The Political Career of Henry Johnson

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THE POLITICAL CAREER OF HENRY JOHNSON

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF THE

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

AND

AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE

IN

PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY

ANNA MAY SCHMIDT

PONCHATOULA, LOUISIANA

JUNE, 1935

Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to acknowledge indebtedness to all who have encouraged and co-operated in this work, particularly to: Professor Walter Prichard for suggestions in the collection of information and in the preparation of this thesis; Dr. W. H. Stephenson who by his example has been an inspiration to all who do historical research; and Mr. J.A. McMillen for valuable service in the securing of materials.

Appreciation is also expressed to Miss Judith Major, Professor of Romance Languages, for encouraging interest in the subject and for her assistance in gathering material.
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CHAPTER I

THE FORMATIVE YEARS
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During the last quarter of the eighteenth century many brave and resolute settlers passed the Alleghanies and established themselves in the backwoods district south of the Ohio, which was claimed by the seaboard states of Virginia and North Carolina.1 These transmontane pioneers found their lot a hard one. At first they did little beyond the satisfying of their primary wants; finally, as their produce exceeded the needs of the family, they found themselves casting about for an outlet to market their surplus crops. The Mississippi River was the logical answer. Imbued with the ideals of a true democracy, these free and easy settlers were not at all popular with the Spanish officials, who controlled the commerce of the Mississippi after 1783.2 Not wishing to see a strong country develop as her neighbor and hoping to secure the whole of the Mississippi Valley as a buffer state between these aggressive colonists and the rich province of Mexico, the Spaniards attempted to close the river to American commerce and began a series of intrigues to separate the people of this region from their mother states.3 Loud was their protest when the officials at New Orleans closed the port, and it was not until the Treaty of Madrid (1795) that the disturbance was quieted. These concessions, found in the treaty on the part of Spain, might be considered the first step towards the gradual disruption of her

once great empire.4

After the ratification of this treaty and the subjugation of the Indians "the cloud which had hung so long over the frontier was lifted, and the Southwest now enjoyed its first era of prosperity. The wilderness roads were choked with prospective settlers hurrying out to take advantage of the boom in the land business."5

Along with one of the first bands of emigrants who had passed through the Cumberland Gap6 and traveled the road from Clinch Mountain to the Nashville settlement7 in Davidson County, Tennessee, was a certain Isaac Johnson, his wife Mary Durham, and their son.8 This boy, born September 14, 1785, in Southern Virginia, was Henry Johnson destined to be a political leader and wealthy sugar planter in the future state of Louisiana.9 The Nashville basin attracted many other settlers who were later to become leading characters in this western civilization.

Just how much influence these men had upon the development of Louisiana can be realized by a study of the lives of such men as Andrew Jackson,

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5 Abernethy, S.P., From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee, Chapel Hill, 1932, p.152.
6 Phillips, U.B., Life and Labor in the Old South, Boston, 1929, p.74. Cumberland Gap, at the present junction of Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky, was found in 1750 with a Cherokee path leading north for a long distance.
7 Abernethy, op.cit., p.156.
8 See appendix, letter number 4.
9 Lanman, C., Biographical Annals, Washington, 1876, p.228; The Daily Picayune, (New Orleans), July 26, 1866. Both give Tennessee as birthplace. The New Orleans Times Sept. 1, 1864, gives Mississippi. In Biographical Sketch of the Governors of Louisiana, Virginia is given. As there was no state of Tennessee at the time and the back country was uncertain in its exact relation to the sea-coast states, this mistake could easily be recorded. The Johnsons moved to Tennessee in 1790 and then to Mississippi in 1805.
Alexander Porter, Solomon W. Downs, Alexander Barrow, John B. Dawson, Donelson Caffery, and Henry Johnson.10

After the second attempt of Spain to close the port of New Orleans such pressure was brought to bear upon Jefferson by Tennessee and Kentucky that he became alarmed and tried to obtain an outlet by the purchase of the Isle of Orleans.11 The Louisiana purchase resulted not only in the removal of the blockade and the opening of the Mississippi River to American trade, but also gave rise to issues that lead to the "war for Southern Independence",12 which was the final step in the struggle for the domination of this territory beyond the Mississippi between rival institutions and political ideals in the North and South.13

This purchase caused a new movement toward the "New Southwest". The Johnson family was one of the first groups to follow this "lure of the West". The hunt for a new home ended in Wilkinson County, Mississippi, in that fertile delta region just north of the then Spanish Floridas.14 Henry Johnson, now a young man, was not satisfied; so he continued down the river and settled in the Attakapas region.15 In this he was not unlike many of the sons of families in the East and "Old Southwest" who were

10 These names cover a period from the Revolutionary days down to the present century. Other names might be added; these were chosen only as representative settlers.
12 Turner, "The Significance of the Louisiana Purchase," in Review of Reviews, vol.XXXVII, p.578. Such issues as Missouri Compromise, Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the civil war in Kansas were indirect causes of the war.
13 Ibid.
14 Gayarre, op.cit., Vol.IV, p.273, This was after West Florida revolution.
15 See appendix, letters number 2 and 4.
looking for an opportunity to better their condition in a new and un-
tried country. Lands, practically free, not only attracted the settlers,
but furnished them with the opportunity to work out their own careers.
Here was a way of escape for the poor, the discontented, the oppressed,
as well as the adventurous. In this newly acquired territory men of in-
itiative and worth could make the most out of what might be considered
very little in other places or under other circumstances. "Land speculation,
the opportunities of political preferment, and the advantages which these
growing communities brought to the practitioners of the law combined to
attract men of this class."

During Mr. Johnson's early life he must have studied law in Louisiana,
for in order to be able to qualify for a position in the court it was
necessary to be familiar with the Spanish, French, and English jurisprudence.
In 1809 he was appointed clerk of the Territorial Court of Orleans. This
position gave him further opportunity to study the laws and customs of the
new territory.

On May 1, 1811, Johnson received a commission as judge of the parish
of St. Mary. Governor Claiborne expressed his method of selecting judges
in these words:

In my official character, I can acknowledge no other dis-
tinction between the inhabitants... than personal merit.
In making appointments, therefore, I have been desirous

16 Turner, F.J., Rise of the New West, New York, 1906, p.77
17 This was before F.X. Martin worked to simplify the practice or
Livingston to codify the laws.
18 Rowland, Dunbar, ed., Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne, Jackson,
Miss., 1917, 6 volumes, Vol. IV, p.75. Cited as Claiborne's Letter
Books.
to select the most worthy and the most capable, keeping in view the expediency of dividing the offices as near as may be between the ancient and modern Louisianians, as one means of lessening the existing jealousy and distrust between these...citizens.

Claiborne must have recognized Johnson as a man of influence and prominence in his own community for when he planned his tour of the state, he accepted Johnson's offer of hospitality. That Johnson was recognized by his neighbors was attested in the fact that he was elected one of the delegates from the county of Attakapas to the constitutional convention called at New Orleans 1811-12. Besides Johnson the other delegates from Attakapas were Alexander Porter, W.C. Maquitte, Charles Olivier, Jr., and Louis Deblanc. Two of this group, Alexander Porter and Henry Johnson, were destined to participate in the political and civic organizations of the state in a similar capacity for many years to come. These two men played a conspicuous part in the convention, each serving on many committees. Porter served on the committee elected to draw up a memorial requesting that the limits of the state be extended so as to include West Florida, while Johnson served on the other important committee instructed to draw up or prepare an outline plan of the constitution. It was said that to these two men "we are principally indebted for

21 Journal of the Convention at New Orleans, 1811-12. (Photostat copy of the original at Harvard Library.) p. 3
22 These two men served in one office or another until the time of the death of Porter 1844, and the retirement of Johnson 1850.
23 Ibid., p. 4
24 Ibid., p. 6
25 Ibid.
the democratic features of that instrument”. 26 Besides their work on the actual constitution they did much toward reconciling the two elements in the convention. 27

Not only did Porter and Johnson combine their energies in drawing up what they considered a practical constitution, but their careers seemed to run along parallel lines throughout life. Both migrated from Tennessee to Louisiana and settled in the Attakapas county; both served on the bench and played a conspicuous part in local politics; both attained the place and distinction of wealthy planters and whig leaders; and both represented their adopted state at Washington for many years with much success.

After the constitution had been approved, the date for election was set for June 29, 1812. 28 Johnson was a candidate for Congress but was defeated by Mr. Martin Duralde. He was at all times a staunch supporter of the Claiborne administration which at this time seemed to be in dispute in Attakapas country. One of Claiborne’s letters to the central government was misinterpreted, his language perverted, and his feelings toward the creole population of the state totally misrepresented. All of this was done to injure Claiborne and his associates with these people
in political matters. Governor Claiborne wrote Johnson a letter explaining his message and pointing out the falseness of the statements.

