder patients than to help them.²⁶ Early travelers and southerners must have spread the word about the lack of adequate medical services and “ignorant and lazy” physicians in Brazil, because an unusually high number of men traveling to Brazil after the Civil War claimed to be doctors, especially dentists.²⁷

¹⁹ Gaston, 72, 75.

²⁰ June 28, 1869 Mrs. M. B. C. Rivers letter in the Julia Louisa Hentz Keyes Reminiscence #1672-z, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

²¹ See Walker for an example of this rhetoric.

²² Brazil banished the Jesuits from its borders, but this was not concern for the Protestant southerners.

²³ Must cite original source, than say “quoted in Dunn...” Qtd in Dunn, 248.

²⁴ See above. Qtd in Dawsey, 109.

²⁵ Dawsey, 109.

²⁶ “Notes on Brazil during the years of 1867 to 1880 by George Scarborough Barnsley M. D.” in the George Scarborough Barnsley Papers #1521, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

²⁷ “Notes on Brazil during the years of 1867 to 1880 by George Scarborough Barnsley M. D.” in the George Scarborough Barnsley Papers #1521, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

When interviewed about his experiences in Brazil, George Barnsley could list and describe fifty-six people he knew in Brazil. Twelve of the people George listed, including George and his brother, Lucien, had some sort of medical training or at least described themselves as “doctor.” A full fifth of this particular group of immigrants were medical personnel. Among this percentage of the population was Dr. Keyes, the “father of dentistry in Brazil” from Florida and Dr. Sheppard of Louisville, Kentucky who worked in isolated villages throughout Brazil until his death. George concluded after surveying American dentists in Brazil, “American Immigration to Brazil by us ex Confeds, has been of good use and profit to this country.”²⁸ Southerners believed they brought scientific and commoditized forms of professionalized progress from the south to Brazil with them.²⁹

Proper management of slaves, much like enlightened ideas about gender roles and perceptions of medicine as professionalized science instead of traditional home remedies, was a central tenet of how southerners interpreted and improved upon supposedly inferior Brazilian practices. Southerners prided themselves on being able to manage slave labor better than their Brazilian counterparts. They measured that slave management success in terms of proper slave behavior and agricultural production output.

One summer morning James Gaston sipped his daily coffee and recorded a story about a group of slaves he watched arrive at a police station across the street from a café. The slaves gave themselves up to the police because they had killed their overseer after he treated them badly. Instead of incarcerating the slaves, who apparently numbered sixty-four, the police arranged for a train to take them back that afternoon to Leniz de Protes’ plantation from where they came. Gaston concluded about the whole chaotic situation, “This shows the crisis slavery has come to.”³⁰ Rather than approving of the fact that the slaves reported their crime to the local police, Gaston was appalled that they successfully carried out the crime in the first place. Furthermore, the police did not administer any justice to the slaves in the form of corporal punishment or imprisonment but let them return to their home unpunished. In Gaston’s view, the lack of proper management resulted in a serious lack of discipline among the slaves.

Perhaps more important than instances of insubordination among slaves were the low crop yields that southerners found in some parts of Brazil. Instead of attributing poor agricultural production to systems of slavery in Brazil, southerners targeted what they saw to be the poor management of that slave labor. George Scarborough Barnsley took a tour of various plantations across Brazil and called the “general industry of the Brazilians” “piddling” partially because “[t]he slave management is also badly conducive to procuring gain.” According to George, there was a “useless waste of labor” in Brazil which southerners could improve upon because Brazilian slave owners did not know how to organize their slaves in such a way as to maximize slave labor for agricultural production.³¹

²⁸ “Original of reply to a Circular asking for information of the Ex-confederates emigrants April 1915 by Dr. George Scarborough Barnsley” in the George Scarborough Barnsley Papers #1521, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

²⁹ Southerners in Brazil made a point of keeping up with the latest scientific discoveries and theories as evidenced by Julia’s remembrance of multiple conversations about Darwin’s theory of evolution and Dr. Barnsley’s extensive list of medical journal subscriptions.