Having failed to gain a place in Congress, Johnson turned to agriculture. In 1813, while he was living in Donaldsonville, he brought a tract of land in Lafourche parish near the present city of Thibodaux. The land valued at $3,000 was the first acquisition of Mr. Johnson in Lafourche Parish. From time to time he increased his holdings until at one time he owned a considerable part of the land fronting on Bayou Lafourche.

In 1818 upon the death of Senator W.C.C. Claiborne, Johnson was elected by the legislature to fill the vacancy. At the time Johnson was serving in the capacity of judge of the second District Court. In the absence of judges in some of the other districts, especially the fourth, Mr. Johnson had been acting as judge and holding court.

Johnson lost no time in taking up his duties at Washington, where he presented his credentials and was seated as a qualified member. Although Johnson was a faithful attendant at the meetings of Congress from 1818–24, he did not take a very active part in the debates on the floor. He favored the amendment to the U.S. Constitution which permitted the direct election of Congressmen and electors for president and vice-president; he supported the Missouri Compromise and was much pleased by the issuance of the "Monroe Doctrine" in 1823. This he thought helped Mr.

30 Conveyance Records 1813, pp.56-57. Located in the Parish Court House at Thibodeaux, Louisiana.
31 There are many accounts of purchases, sales, mortgage and release in the Conveyance Records of Lafourche Parish from 1813-1856.
33 Acts of La. Legislature, 3 Leg., 2 Sess., (1818), p.4. The act reveals the fact that Johnson was serving as judge in more than one district.
34 The New Orleans Times, Sept. 1, 1864.
Clay's "American System" and his policy towards the Latin American countries. The question of Indian trouble in Florida was one that absorbed much of his attention as chairman of the committee on Indian Affairs. As a member of the committee on Public Lands Johnson presented a bill to allow settlers to purchase the public land at lower rates; he also worked for the adjustment of private land claims in his own state.

In 1824 he resigned his position in the Senate to become governor of Louisiana. At the end of four years as chief executive Johnson attempted to regain his seat in Congress but was defeated by Edward Livingston.

Not long after this defeat Ex-Governor Johnson married Miss Elizabeth R. Key, daughter of the late Philip Barton Key, in Georgetown, D.C. on October 1, 1829. They returned to Louisiana and purchased a number of sugar and cotton plantations which when combined made up "Chatham Plantation."

56 Lanman, C., Biographical Annals, Washington, 1876, p.228.
57 Marchand, S.A., Flight of a Century in Ascension Parish, La. (Unpublished manuscripts in the possession of the author at Donaldsonville)
58 Ibid.
CHAPTER II

EXECUTIVE 1824-1828
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EXECUTIVE 1824-1828

When the Louisiana legislature met in the fall of 1824, one of its first problems was that of electing a governor. Upon opening the election returns it was found that Henry Johnson and Joseph Villere had received the largest number of votes. The members then proceeded to decide the question in accordance with the constitutional practice. Henry Johnson obtained forty-one out of the possible fifty-seven votes; therefore, a committee was directed to wait upon him, and to inform him that he had been duly elected governor of the state.

Ten days later Mr. Johnson took the oath of office in the presence of the general assembly and other dignitaries of the state. In his inaugural address the governor acknowledged gratitude to the people for their confidence in him, and being aware of the duties and obligations attached to the office, asked for their cooperation in carrying out a program of administration which would be worthy of the best efforts of all concerned. This program was to embrace many much needed developments in the internal resources and external relations of the state.

The new governor was a true son of the old school - courteous, chivalrous, well-bred, honorable, and talented - possessed of a keen insight into human nature and a strong sense of justice and right. He was a worthy man in private life and his administration was a very satisfactory one.

1 Louisiana Senate Journal, 7 Leg., 1 Sess., (1824), p.5
2 Ibid.
3 Gayarre, op.cit., Vol.IV, p.646
While in office Mr. Johnson enjoyed the position of being the highest paid governor in the United States. The salaries of other state officials were high in proportion to their importance. Due to the high cost of living in New Orleans it was necessary for the state to maintain these high rates. At the time of Johnson's inauguration the state debt was very small, and even though, during the next four years, there was a considerable amount of money expended for internal improvements - education and other public works - this figure was not enlarged a great deal.

A goodly amount of this work of improvement was provided for by lotteries authorized by the state legislature, stock companies, or improvement banks. When the lottery was not for a church, school, library, or any charitable institution, it became a source of revenue for the state because of the two and one-half per cent tax attached. Although the average number of lotteries were allowed during his administration, Governor Johnson disapproved of them because of the uncertain results, extravagant expense, and because it was a known fact that only about one third of the contributions was used for the purpose intended.

During the 1820's many people migrated into the new Southwest. Louisiana received her quota not only from the older states but also from foreign countries. The fertile soil of the lower Mississippi drew many planters, just as New Orleans furnished the chief attraction to the merchants. To prevent trouble between the different groups, aliens were prohibited by an act of the legislature from holding any military commission or civil

4 Niles' Weekly Register, Vol. XXXI, p.192, (1821-1822)
7 Louisiana Senate Journal, 7 Leg., 2 Sess., (1825), p.10
office unless they were in possession of such at the time of the passage of this bill. To police such a heterogeneous population it was necessary, upon the withdrawal of the United States troops to Baton Rouge, for the city to organize a corps of "Fencibles" to protect the citizens from danger. In the meantime a memorial was sent to the president requesting that a regular force of two hundred men be stationed in the city.

That the fears of the people were well grounded was shown in the case of the New Orleans fire of February 2, 1823, which destroyed the archives of the State, books and papers of the treasury office, and buildings in the vicinity of the government house. Several lives were lost and property to the amount of $500,000 was destroyed. Vagabonds that infested the city were accused of starting the fire. One of the supposed culprits turned state's evidence and disclosed all of the plans of his terrible associates.

After the fire the government was obliged to hold its meetings in the former convent of the Ursuline Nuns until other quarters could be prepared. It was at this time that the old arguments for moving the seat of government from New Orleans were again revived. In the early twenties the subject had been debated, and possible substitutes were suggested. None could be agreed upon, so the matter was dropped. The question had again been brought up in 1825, and it was decided to move the capital to Donaldsonville after a period of four years. In July, 1828, the governor noted that the state house was nearing completion at Donaldsonville and

8 Ibid., 7 Leg., 1 Sess., (1824-25), p.58
9 Niles' Weekly Register, (1823-24), Vol.XXV, p.52
10 Ibid., (1823) Vol.XXXIV, p.20
11 Ibid., (1821), Vol.XX, p.128; See appendix p.6.
that it would not be long before the legislature could assemble in its new quarters.

The arguments of those who wished to move the capital were of a reciprocal nature. They wished to keep the members of the assembly from participating too much in the gay life of the city and to keep the city from interfering too much in the affairs of government. Racing, theatre-going, gaming, and dueling were all too frequent. Although dueling was frowned upon by the majority of citizens, it continued to be practiced. Just why Donaldsonville was selected as the proper place for the capital is not known; however, some of the possible reasons can be guessed. First and foremost, it was near the home of Governor Johnson, which in itself must have carried considerable weight in the voting. The town was smaller so there would be less to distract the representatives or take them from their work. It was believed that the health of the town was better than that of New Orleans.

During his administration, Governor Johnson took every opportunity to help the movement for public education in the state. He took pride in the fact that the school funds were well managed and distributed with the right spirit. He believed in the establishment of colleges and free schools throughout the state so that the great mass of the people might receive the benefits of an education. "It should be the object of our particular endeavors to provide for the instruction of those who have not otherwise the means of disbursement necessary to obtain it."

The need of schools was felt here more than in other sections where the population was of a less heterogeneous nature and the difficulties

12 Ibid., (1824-25), Vol.XXVII, p.320
13 Louisiana Senate Journal, 7 Leg. 1 Sess., (1824-25), p.32
brought about by the merging of Anglo-American, French, and Spanish elements caused the teachers of the period to be "jacks-of-all-trades". They worked in partnerships in order to appeal to a broader clientele, but even with these precautions few schools continued under the same management more than a year or two.14

On account of Johnson's persistence and sympathy for the cause, the Louisiana College was established at Jackson in 1825 under the trusteeship of the governor, the judges of the superior Court, and twenty-eight other interested persons.15 The power and authority to direct, prescribe discipline, and arrange a program of studies, as well as appoint the teaching staff was vested in this group of men. The program consisted of English, French, Greek, Latin, logic, rhetoric, ancient and modern history, mathematics, and natural, moral, and political philosophy. The president and faculty served during good behavior. The institution was given the authority to grant such honors and degrees as were usual at that time. The gift of loan of a building was solicited until the state could provide better facilities.

The College of Orleans did not appear at this time to have attained the end for which it was created. The number of students in attendance was never very large. Mr. Johnson in speaking to the legislature said "The advantage of educating so small a number, can hardly compensate the expense which their instruction costs the state. Instead of such a College, which, from present prospects and many years experience, we cannot expect to rise much above the rank of a Grammar School, would it not

14 Noble, S.G., "Schools of New Orleans during the First Quarter of the Nineteenth Century," in Louisiana Historical Quarterly. Vol.XIV, p.67
he better to establish within the City of New Orleans, an (Sic) University where the Sciences of Law and Medicine, and the other branches of learning might be taught to those who have already completed their scholastic studies? There is some institution of the kind in every great state of the Union: Louisiana should not be without hers."16

Although the legislature did not follow the recommendation of Governor Johnson exactly, they did abolish the College of Orleans and organize in its place two primary and one central school. Since the career of the College of Orleans was never a happy one, it might be considered as one of the experiments which appeared during the early "national period" of America. Its most noted graduate was Charles E. Gayarré. It will live in history because of this and also because of the idea behind it. For a period of fifteen years its struggle to maintain an existence kept the public education issue almost constantly before the people.17

Governor Johnson was always solicitous for the diffusion of the benefits of education among the poor, and in order to render the country school more accessible to them a change was made in the distribution of funds in the parishes. Until 1827 each parish had received $800 from the state funds. By an act of March 14, 1827, each parish allotment was to be calculated according to the number of voters registered. They were to receive 2-5/8 dollars per voter; provided, however, that no parish obtained more than $1300 or less than $800.18

In this revival of interest in education Louisiana was to make more progress as the years passed; however, all movements need a foundation

16 Louisiana Senate Journal, 7 Leg., 2 Sess., (1826), p.7
17 Noble, loc.cit., p.78
18 Acts of Louisiana Legislature, 8 Leg., 1 Sess., (1827), p.80
upon which to work and this was provided during this time. Public education was still struggling against the idea of its being only for the poor, and a sort of stigma was attached to it. The retardation of the public school was due to a large extent to the grasp of the private schools on the whole field of education.

The establishment of the college at Jackson, and the central school at New Orleans acted as a stimulus to other parts of the state. At Baton Rouge an academy was established in 1827 and in the following year a Lyceum was incorporated in St. Charles parish. Trustees were appointed each, curricula drawn up, and lotteries authorized. Other institutions followed.

An interest in societies of an educational nature was aroused. The Law Library Society in New Orleans and the Agricultural Society at Baton Rouge would fall under this heading.19

Governor Johnson was very much in favor of organizing an agricultural society in Louisiana. In a message to the legislature in 1826 he stated that "the subject of agriculture is one which, from our local situation, and the exuberance of our soil, must ever be one of paramount interest to the state of Louisiana. It must constitute the foundation of her prosperity."

"In many states of the Union, agricultural societies have been formed, and in some instances fostered by legislative encouragement. With such incitement, those institutions have been productive of important results."20

He then pointed out the merits of an agricultural periodical or journal, saying it would be beneficial to the less informed and it would promote

19 Acts of the Louisiana Legislature, 8 Leg., 1 Sess., (1827), p.44
20 Louisiana Senate Journal, 7 Leg., 2 Sess., (1828), p.6
a spirit of inquiry into the various branches of agricultural economy.

The agricultural society incorporated in Baton Rouge was made up of fifteen interested planters and such other free white persons, twenty-one years of age, who might profit by association with the more informal members. It was given the powers of a corporation for a term of 50 years. The purpose or sole object of the society was the improvement of the agriculture of the State and the amelioration of the breed of horses, of horned cattle and others. The funds were not to exceed $50,000 and no authority to carry on banking business was included in the charter.

Internal improvements loomed large in the political difficulties in the early days of the republic. Since the constitution of the United States lacked any specific provision authorizing these improvements at national expense, those who were of the strict constructive type of politician prevented any large appropriation for roads or canals. Many politicians believed in advancing the frontier by means of internal improvements, but were not nationalistic in their attitude. Each wished to reap some reward for his particular section of the country.

The debate in Congress over the constitutionality or unconstitutionality of the subject under discussion did not hinder the individual states from taking action. Louisiana was not one of the lesser lights in this regard. It was a known fact that the agitation for canals and roads in Louisiana, although having met with little success until the 20's continued right along. Johnson, in his first message to the legislature mentioned the need for an organized effort and co-operation on the part of all the people in order to realize any benefits from improvements of transportation. The governor did not doubt that Congress had the power to appropriate the public money for improvements like the national road from Washington to New Orleans.
or the canal from the Mississippi River to Lake Ponchatrain, if it obtained the consent of the states concerned; however, he realized that whether the state got aid from the central government or not it would have to depend for the most part upon its own resources.21

In Louisiana Johnson observed that the improvement of canals and rivers could be done with the minimum amount of capital and labor. Since the state of the public treasury was not at the time in a condition to justify any appropriation for this purpose, Johnson advocated the organization of improvement companies." At all events, preliminary steps might be taken, with a view to having surveys made, and acquiring the requisite information."22 He realized that jealousy between sections would hold up legislation, and he attempted to show the people that local feelings and sectional interest should be laid aside, because the improvement of one part would reflect benefit on the whole state.

On account of Johnson's efforts in behalf of this subject and the crying need for better transportation and communication facilities a Board of Internal Improvements was created by the legislature in 1826. This board was to consist of five members, nominated annually by the governor and appointed by him with the advice and consent of the senate. The governor was ex officio member and president of the board. The purpose was to inquire into the objects relative to internal improvements, to ascertain what work ought to be recommended, and to select and arrange the order in which they would be undertaken. The members of the board were empowered to hire Louis Bringier, surveyor general of the state, and as many other engineers as needed to repair to the selected places and to

21 Louisiana Senate Journal, 7 Leg., 2 Sess., (1826), p.8
22 Ibid.
make the necessary surveys, measurements, plans, and to estimate the
probable cost of the works contemplated. They were required to make de-
tailed reports to the commission who in turn were to lay all such reports
before the General Assembly at its next session. The financial end of the
board was very simple. The commissioners and the governor served without
pay, although they received their traveling expenses, and such other ex-
penses attending the organization and operation of the board. The survey-
ors were to be paid, upon warrant of the governor, out of the appropria-
tion of $9000 set aside for this purpose. During the first year of its
operation only $4135.55 was spent. In view of the progress made in the
state during this time, this was a very nominal sum.

The first report of the commission contained much useful information.
Governor Johnson, upon giving the report, commented on the proposed road
to Washington and the canal connecting the Mississippi and Lake Poncha-
train and added:

"A work of such extent, involving so many consequences,
could not be undertaken without due reflection. Some
time would be necessary to procure information, to en-
gage public attention, and to increase general confi-
dence. These preliminary objects attained the means to
accomplish the desired end would be found in the
public spirit of our citizens, the liberality of the
states, and the munificence of Congress.

"The proposed canal from the Mississippi to the
Attakapas, invites particular attention. The route
from that section of the state to New Orleans, would
thereby be abridged forty or fifty miles, and natural
streams traverse the greater portion of the distance...

"On the west side, canal Cherame evinces the prac-
ticability of establishing, with very inconsiderable
expense, a navigable channel of communication between
Lake Barataria and Lafourche. From the point of junc-
tion with Lafourche, a few excavations of no great ex-

23 Ibid., 7 Leg., 2 Sess., (1826), p.72
24 Ibid., 8 Leg., 1 Sess., (1827), p.43
The completion of such a scheme offers inestimable benefits... A great body of the most fertile soil, particularly adapted to the growth of the sugar cane... would be brought into cultivation, and be productive of a rapid accession of population and resources to the state.

"A canal to the bay of Barataria and island of Grand Terre is also deemed an object worthy of your attention... Such a channel would facilitate the intercourse of our citizens and afford singular advantages in our trade with the rising states of Mexico and South America.

In the contemplation of these improvements, the mind is much more forcibly impressed by the sense of their results than by the difficulty of their accomplishment. From the information I have been enabled to obtain, it is believed that the construction of the works would not require a capital exceeding one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Apprehending, however, that the resources of the state may not, at this moment, be adequate to such an exigency, I would suggest a memorial from the legislature to Congress, showing the advantages to be derived to the United States from the execution of the work, and praying a grant of land on each side of the route to the Attakapas, to aid in defraying the cost. The public lands... would be enhanced in value....