³⁰ “Journal of Trip to Brazil July 1 1882-April 1, 1883 March 10, 1929-September 3, 1935” in James McFadden Gaston Papers #1470, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

³¹ “Notes on Brazil during the years of 1867 to 1880 by George Scarborough Barnsley M. D.” in the George Scarborough Barnsley Papers #1521, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

George Barnsley was not alone in making these assertions about slave management in Brazil. Andrew McCollam concluded after making a tour of Brazil, “The country was evidently once been in a better condition when slaves could be bought for \$100 they could afford to cultivate these lands but slaves at \$700 worked on such land by such people will not pay it.”³² Julia Hentz Keyes reached a similar evaluation when she wrote about how Brazilians judged North American agricultural enterprises, “Brazilians cannot understand how so much is made with so few hands.”³³ Importantly, these men and woman did not blame slavery itself for the decline of agricultural output in Brazil. Instead, southerners emphasized how Brazilians were handling and buying their slaves to explain why cotton and grain crop yields appeared to be lower than usual.

Slavery, when properly executed, was still a viable economic system according to men such as Andrew McCollam. Andrew still claimed that slavery was “the only reliable labor for this country” even after negatively evaluating the plantations he toured in 1866.³⁴ In a similar manner, a traveling southerner praised a Brazilian plantation owner who practiced “correct” slaveholding practices. The traveler is worth quoting at length because of the assumptions he ingrained in his evaluations of Brazilian plantation life. He concluded about a slave owner, whom he admired:

He is the first and only man I have seen who appears to to (sic) understand his triumph, he in his management, very much reminded me of some of our best cotton planters. There seemed to be a great deal of regularity and system in all his triumph and if one is to judge from what he saw I should think none of his colored people eat much older bread (?) and I should think it would do the people in the Northern portion of the U.S. called Yankees much good to reconstruct him as they have done us Southerners.³⁵

This anonymous traveler presented his ideal slavery system as an efficient system of production. He claimed that “regularity” defined this system, a word which implied precision and control over one’s environment, language not unlike the language of professionalized, and thus progressive, nineteenth-century medicine and science.

Southerners focused on mechanizing their agricultural pursuits in Brazil in addition to organizing slave labor efficiently there. During the early years of Charles Nathan’s stint as an emigration booster in Rio de Janeiro, he and his business associate, J. D. Porter, made sure that they established contacts at various machinery companies who would be willing to sell their products to southern emigrants. One of Porter’s main roles while he remained in the United States in 1867 was convincing machinery salesmen that it was worth their time to sell their products to southern emigrants. Porter cast a wide net while he looked for sellers. He visited the Mechanic’s Institute as well as the steam engine sellers, Hicks and Hale, in New York City. J. B. Bartlett talked to him about Murdock’s Automative Stave Machine. Porter met with Pool and Hunt, Baltimore agents for Leppels Turbine Wheel. Porter included representatives selling the Florence Sewing Machine in some of his meetings.

³² July 5th, 1866 letter in the Andrew McCollam Papers #449, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

³³ “Our Life in Brazil” in the Julia Louisa Hentz Keyes Reminiscence #1672-z, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

³⁴ July 5th, 1866 letter in Andrew McCollam Papers in the Andrew McCollam Papers #449, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

³⁵ “Brazilian Travel Diary” in Brazilian Travel Diary #5235-z, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Porter could not interest everyone in his emigration and colonization schemes, however. The Lehman Brothers, for example, refused to sell their machines to Porter because they did not think it would be profitable to ship their products down to Rio.³⁶ While Porter and Charles could not convince everyone to join in their efforts, their emphasis on procuring machines and agricultural tools for use in a Brazilian slave economy indicates that they viewed slavery as being compatible with technological advancements, and that they did not think that they could find adequate machinery companies in Brazil.³⁷

In addition to associating their economic practices with progress, southern emigrants valued agricultural economic enterprises in Brazil over military conquest. Lieutenant Herndon kept careful records about which crops would prosper in different regions of Brazil in *Exploration of the Valley of the Amazon*. He pinpointed the areas where the fields of cocoa and coffee only needed care and people before they would easily become profitable economic ventures for southerners.³⁸ James Gaston was especially enthusiastic in *Hunting a Home in Brazil* about the possibility of creating a new center for cotton production in Brazil. He concluded that, "Should the improved appliances and the skilled labor of the Southern States be applied to the culture of cotton here, I am satisfied the yield will exceed that of the lands in the United States; and it is likely that the amount of cotton grown in Brazil within a few years will affect very much the markets of the world."³⁹ In reference to cotton in Brazil, Ballard Dunn claimed, "[I]t cannot be denied that it has proved one of the mightiest engines of modern progress."⁴⁰ By advocating the cultivation of a familiar crop, cotton, Gaston and Dunn emphasized parallels between future, modern lives in Brazil and past lives in the South.

Many southern emigrants to Brazil actively embraced roles as planters and entrepreneurs. Dr. Pitts of Nashville, Tennessee boasted about his agricultural exploits in Brazil through a series of letters that the Charleston *Daily Courier* published on July 9, 1868. Not only had he raised four crops of corn, but he also grew cotton, pumpkins, potatoes, tobacco, sugar cane, and peas. Additionally, Pitts described in his letters how his neighbor, Robert Henry Riker, was building a saw and sugar mill with his half-brother and had "considerable money."⁴¹

Agricultural improvements were a central part of individual enterprise in Brazil. Southern authors were careful to point out when southerners could use their expertise in agriculture and technology to improve local conditions in Brazil. Roads and railroads were a key concern for southerners surveying the regions and considering making the move to Brazil as they would need to transport and sell their produce. Both Dr. James Gaston and Reverend Ballard Dunn kept records of the railroads that they found in Brazil as well as what areas were suitable for building future railroad tracks while they were surveying the country.⁴²

In Brazil, southerners could shape the nature of agricultural improvements. They did not

³⁶ October 14, 1867 letter from J. D. Porter to Charles Nathan in J. D. Porter Letters, #892-z, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

³⁷ October 14, 1867 letter from J. D. Porter to Charles Nathan in J. D. Porter Letters, #892-z, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Walter Johnson wrote in *River of Dark Dreams* about similar perceptions concerning the compatibility of slave labor and steam power within a successful southern economic system.

³⁸ Herndon, 84, 55, 264.

³⁹ Gaston, 354.

⁴⁰ Dunn, 226.

⁴¹ Author if known, "name of article," *Daily Courier*, July 9, 1868.

⁴² Gaston, 78; Dunn, 230, 236. Unlike future U.S. investments in Latin American railroad, these railroads in Brazil were not to be an economic end in and of themselves. See Fifer.

have to follow the mandates of an invading governmental force, such as the one they found in their former homes. Through the promotion of individual agricultural enterprise, economic imperialism in Latin America was beginning to replace the traditional nationalist regimes of the filibusters.⁴³

Southerners balanced what they saw to be their superior mechanical knowledge with presenting Brazilians as being able to adopt outside advancements and thus improve their own lives. In 1915, George Scarborough Barnsley remembered a Mr. Merriwether who traveled to Brazil with him. George recalled about Merriwether, “He had some money and settled above Santa Barbara. He purchased slaves, and I feel assured, was the first man who ever had a decent cotton –. His success was the reason of the introduction of the plough in the state. He had cotton and coffee until the abolishment of slavery in 1888 and then he went to S. Paulo and his plow is a novelty.”⁴⁴ George did tell his story partially to point out an example of a successful southerner in Brazil, but he also emphasized that Brazilians had never seen a plow before the arrival of a North American and that they were still in awe of it as late as the 1880s. Lest his audience write off Brazilians as being completely backwards and incapable of advancement, George characterized the introduction of novelties such as plows into Brazil as an opportunity for improvement. He concluded, “In the adoption of machinery the Brazilians show a mean talent.”⁴⁵ Southerners would not waste their energy on improving people who would not accept their improvements.

Brazilian Involvement

As much as southerners depicted themselves as progressive benefactors, they could not have gained a foothold in Brazil without the help of Brazilians. Brazilian aid was central to southern colonization enterprises. Both private and governmental support furthered southern interests in Brazil. Southern emigrant goals and travel patterns also lent themselves to Brazilian involvement.