The improvement of the navigation of the Bayou Plaquemine is certainly the first object requiring the attention of the Legislature. Upon that outlet, the people of the state are dependent for the transportation of their produce to market. If the Legislature shall not deem it expedient to make an appropriation for the purpose, two other modes present themselves; an incorporated company to receive subscriptions to which the state might become a contributor, or else the requisite sum might be raised by loan, an expedient by which some of the states have effected important ameliorations.

The most important act of the legislature to grow out of these recommendations was that which incorporated the company to construct the Barataria and Lafourche Canal. 26 The purpose of the act was to organ-

ize a political and corporate body in order to dig a canal to connect the Mississippi River and Bayou Lafourche. The capital stock was $150,000 to be divided into shares of $100 each. The stock was transferable at the current market price. The starting point for the canal was set at a certain plantation about five miles from New Orleans; it was to be at least 40 ft. wide and to provide at the lowest stage of water level accommodation for ships drawing six feet of water. The toll was fixed at one dollar a ton with a 50% discount for steamships on account of their machinery. A 15% profit was to be allowed; but if the income over and above expenses amounted to more than this on the invested money, then the toll was to be reduced. Another precaution, that showed that Governor Johnson and the legislators were alert, provided that in 20 years the state could buy out the corporation. In this we see that Johnson was willing to let private enterprise take the initiative and the responsibility of organization. When the concern was on a paying basis the state could take it over, thus proving that although he may have favored certain interests in the incorporation, he limited their sphere of action so that the great mass of the people could profit later on. Shorter links to join this canal were provided for later.

Such projects as the opening of Old River, the clearing of Grand Lake, the improvement of the navigation on Bayou Plaquemine and Bayou Pigeon, and that of making the Red River navigable from the lower falls to the Mississippi are just a few of the other important improvements begun, or at least provided for by this administration.

When considering the land communications, the subject of ferries and bridges is as important as the upkeep of the roads because of the
innumerable streams to be crossed. During Johnson's administration ferries were usually established by the police juries of the several parishes. Nevertheless many of the more important ferries were chartered by the state legislature.

In taking a backward glance over the first few years after the organization of the Board of Internal Improvements it can be said that it was one of the most progressive measures of Johnson's administration. All of which proved that the spirit of progress was stirring in Louisiana and promised immeasurable good to the people of the state and by their example to those of other states.27

Both the establishment of educational facilities and a system of internal improvements called for ways and means of financing these projects. A goodly number were backed through lotteries or taxes placed on lottery tickets and gambling houses, while others were backed by the state banks. When the first bank of the United States was refused a renewal of its charter, there sprang up over the country a mushroom growth of banks. Louisiana was no exception. The Bank of Orleans, established in 1811, was augmented in 1818 by the incorporation of the Louisiana State Bank with a capital stock of $2,000,000. The business of this bank was seriously encroached upon by the incorporation of two other banks - the Bank of Louisiana approved April 7, 1824, and the Consolidated Association of Planters of Louisiana, approved November 16, 1827.

To Mr. Johnson fell the task of establishing and organizing the Bank of Louisiana, although it had been incorporated by his predecessor. The capital stock of the bank was set at $4,000,000, one-half to be taken by the state in shares of $100 each and the remainder to be subscribed by

27 Niles' Weekly Register, (1821), Vol.XXI, p.170
individuals, companies, or corporations. The faith of the state was pledges for payment of the bonds. The bank was to continue until December 31, 1870 exempt from taxes either state or local in nature. Each branch bank received $200,000 as its capital stock, but was forbidden to lend sums exceeding $5,000 without the authority of the mother bank.

That such a bank was possible at this time was due to the prosperity of the country and the world at large. Capitalists in the East as well as those of foreign countries bought the bonds of the bank with the understanding that the state would guarantee payment.28

Profits must have accumulated rapidly for on March 24, 1827, a supplementary act was passed providing for the declaration of dividends every six months. A limit of $25,000 was set on loans secured by mortgage on immovable property. A resolution approved the same day provided that the state's share in the profits derived from the sale of bonds be used to the amount of $300,951.66 by the sinking fund administrators to pay off the bonds on demand.29

The other banking enterprise incorporated at this time, the Consolidated Association of Planters of Louisiana, was established and organized in the same way; however, its capital was only one-half as much as the other and was to be bought exclusively by planters. No yearly dividends were to be declared until the loans and interest were paid off.30 By a later act the state extended the recognized stockholder to the amount of $1,000,000. At the same time the faith of the state was pledged for all of the bonds.

28 Niles' Weekly Register, (1824-25), Vol XXVII, p.150
29 Louisiana Senate Journal, 8 Leg., 1 Sess., (1827), p.72
30 Act of the Louisiana Legislature, 8 Leg., 1 Sess., (1827), p.96
Against the last act the minority in both houses voiced an objection. They did not believe in the policy of pledging the faith of the state for the benefit of a small group of individual planters.\textsuperscript{31} Their complaint was as a matter of form but little attention was paid to it. Johnson sided with the planters in this, just as he was many times later to plead their cause and support them, for he believed if the planters prospered, the merchants would prosper and the state would be better off.

The planters were not the only ones of whose interest Johnson and the legislature were mindful. Another bank with a different purpose established for the needs of an entirely different group of people was the New Orleans Saving Bank Society. It was incorporated with the aim of encouraging habits of industry and economy among the laboring classes and obtaining for them the added advantage of security and interest.\textsuperscript{32}

The government of the state made use of the banks in the collection of taxes by requiring its agents to deposit the taxes in the nearest branch bank and then demanding that the mother bank make good these amounts. At a time when transportation was difficult and highway robbery not infrequent this facilitated matters greatly. Loans were also negotiated by the governor upon authorization of the legislature.\textsuperscript{33}

During the year 1825 Louisiana was honored by a visit of a very eminent, as well as beloved Frenchman, General Lafayette. When it became known that Lafayette was to make a visit to America, the French population of Louisiana were desirous that he include New Orleans and the State of Louisiana in his tour. A meeting was held in New Orleans and the mayor was requested to extend to Lafayette an official invitation to visit their fair city. A com-

\textsuperscript{31} Baton Rouge Gazette, Feb. 7, 1828, (Senate protest), Feb. 16, 1828, (House protest).
\textsuperscript{32} Acts of the Louisiana Legislature, 8 Leg., 1 Sess., (1827), p.124
\textsuperscript{33} Louisiana Senate Journal, 8 Leg., 2 Sess., (1828), p.49
mittee on arrangements was selected to prepare all things so that this visit might be an enjoyable one. When the news of his arrival at New York reached the city, one hundred guns were fired in his honor. 34

As no answer to the invitation of the city was received the legislature adopted a resolution to the effect that the governor send an invitation in the name of the state. This Governor Johnson did with much pleasure, feeling that it would reflect honor upon the state to entertain such a distinguished guest.

Lafayette accepted both invitations and a new committee with Governor Johnson at its head began the preparations for the event. A triumphal arch was erected in Place d'Arms that measured 63 ft. in height, 58 ft. in width, and 25 ft. in depth. This colossal ornament was built of imitation marble and decorated with statues and inscriptions. For living quarters the Cabildo was decided on the "the council chamber was turned into a handsomely equipped drawing-room; the arsenal made the dining hall, while the offices of mayor, secretary, and ... treasurer were converted into sleeping apartments". 35

Upon the arrival of Lafayette aboard the "Natchez", Governor Johnson and the committee repaired to the battlefield of Chalmette and extended him a hearty welcome. The other members of the party, his son and their friend, were introduced and presented to the company. The march to the city, a distance of about five miles, presented a spectacular scene. The first carriage drawn by six spirited horses contained Lafayette, Governor Johnson, General Villere, and Mr. Duplantier. They were followed by other

35 Ibid.
members of the visitor's party, dignitaries of state and city, judges of
the superior court, distinguished citizens, and representatives of the
military and civic organizations of the city and state. As they moved
toward the city the parade grew in volume.