Prominent Brazilians as well as upper-class southerners created emigration companies fostering Brazil as a destination for southerners. Dr. James Gaston described in *Hunting a Home in Brazil* how he witnessed the creation of a colonization society in Brazil on November 21, 1865. The officers in the society consisted entirely of upper-class Brazilian citizens who were dedicated to “expressions of favor” for the “advantage of emigrants from the Southern States.” Gaston concluded about Brazilian perceptions of southern emigration, “The people everywhere exhibit likewise the most cordial disposition to favor this movement.” Brazilian responses to southern emigration were more varied than Gaston depicted, but one way in which Brazilians favored southern emigrants was by arranging steamship passages for southerners leaving New Orleans for Lizzieland, one of the southern settlements. Other Brazilians helped southerners move into temporary homes in Rio de Janeiro before the emigrants established plantations and more permanent residences. Some prominent Brazilian families, according to Gaston, were even willing

⁴³ While on a much smaller scale than future enterprises, the southerners' emphasis on economic endeavors in Brazil foreshadows U.S. involvement in Latin America in the form of the United Fruit Company and the Panama Canal.

⁴⁴ “Original of reply to a Circular asking for information of the Ex-confederates emigrants April 1915 by Dr. George Scarborough Barnsley” in the George Scarborough Barnsley Papers #1521, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁴⁵ Notes on Brazil during the years of 1867 to 1880 by George Scarborough Barnsley M. D. in the George Scarborough Barnsley Papers #1521, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

to allow southerners to marry into their families.⁴⁶

Representatives of the Brazilian government, in addition to civilian individuals, endorsed Confederate emigration. On one occasion the emperor himself, Pedro II, extended a personal welcome to North Americans, “his new people,” as they landed.⁴⁷ Other individuals in the Brazilian government used their positions to help southern emigrants once they arrived in Brazil. William Lidgerwood, a U.S. government official, reported to Secretary of State William Seward in a June 2, 1866 dispatch how Consello Paulo Souza, minister of commerce, agriculture, and public works, wanted to create a telegraph line between Brazil and Washington which would allow southerners to communicate with potential future emigrants. The emperor of Brazil supported the scientific expeditions of Professor Louis F. Agassiz, one of the first academics to systematize the study of the earth's natural history, to the Amazon basin.⁴⁸ Aurélio Cândido Tavares Bastos, one of Dom Pedro's advisers, created the International Immigration Society to promote free coastal navigation of Brazil, international commerce in the Amazon, and constitutional rights for Protestants.⁴⁹ Twenty years after southern emigrants began arriving in Brazil, United States newspapers recognized that the emigrants who still remained in Brazil owed that country a great debt for helping them to start a new life. According to *The Daily Picayune* of July 16, 1888, emigrants from North America to Brazil had “everything done for them” upon their arrival in Brazil.⁵⁰

Southern emigrants embodied a brand of expansionism that depended on the cooperation of the destination country. Unlike their expansionist and militant predecessors from the United States, southern emigrants could not always afford to dictate terms to Brazilians despite what they claimed. Instead, southerners entered into relationships with Brazilians which, while not always completely equitable, were far closer to partnerships than the relationships that southern sympathizers developed with Central Americans during the years before the Civil War. The need to make a living and the initial patterns of southern emigration dictated that southerners be open to creating these partnerships with Brazilians. Many southern emigrants would not have been very successful in Brazil otherwise.

Southerners who remained in Brazil often had to change their occupations multiple times or combine several occupations in order to make ends meet. Much of the early correspondence between George and Lucien Barnsley and their father detailed the Barnsley family's economic difficulties in the years after the Civil War. In September of 1868, Godfrey Barnsley despondently reported to his sons, “[A]ll my business matters go wrong and hope is all but extinct.”⁵¹ The Barnsley family members were able to keep afloat financially but only after the Barnsley sons tried their hands at multiple occupations before obtaining medical licenses allowing them to practice medicine in Brazil. At various times during their stays in Brazil, the men tried being gold miners, drug distributors, railroad investors, planters, dentists, and encyclopedia publishers.⁵² These

⁴⁶ Gaston, 211, 370, 183. Promoting potential connections to Brazilian families is a marked change in expansionist tactics.

⁴⁷ Hill, 43; Ferguson 33.

⁴⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 305, 311.

⁴⁹ Dawsey, 76.

⁵⁰ Author, “name of article,” *Daily Picayune*, July 16, 1888.

⁵¹ September 14, 1868 letter from Godfrey to George in the George Scarborough Barnsley Papers #1521, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁵² May 11, 1879 letter from Godfrey to George; September 14, 1870 letter from Godfrey to George; October 11, 1871 letter from Godfrey to Mollie (George's wife) in the George Scarborough Barnsley Papers #1521, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

occupations were not mutually exclusive for the brothers and the positions lasted for different amounts of time. Changing professions required the Barnsley boys to foster job leads among Brazilians who were more knowledgeable about local conditions than recent southern emigrants. The Barnsleys also had to separate their senses of self from holding a single career.

Southerners did prefer to work with other southerners, but the language barrier prevented the majority of southern emigrants from being completely self-sufficient when obtaining employment in Brazil. Many southern emigrants reported similar scenes on their steamship trips to Brazil. One of the most common scenes was of groups of people trying to learn Portuguese.⁵³ Some emigrants, such as the Barnsleys and James Gaston, eventually mastered the foreign language, but others were not so successful. One traveler predicted that learning Portuguese would prove to be the hardest obstacle for southerners once they arrived in their new home. He concluded, "I am satisfied some of our old people will never learn the Portuguese language."⁵⁴ Several southerners used translators throughout their travels and efforts to establish themselves in Brazil. James Hamilton Tomb, the former chief engineer for the Confederate navy, employed a German to speak in Portuguese for him while Tomb obtained a position in the Brazilian navy.⁵⁵ Both James Gaston and Joseph Weed commented on the variety of languages they encountered in Brazilian cities and recorded that they, or various men they met, often traveled with interpreters.⁵⁶ Using interpreters in conversations diminished the degree of control southerners possessed in their initial contacts with Brazilian movers and shakers because the process of translating words inherently shifts meanings and intentions. Employing a competent translator was a necessary arrangement for them to make, however. Failure to procure an interpreter could literally be life changing. George Barnsley, for example, endured a series of communication misunderstandings that resulted in his being unknowingly named the groom in a wedding ceremony.⁵⁷

Because southern emigrants focused on familial and local ties of loyalty when they initially relocated to Brazil, they were willing to cultivate Brazilian connections that would further their individual interests even if meeting their goals meant aligning with people who were not always "Southern in feeling" as James McMullen stipulated in his initial travel plans. Southerners encountered Europeans fairly regularly while they were in Brazil, in part due to Brazil's emigration policies. In addition to being translators for some southerners, Europeans were also neighbors and fellow settlers. When Julia Hentz Keyes described a village dance held close to her homestead, she made sure to mention that she heard a smattering of English, Portuguese, French, and German at the dance. Such variety of languages indicates the range of people living in close proximity to each other next to a colony founded by southerners called Docé.⁵⁸

⁵³ Notes on Brazil during the years of 1867 to 1880 by George Scarborough Barnsley M. D. in the George Scarborough Barnsley Papers #1521, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁵⁴ Brazilian Travel Diary in Brazilian Travel Diary #5235-z, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁵⁵ "Confederate Naval Memoirs" in the James Hamilton Tomb Papers, #723, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁵⁶ Journal of Trip to Brazil June 10 1865-November 9 1865 in James McFadden Gaston Papers #1470, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; August 30, 1874 letter from Joseph Weed to his wife, Sarah, in the Joseph W. Weed Letters, #2109-z, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁵⁷ "Original of reply to a Circular asking for information of the Ex-confederates emigrants April 1915 by Dr. George Scarborough Barnsley" in the George Scarborough Barnsley Papers #1521, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁵⁸ "Our Life in Brazil" in the Julia Louisa Hentz Keyes Reminiscence #1672-z, Southern Historical Collection,