Upon his arrival at New Orleans, Lafayette was received and wel-
comed by the mayor, who conducted him to his living quarters in the Cabildo.
A round of gaiety set in that caused "the visit of Lafayette to be a glad
series of gala days and festal nights".36

For the entertainment of these distinguished guests both the legislature
of the state and the council of the city had made an appropriation of
$15,000.0037 Besides these, individuals, clubs, and organizations sub-
scribed certain amounts. The Masonic Order was particularly prominent in
its desire to help. Although "his reception here (in Louisiana) was not
as splendid as in some of the other states, none received him with more
affection and cordiality".38

Acting upon Governor Johnson's suggestion in his message of January 2,
1827, the legislature, in order to show the gratitude of Louisiana to
Thomas Jefferson, passed a resolution, entitled "an act Offering a Tribute
of Gratitude to the Family of the late Thomas Jefferson".39 A gift of
$10,000 in state bonds at 6% was duly made.

So successful was the visit of Lafayette that the people requested
Governor Johnson to invite General Andrew Jackson to participate in the
celebration of January 8, 1828.40 The invitation was accepted and the
visit was considered a very successful one.41

36 Ibid, p.189.
40 Baton Rouge Gazette, May 5, 1827.
The slavery question during this period was very much unsettled.
The great majority of people were getting away from the old Jeffersonian idea of the equality of man. Jefferson's political theories were beginning to be questioned, and, although a few sons of the revolution still adhered to them and liberated their slaves upon death, as a reward for faithful service, the greater number had found it economically profitable to increase their holdings in this particular kind of property. With the invention of the cotton gin and the settlement of the new Southwest slaves began to be heard.

In 1826 Governor Johnson laid before the legislature "Resolutions" from five states in favor of and two states against the "Resolutions" of the state of Ohio recommending to the central government that it abolish slavery. "That resolution was presented for your consideration by my predecessor. The high source from whence these Resolutions emanate entitle them to respectful consideration." The governor said, "But however pure the intention in which that of Ohio may have originated, I cannot withhold the expression of my regret that it should have been proposed; nor can I help considering such attempts as unconstitutional in their character and dangerous in their tendency. They are justly regarded as tending to impair the validity of the right to a species of property which is as much guaranteed by the Constitution as any other, and even as an infringement of the sovereignty of the states concerned. Nor do they subserve the interests of an enlightened philanthropy inasmuch as they may awake in the minds of those who are otherwise quiet, and as happy as their condition will admit, a desire and hope of change extremely hazardous, and prompting to acts which would necessarily bring down upon them
calamities far greater than any which now exist. The evil in question has been entailed upon us by the mother country; an evil which the progress of things is tending to mitigate, and finally to remove. Being called upon to act on this delicate question, we should be unjust to ourselves were we not to express our opinion temperately but decisively."

Mr. C. E. Gayarré in his discussion of Governor Johnson's administration denounces him soundly for his apologetic attitude toward slavery. He seems to fail to remember that in Johnson's time many of the people still believed slavery to be an evil, and if it was possible to do so they would have freed their slaves. This was five years before the famous debate in the Virginia Legislature which followed Nat Turner's insurrection. Cooper and Dew had not as yet reached prominence for their activity in repudiating Jefferson's philosophy. In a word the pro-slavery arguments were not yet formed; cotton was not as yet "King"!

Mr. Gayarré made much over Johnson's veto of a bill "more effectually to prohibit free negroes and persons of color from entering into the state." Although he quotes Johnson's reasons as direct quotations from the messages of the governor, the present writer has been unable to find such a bill. According to Gayarré the governor's grounds for the veto were: first, congress is given in the eighth section of the second article of the constitution the reserved power to regulate commerce with foreign nations and between states; second, free negroes or persons of color might be a Frenchman or Englishman, and to prohibit entry might lead to the in-

44 The fact that Gayarré wrote this part of the history during the civil war must surely have caused him to read into the actions of Johnson, feelings that did not develop until later.
fringement of the treaty making power; third, the constitution insures to the citizens of each state all the privileges and immunities of citizens of the several states. Mr. Johnson explained that in some states the people mentioned are citizens in the full sense of the word.

Such a strict construction of the constitution was not the usual attitude of Johnson, who advocated government aid for internal improvement and a high tariff. His contemporaries showed no surprise in his views nor did they protest them.

In summarizing the period of Johnson's administration it might be said that he was more or less of a liberal. Having adopted Louisiana as his home he served her with all the powers in his possession, be the position great or small. Although the years 1824-28 were not marked by spectacular service on his part, he did perform his duties with efficiency and dispatch. No act seemed too small to be given his personal attention and scrutiny.

His farewell speech as governor threw light on the conditions of the state as he left it:

In taking a retrospective view of the conditions of our common country...we find the strongest motives to the renewed expression of our gratitude to the Omnipotent Ruler of the Universe, for the numerous evidences of his peculiar favor. Among other nations of the earth, the elements of deadly animosities are at work....whilst through our wide extended common wealth the jarrings of their conflicting interest and passions are unfelt, or perceived only as a subject of remote interest and abstract speculation. And whilst, with the exception of some slight commercial interest to be adjusted, our political relations are peaceful and harmonious. At home, we continue to advance in resources, in national strength and prosperity.

46 Gayarre gives "Executive Journal" as his source. A search of the papers and journals of the time have failed to show any protest. Gayarre must have gotten his information from Martin.
47 Baton Rouge Gazette, Nov. 29, 1828.
Of the flourishing state of Agriculture and commerce we have the best evidences in the number and activity of ships and steamboats which throng our harbours, the extent and beauty of these edifices which are rapidly springing into existence in this city, outstripping the improvement of any former period, and in the luxuriance of our fields, affording the most liberal promise of remuneration to the industry and skill of the inhabitants. With a soil and climate, yielding abundantly the most invaluable products, and with civil order, never had any people more potent incentives to labour to improve the advantage of their lot, and attain that high degree of wealth, power and happiness which providence has been pleased to place within our reach.

In performing the important duties we are called upon to fulfill, let us proceed from the impulse of patriotism and brotherly kindness. Discarding all angry feelings growing out of party strife, let us unite as members of the same family, having a common interest, in directing our minds to the single object of the public good. One of the most admirable provisions of our government is that which guarantees to every man a right to form and express his opinions upon all subjects; and if discrepancy of opinion could form a just ground of censure there is no man, however pure his morals, or enlightened his understanding, who could claim exemption from the reproach.

No subject requires your attention more than the state of our roads and levees — We are constantly admonished of the inadequacy of the existing laws respecting them. It is believed that the care and regulation of them should be placed more immediately under the control and superintendence of the state. The proceedings of police juries, to whom these objects are entrusted, are in many instances wholly inefficient. On Lafourche particularly, for a considerable extent, the roads have been impassable for years, during the season of highwater.

To diminish the evils arising from the periodical inundation of the Mississippi ... a portion of the surplus water should be carried off by outlets leading into the lakes and the sea, and canals should be cut through the points so as to shorten the course of the current. ...It is only a matter of surprise, that in our state ...we should have contributed so little to make these a advantages available: — More especially when it is considered that the requisite expenses will be small in comparison with the prospectus benefits. Yet it must be admitted that from the measures already adopted, much may reasonably be anticipated.
A portion of the contemplated canal from New Orleans to Atakapas, to wit: from Lafourche to Terre Bonne, has been nearly completed by individual enterprise. . . . It is manifest that the government would consult its own best interest, in conceding to the state, for the purpose of the publicly aiding in the accomplishment of the work, a portion of the public lands bording on the route. The friendly disposition evinced by the Congress towards this state, as well as the liberal grants recently made by them to other states for similar purposes, offer the best reasons to believe that the appeal would not be made in vain.

In conformity to a resolution of the last session, the Board of Internal Improvements have examined the isthmus of land between the Mississippi and Lake Ponchartrain with the view of ascertaining the most eligible route for a canal. . . . The Board are of the opinion that a canal can be opened from the Mississippi, near the upper limits of the Fauxbourg St. Mary, or from the end of Canal Street go the Bayou St John, a natural stream which was used long before the Orleans Navigation Co. was organized. . . . The Canal Carondelet. . . . is totally inadequate to the present exigencies of commerce.

. . . . I am still of the opinion that the works could be best executed under the authority of the state, receiving the aid of the National Government in subscriptions for a portion of stock; and for this purpose a company might be incorporated to construct the canal at a point to be fixed on by the United States with the approbation of the state. Congress has authority for such subscriptions, in other states, for objects chiefly of state utility.

I would also call your attention to the utility of railroads. Those established in other states of the Union and in Europe furnish the best proof of the great facility with which these advantageous modes of conveyance might be constructed here.

A serious evil has arisen from the great number of vicious slaves recently sold in this state, which calls loudly for the effectual interposition of the Legislature.

The expediency of enlarging the jail of this city, or providing other means for the security and employment of prisoners is again submitted. . . . and I again suggest the propriety of providing in each parish a fire proof house for the public archives.
I have, after particular examination, designated two townships of land by Congress to this state, for the support of seminaries of learning, and the United States surveyors are now engaged in making the necessary surveys....

Twenty-five years have elapsed since the transfer of Louisiana to the American Government, and although we have abundant reason to rejoice at our happy condition and to acknowledge in other respects the wisdom and justice of the United States towards us, yet it is certain that the prosperity still exercised over the public lands. . . . I would suggest the propriety of a memorial to Congress on these several subjects.

An opposition to certain acts of Congress has been recently manifest in some of the sister states, even indicating a threat of separation from the Union.−−However oppressive those acts may be in their operation upon the southern states, the character and extent of the opposition is deeply to be regretted.−−The charter of our liberty is too sacred to be sported with. Separate the Union, and our free institutions may be forever destroyed. But these symptoms of partial discontent afford no just ground of alarm. The character of the American people, the devotion they have displayed to the principles of true liberty, and to the constitution which is its Palladium, afford a sufficient pledge for its preservation. We have enjoyed too many proud recollections to doubt the durability of our federal government. All attempts at disunion or consolidation will be met by the frowns, and if necessary resisted by the arms of an indignant public.

. . . However much my services may have fallen short of public expectation, I shall carry with me the consciousness of having zealously employed my best efforts to advance the true interest of the State. Having witnessed its progress from a Territorial Government to the proud rank of an independent member of our great confederacy, I congratulate you, my fellow citizens at large, on its present auspicious condition, offering my fervent prayer to the Almighty that its prosperity may be perpetual; and transferring the government to abler hands, I should in justice to my own feelings were I to refrain from again expressing my heart felt sense of the obligations which I owe to the people of Louisiana, for
the many distinguished honors they have conferred upon me, and for these proofs of their confidence and esteem which I shall ever cherish with the most grateful remembrance.

Henry Johnson

New Orleans, November 18, 1828.
CHAPTER III

REPRESENTATIVE 1834-1839
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REPRESENTATIVE. 1834-1839.

After the disappearance of the old Federalist party the Republicans dissolved themselves into factions. Being without opposition from without, that important element was found within the party in its earliest days and resulted in a split. This was an era of popular leaders. The followers of Adam and Clay were dubbed National Republicans, and the supporters of Jackson and Van Buren were called Democratic Republicans. The latter disliking everything connected with Clay dropped the "Republican" part and simply called themselves Democrats. Clay and Adams found many supporters in the southern states of Maryland, Kentucky, and Louisiana.

A very timely visit of Henry Clay to New Orleans in 1830 did much to arouse enthusiasm in the National Republican party. A public celebration was planned in his honor, supervised by Jacques Villere assisted by such notables as Henry Johnson, A. Beauvais, E. Mazureau, and D. Bouligny. He also visited "Oak Lawn" and "Chatham" plantations, the latter was the home of Henry Johnson.

By 1834 this party was well established in Louisiana and the majority of the planters belonged to it. They were in favor of Clay's "American System" - a high tariff, strong banks, and internal improvements - and called themselves Whigs.


3 Cole, op. cit.
A prominent member of this party, Ex-Governor Johnson, "upon repeated solicitations" yielded to the wishes of his friends and became a candidate for a seat in the National Legislature. "Governor Johnson was a high minded honorable man, and well qualified to represent the interests of the citizens of the First Congressional District of Louisiana." He was well known to the public and had little trouble in defeating his competitors, Messrs. Gayarre and Nicholls. The election returns showed a great victory for the new party. They not only succeeded in electing Johnson but also Mr. Garland to the House of Representatives from the Third District and Governor White, and a large number to the state legislature.

During the next fifteen years the Whig Party was at the height of its power. It elected two presidents, Harrison and Taylor, both Military Heroes. During the first six years following 1834 Johnson served in the House, while during the last six he was in the Senate.

Mr. Johnson was well qualified to represent the best interests of the citizens of Louisiana. His rise to a place in the House acted as a natural step in his political career. Upon his arrival at the capital he pursued a policy that acted as a follow-up program to his work as the governor of Louisiana in 1824-28. At that time he had advocated appeals to the central government for aid in the construction of internal improvements. Now he was able to act on his own advice and lost no opportunity...
to present petitions and resolutions that benefitted his state. The improvement of navigation on the Mississippi and Red Rivers was the subject of a constant stream of petitions. Appropriations were asked for light houses, drainage systems, public roads, and above all the continuation of the work of removing the obstructions to navigation at the mouth of the Mississippi River.

Since Johnson's efforts toward getting federal aid for internal improvements did not meet with as much success as he desired, he advocated that the government grant to the states certain lands for this purpose. He argued that in the original states certain lands had been used for improvement but the new states were without that resource and therefore should be helped either directly or at least encouraged by liberal grants of land. The question of land claims, Mr. Johnson declared, had dragged along without settlement for thirty-four years and had retarded the growth and prosperity of his state.

The problem of slavery in the District of Columbia presented a vital problem for statesmen of that day. With the westward migration, the invention of the cotton gin, and the spread of cotton culture, slaves were in great demand. Men forgot Jefferson's ideals in the face of economic advancement. The pro-slavery arguments were perfected. The states of Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina saw the advantage of sending their surplus slaves to the new Southwest where they received a good price for them. Certain cities in these exporting states were notorious as stations

8 Congressional Debates, 24 Cong., 1 Sess., (1836), p. 197.
for accumulation of the slaves and trade centers. Alexandria, then in the District of Columbia, was one of the most important for the trade sent over land. New Orleans was the distribution center for the importing states. Planter, who sent their crops to New Orleans, visited the slave dealers whenever their stock of field hands or domestics ran low.

In the north, since the middle 1820's, certain abolitionist groups were at work attempting to obtain immediate emancipation of the slaves. Besides this agitation the distribution of papers, pamphlets, and circulars was the favorite method employed by this group to spread their opinions. So heavy was this kind of mail that in 1835 a mob attacked the post office at Charleston and made a bonfire of this abolitionist propaganda.

Congress was besieged with petitions to take action on the slavery question or at least to do away with it in the District of Columbia. The debates that invariably followed covered considerable space in the journals of the two houses of Congress. The members from the southern states felt themselves called upon to defend their institution and demand their rights.

Johnson, upon entering the debate, stated that he could not see the reason for so much useless talk upon the subject, but since he came from a state deeply interested in the question, and being a slave owner himself, he considered it a duty to offer a few remarks. As a

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16 Dabney, V., Liberalism in the South, Chapel Hill, 1932, p. 106.
17 McMaster, J. B., A History of the People of the United States, 8 volumes, New York, 1898, Vol. VI, pp. 272 and 291. The district was looked upon as a weak point through which the first attack should be made on the state.
representative of a group of "ardent and brave people" who were attached to family and property, he could not sit silent when their lives and property were endangered by fanatics. According to Johnson, Congress had no power to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia or anywhere else. He believed that such a step would "convulse the whole Union". The South would not submit to this step as it was the aim of these agitators to effect complete emancipation. If Congress passed such an act, Johnson felt that it would be resisted by the combined powers of the southern states acting in defense of all that was dear to them. He offered the recommendations that all such petitions be rejected and that a resolution be passed to the effect that Congress had no power to legislate on this subject.

A select committee was appointed by the House to look into the matter and make a report of its findings. When this committee made its report, the chairman presented these resolutions:

Resolved, That Congress possesses no constitutional authority to interfere in any way with the institution of slavery in any of the States of this Confederacy.

Resolved, That Congress ought not to interfere in any way with slavery in the District of Columbia.

And whereas it is extremely important and desirable, that the agitation of this subject should be finally arrested, for the purpose of restoring tranquillity to the public mind, your committee respectfully recommend the adoption of the following additional resolutions, viz:

19 Baton Rouge Gazette, Feb. 23, 1828. In the case of Marigny D'Autterive the Committee on Claims in reporting the case said that a slave was property only in one sense, but a person in another.

20 Congressional Globe, 24 Cong., 1 Sess., (1836), p. 161. The Committee was appointed on Feb. 22, 1836 consisting of Congressmen Pinckney, (S.Car.) Chairman, Hamer (Ohio), Pierce (N.H.), Hardin (Ky.), Jarvis (Me.), Owens (Ga.), Muhlenberg (Pa.), Dromgoogle (Va.), Turrill (N.Y.).

21 Ibid., p. 383.
Resolved, That all petitions, memorials, resolutions, prepositions, or papers, relating in any way, or to any extent whatever, to the subject of slavery, or the abolition of slavery, shall without being either printed or referred, be laid upon the table, and that no further action whatever shall be had thereon.