People who were initially from different nations did not simply live next to each other in Brazil; they also depended on each other for survival. Julia Hentz Keyes described how their closest neighbors were the Seraphim family. The Seraphims, consisting of “Old Seraphim,” his wife, their two daughters, and their son, had always lived in Brazil. Despite her assertions of independence, Julia and her husband found themselves relying on the Seraphims for help on multiple occasions. When Julia’s children came down with fevers, it was Senorena, Mrs. Seraphim, who helped Julia take care of the children. When Julia was first setting up her home, it was the Seraphims’ son, “Antone,” who helped build her house. The Seraphim daughters, Josephine and Sophie, helped Julia clean her house right before she moved into it.⁵⁹ For the Keyes family, the practical elements of establishing and maintaining a home in a foreign environment with whatever help they could find outweighed any ideological declarations of spreading a distinctly southern way of living into Brazilian colonies.

Southerners who remained in Brazil through the 1870s defined their success in terms of meeting individual and familial goals. They acknowledged that large-scale colonization efforts were no longer possible but still characterized their lives as contented ones. Julia Keyes claimed, “You think I must come back to the States. This is so remote a possibility that I do not entertain it for a moment. I would not exchange countries.”⁶⁰ George Barnsley explained why southerners did not move back to the United States after he traveled back there for a visit. He reported when he returned to Brazil, “I was glad to get back to Brazil where I could do as I pleased, and perfect freedom to think as it suited me.” He also explained what he meant by living in perfect freedom: “[W]e have enjoyed peace, good health, how acquired some wealth, formed lasting friendships with the people, from and feared no interference of week [sic] creeds, doctrines personal freedom to move, to think, to act for personal pleasure or profit; while there exists all the most modern means for education in any and all professions.”⁶¹ This quotation reveals that George valued personal freedom with modern developments for himself and his family over any nationalistic goals.

James Gaston reached a similar conclusion when he claimed during his early explorations, “If I seek the good things of this life, it is that my family may share them with me. If I seek exemption from the cares and vexations of life, it is to shield them from annoyance.”⁶² Because these two travelers met their goals of freely providing for their families, they counted themselves as successful men. In their efforts to escape northern federal power in the south, southerners valued individual connections to family and friends over sovereign legitimacy. Personal connections were such a central part of creating colonies in Brazil that when individual leaders died or moved on to other interests, their Brazilian colonies faltered or only continued to exist in the form of independent plantations. Individually controlled agricultural pursuits on plantations instead of military conquests of nations defined southern experiences in Brazil.

Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁵⁹ “Our Life in Brazil” in the Julia Louisa Hentz Keyes Reminiscence #1672-z, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁶⁰ “Our Life in Brazil” in the Julia Louisa Hentz Keyes Reminiscence #1672-z, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁶¹ “Original of reply to a Circular asking for information of the Ex-confederates emigrants April 1915 by Dr. George Scarborough Barnsley” in the George Scarborough Barnsley Papers #1521, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁶² Journal of Trip to Brazil June 10 1865-November 9 1865 in the James McFadden Gaston Papers #1470, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Conclusion

Southern emigrants embody larger historical trends of expansionistic rhetoric and emigration in the nineteenth-century United States. Southern emigrants were, in some regards, the logical extension of sectional antebellum expansionist tendencies; they traveled to Brazil because they lost the Civil War. But southerners endorsed a unique brand of expansionism when they escaped the federal government of the north by following individual leaders into Brazil. Family and community ties were far more important to southern emigrants than establishing formal recognition from sovereign powers or winning military glory through conquest. Individual agricultural enterprise away from the prying eyes of a federal government and not a slave empire connecting North and South America was the ultimate goal of these colonists. Emigrants moving from the south to Latin America recognized that they needed to work with Brazilians if they were to be successful in their colonization process. Unlike their expansionistic predecessors who wanted to build new nations in South America and “regenerate” Latin Americans, southerners formed economic and cultural partnerships with Brazilians they described as genteel, slave-holding, and religiously tolerant people. While Brazilian aid helped southerners, it also did not dictate the entire nature of southern enterprises in Brazil. Southerners in Brazil could, in theory at least, take control of their own plowshares and live their private, modern lives in peace.