As soon as the reading of the report was over, many of the members rose to denounce it and voice protest. Some claimed these resolutions were "more offensive" than the abolition petitions. Others asserted that Congress had yielded its rights and given in too far to the abolitionist.  

When the vote was taken, Mr. Adams rose and said: "I hold the resolution to be a direct violation of the Constitution of the United States, the rules of this House, and the rights of my constituents."  

The resolutions were passed by large majorities. As they represented the exact view taken by Mr. Johnson on the subject, he cast his vote in favor of all three. These resolutions acted as a "gag rule" in the House, but the people were not to be gagged and continued debating the issue for some time.

In 1837 the question of the right of a negro to petition the government was brought up. Johnson was of the opinion that if the House recognized the right of slaves to petition, then the Union was virtually dissolved. When that day came, he should feel it his duty to leave the House and return to his constituents. He proposed the fol-

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22 McMaster, op. cit., Vol VI, p. 296. These objections came principally from the Southern members.
23 Congressional Globe, 24 Cong., 1 Sess., (1836), p. 406. Mr. Adams tried to obtain the floor for five minutes but was ordered down.
lowing resolution:

Resolved, That this house connot receive the said petitions without disregarding its own dignity, the rights of a large class of citizens of the South and West, and the Constitution of the United States.

It was carried by a vote of 160 to 35. One Congressman refused to vote for he thought that Congress had no power to interfere one way or another with the question of slavery. Another resolution resulted from the debate:

Resolved, That the slaves do not possess the right of petition secured to the people of the United States by the Constitution.

In taking the stand that he did, Johnson was merely expressing the current attitude and opinion of the planter class of which he was a member. While in the senate a few years later the question of abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia again came up for debate. Johnson's attitude had not changed, so he voted against the bill.

Next to the question of slavery and its protection the Whig planters of Louisiana were very much interested in the tariff question. The compromise bill of Henry Clay in 1833 was not as satisfactory as might be desired, but all realized that it was the best that could be obtained at the time. When in 1836 an attempt was made to place sugar on the "free list" along with coal, salt, and iron the proponents of the tariff set up a great cry. After a heated discussion, Mr. Johnson moved that the motion be tabled, and that motion prevailed.

After the election of 1832 the Bank of United States became very

27 Ibid., Mr. Wise of Virginia refused to vote for or against the resolution.
unpopular. "All projects for obtaining a renewal of the national charter failed, and the bank, by a judicious collection of its debts, readjustment of loans, accumulation of specie, and gradual closing of branches, indicated a purpose quietly to wind up its affairs.\textsuperscript{31} The settlement of the controversy over the payment of government stock in 1837 ended the connection between the bank and the government.

Democrats as a group were hostile to all banks, state or national, and therefore hampered their financial operations whenever possible. They considered the bank of U.S. a monster, the source of all evils.\textsuperscript{32} The Whigs on the other hand composed chiefly of the planter class in the South and the industrialist in the North, advocated strong banks. They were good judges of banks, and since they needed all the assistance possible in a financial way, they saw to it that the states fostered sound banking institutions. The services of the branch of the national bank at New Orleans was valued highly by the planters of Louisiana whom Johnson represented.\textsuperscript{33}

When the Democrat's hostility to the bank deprived the states of monetary and banking facilities commensurate with its real needs, the planters were the first to fill the pinch. They were hampered in their financial operations, forced to pay high rates of interest and often had to go out of the state for loans. The withdrawal of the deposits and the bill for "adjusting remaining claims upon the late deposit bank," caused much distress. Mr. Johnson in discussing his plan of adjustment said that, "the first installment (ought) to be paid on the first day

\textsuperscript{31} MacDonald, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 237.
\textsuperscript{32} Cole, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 3.
of July next, the second on the first of January 1839 and the remaining installment on the first day of July 1839." The deposits bank in the city of New Orleans, he pointed out, had rendered an important service to the government in collecting and gathering the deposits from other banks and therefore it had strong claims for a small amount of indulgence on the part of the National Government. The bank would probably sustain imminent losses by remittance in exchange. Notwithstanding these losses, he believed that the bank was ready to pay the whole amount due by them in such funds as they received in deposit. The people deserved indulgence from the government for he said that "By pressing the banks a pressure would be created upon the people," who were little able at this time to stand such a pressure.

Johnson's voting on the "bill to authorize the issuing of Treasury notes" showed that he was in favor of reducing the total amount of the issue and also the denomination of the bills. It had been argued that by issuing bills of $100 only the capitalist would be benefitted, but if the bills or notes were smaller, $50 or $25, the soldier and the laborer would be able to use them for the purchase of land and the necessities of life.

On September 12, 1837, Johnson presented a memorial from the Chamber of Commerce at New Orleans praying for the establishment of a National Bank. Similar petitions had been received by the House from other cities and states. All were referred to the Committee on Ways

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., p. 23.
37 Ibid., p. 118-120.
38 Ibid., p. 21

Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University
and Means, that reported:

Resolved, That it is expedient to charter a national bank.

Much discussion followed. It looked for a while as if the "ghost" of the old bank was back in the house. One congressman wanted to amend the resolution by adding "at this time". "And be it further resolved that is will be expedient to establish a national bank whenever there is a clear manifestation of public sentiment in favor of such a measure."

Another wished to propose "nor ought such an institution to be chartered at any time hereafter, unless by an amendment to the Constitution, which the United States shall specially express, by delegating to congress the power to do so." Some wanted a free discussion of the resolution; others wanted and insisted on a vote. They claimed that the battle over the bank had been fought and won so what was the use of renewing the contest. In the final vote which adopted the resolution without amendment, Mr. Johnson voted against it.

Since the removal of the Indians across the Mississippi River, the defense of the Western frontier was a question of great importance. Texas, at this time, 1836, had declared herself independent of Mexican rule and was busy maintaining that freedom. The struggle that resulted added to the uprisings among the Indians and gave great alarm to the people of Western Louisiana and Arkansas. Henry Johnson favored an act that passed

40 Ibid., p. 69.
41 Ibid., p. 78.
42 Ibid., p. 92.
43 Ibid., p. 104-5. The final vote was 122 yeas and 91 nays, which shows that the minority of which Johnson was a member was not small at all.
Congress at this time for organizing a dragoon of riflemen to aid in the defense of the frontier until General Gaines should be reinforced.

Many congressmen opposed the bill for strong fortifications in the west because they feared it would lead to war with Mexico. Johnson spoke in behalf of the bill and showed the influence exercised by "paper talk", upon the present attitude of the House. He explained the situation to the body and expressed his wish to protect the American citizens. As an added comment he pointed out that the Texans were in reality immigrants from the United States who had settled beyond our frontier taking their property with them. They were, in his opinion, being a great injustice.

In order to relieve the Indian trouble Mr. Johnson believed that if the "Choctaw claims" to reservations of land under the 14th. article of the treaty of 1830, were adjusted, peace could be restored. In the meantime he advocated that the central government supply the state of Louisiana with "cannons, carriages, and all the necessary implements and appendages thereto, for three companies of light artillery, so long as hostilities may be apprehended from the Indians on the Western frontier of said state".

Johnson's resolution for planned protection of the western frontier included certain points to be occupied permanently by garrisons; auxiliary stations for reserves and deposits of munitions, arms, and other supplies; routes to be established between the several stations, and finally a minimum number of troops to occupy these means of defence so that our border settlements would be respected. The resolution was

46 Congressional Debates, 24 Cong., 1 Sess., (1836), p. 3330.
47 Ibid., p. 3544.
48 Ibid., p. 3616.
50 Ibid., 25 Cong., 1 Sess., p. 77.
adopted.

Johnson was not alone in his sympathy for the Texans and their cause. A resolution was presented before the House requesting the secretary of War to issue rations to suffering families that were destitute because of the existing war in Texas. Several states sent in memorials asking that Congress recognize Texas.

On July 4, 1836 the Committee on Foreign Affairs reported the following in relation to affairs in Texas:

Resolved, That the independence of Texas ought to be acknowledged by the United States whenever satisfactory information has been received that it has in successful operation a civil government, capable of performing the duties and fulfilling the obligations of an independent power.

Resolved, That the House of Representatives perceived with satisfaction, that the President of the United States has adopted measures to ascertain the political, military, and civil condition of Texas.

The resolutions were carried by large majorities.

Jackson recognized the Texans' independence a few days before the expiration of his term by sending an agent of a semi official nature on March 1, 1837. This minister, Alcée Labranche, who established United States recognition, was from Louisiana. As this state was very much interested in the fate of her neighbor this would seem to be a happy choice. The panic of 1837 and the critical internal conditions of the country provided President Van Buren ample excuse to forget about the new republic and their plea for annexation as the step following recognition. Being an

51 Ibid., 24 Cong., 1 Sess., (1836), p.338.
52 Ibid., p.410.
53 Ibid., p.465.
54 Ibid., 1st. resolution 128 yeas- 20 nays; 2nd. 113 yea- 22 nays, Johnson favored both.
anti-slavery man, he was not anxious to strengthen the South in the Senate by admitting another slave state.

In the meantime the Republic of Texas was making a bold stand, raising an army and navy, and incidentally a huge debt.

Henry Johnson did not show himself favorable to the use of the spoils system, especially where the judiciary was concerned. Remembering, perhaps, his own days as clerk of court and judge, he championed the cause of D.N. Hennen, Clerk of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana against Judge J.K. Lawrence. The judge had attempted to remove the clerk without sufficient cause in order to put a friend in his place. Hennen retaliated with a memorial to Congress charging the judge with negligence, corruption, and intemperance. Johnson, realizing that the charge was grave and therefore important to both contestants and to the state, moved that a select committee be appointed to look into the matter. A committee of seven was formed with Johnson as one of its members.

In explaining his views of the question, Johnson stated that there was serious cause for complaint in regard to the judicial system of the United States in Louisiana. He stated that no business had yet been disposed of in the circuit court; that the last term of the court had not been held, in consequence of this arbitrary attempt on the part of the judge to remove the clerk. The clerk was in possession of a letter from

60 Ibid.
the judge, stating that "he had performed the duties of his office faithfully, promptly, and uprightly, and to the entire satisfaction of the bench, the bar, and the public; and that the only reason he had for removing him was a desire to appoint an intimate friend in his place." On opening the circuit court, the supreme court judge expressed the opinion that Judge Lawrence had no power to remove the clerk. The judge, still maintaining his right to act would attempt to bring the case to the Supreme Court of the United States. Meanwhile no court can be held for want of a clerk. All important business had been suspended or at least "postponed, the interest of the people sacrificed," all because of the wishes of a judge who admits that the clerk is well qualified for the situation, and against whom he has no complaint.

The select committee, after having obtained permission to send for persons and papers, gave the following report as the result of their investigation:

That, in consequence of the evidence collected by them, by virtue of the powers with which they have been invested by the House, and which is hereunto subjoined, they are of the opinion that Philip K. Lawrence, Judge of the District Court of the United States for the Eastern and Western District of Louisiana, be impeached for high misdemeanors in office.

Other committees that Johnson served on were the standing committee on Commerce and the Select Committee on Public Lands. In his work on the former he studied, presented, and supported many petitions and resolutions for the construction of internal improvement. In the latter the work centered around the subject of past donations of public lands, quantity, surveyed, plans for dividing it, or its proceeds. As

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63 Ibid., p.187.
64 Ibid., p.91.
the national debt had been extinguished in 1834, the question of dividing the surplus revenue was of great importance to the states. During the two years from 1834 to 1836 the sale of land had risen from $4,337,000 to $24,000,000. The panic of 1837 caused in part by over speculation, too rapid expansion, and extension of credit, did much to bring the American people to their senses.

In summing up Johnson's career in Washington it might be said that he was the custodian and protector of the best interest of Louisiana. All bills before Congress which in any way was affected the prosperity of Louisiana, or the benefits of which might be shared by Louisiana, were given his special and undivided attention. He worked with un-tiring efforts on committees and always seemed ready to protect the rights of individuals, states or nation. He was liberal in most matters, but is the cause was shown to be a worthy one, none stood firmer for his rights. In his actions one can see that he put the interest of the people first, nest in line came party, and then his own personal or political advancement.

65 Dodd, Expansion and Conflict, p.97.
66 Ibid., pp.91-92. Deposits of surplus funds during the last half of 1836 and the first quarter of 1837 amounted to more than $18,000,000.
67 Ibid., pp.101-102.
CHAPTER IV

SENATOR 1844-1849
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Upon his return from Congress, Johnson again participated in the political activities of the state. The coming presidential campaign was won by the Whigs, who put forward William Henry Harrison, that popular Military hero, and John Tyler. The latter was placed on the ticket even though he was not a real Whig, in order to swing enough votes in Virginia to carry that state. While the parties in Louisiana were still in convention they proceeded to nominate the candidates for the coming state elections. The Democrats nominated Alexander Mouton, and the Whigs named Henry Johnson for the highest executive position. "The Next Gubernatorial Controversy" resulted.

There seemed to be a dissatisfied group in each party. Those in the Democrat Party voiced their objections under the pen name of "Sparticus". They claimed that the choice of a governor at this time was unconstitutional, impolitic, and anti-republican; it was unconstitutional in that it deprived the citizens the right of suffrage by allowing a selection to a minority group; it was impolitic in that it engaged the whole state in its support of a candidate unknown to but a few, and lastly, it was anti-republican in that it was premature and excluded competition. The Whigs in East and West Baton Rouge were of a similar mind in regard to Johnson's nomination. They called themselves the "Independent Whigs" and declared that they would oppose Johnson's election. These Whigs met in a convention, but proved themselves to be but a group of "half-breeds" for after they accused the

2 Ibid., p.46.
3 Baton Rouge Gazette, July 5, 1841.
party leaders of using high handed methods, they pledged themselves to favor the candidate of the Independent Democrats, Denis Prieur.

The next issue of the paper carried an article written by "A delegate to the New Orleans Convention" who found the accusations of the whigs of East and West Baton Rough to be absurd and ridiculous. The writer claimed that the representatives at the convention had withdrawn their objections to Johnson and seemed satisfied with the choice. In another article of the same paper "One Whig" expressed his surprise that any Whig would for a moment entertain the idea of voting for Denis Prieur. "If they make him governor they have less consistency then I give them credit for. Let those nameless ones- "half-breeds"- conservatives or by what ever name they may be known labor on- it will be in vain! Denis Prieur cannot be governor of the State of Louisiana as the choice of the Whigs."

The controversy ended its first phase on this high note expressed by a Whig, "May the powers of mercy and goodness preserve Louisiana from the disgrace of ever again acknowledging Henry Johnson as her governor!"

The controversy was taken up again the next year, but the heat that accompanied the first part was missing. In a letter to a friend Mr Johnson set forth his views on suffrage, for he had been accused of being opposed to a constitutional convention to extend the right of suffrage by drawing up a more liberal instrument. He could not see that his opinion on this subject would affect the members of the convention. He believed that the vote should be given to every free white citizen of the proper area and residence without property qualifications; just as he had advocated the

5 Ibid., Aug. 7, 1841.
6 Ibid.,
7 Ibid., Sept. 4, 1841.
same at the time of the framing of the constitution of 1812.

In the same issue there was a letter from "A Democrat" who claimed that Mr. Johnson had long been a public servant; and, although he had opposed him in general politics, yet he knew that Johnson had rendered invaluable services to the state and country. He claimed that Johnson had on many occasions shown superior merit. As governor of the state he had been active and zealous for the general good.

The next week two letters appeared. One from "A Whig" claiming that the letter of "A Democrat" was not written by a Democrat but by a Whig in disguise so he would follow his example and sign himself "A Whig". He stated that the Whig stories about Mouton were disbelieved by the people so that he would not refute them. He closed his letter saying: "Democrats are not speculators, and as long as they can find good men to represent their principles, they do not ask if the representative is old or young."

The other letter was from the Whigs of East and West Baton Rouge who said, that, having declared themselves against Johnson the year before, they felt that they ought to make their present stand known. If Johnson was not agreeable to them, Mr. Mouton was much less so. Denis Prieur had withdrawn from the race, so they chose what they considered the lesser of evils.

On the morning of the election "The Courier", the official Democrat paper, issued an extra in both French and English denouncing the Whig candidates, Johnson in particular, and praising Mouton. They accused Johnson of being in league with White and Roman to continue the office of Governor between themselves by rotation, of having prostrated the patronage of the

9 *Baton Rouge Gazette*, June 25, 1842.
highest office, and of representing a clique, whose extravagant policy had been the means of running the state in debt to the Bank to the amount of three millions of dollars. "It remains to be seen whether a majority of the qualified voters in New Orleans, a majority certainly made up of the descendents of Europeans, not English, will approve, by their votes, the compact thus entered into between "Whiggery and Illiberality", and prejudice."

Just how much of this was truth and how much political propaganda was proven by the fact that Johnson carried the city of New Orleans where most of this propaganda was issued, and thirteen out of the possible thirty-five parishes with majorities running from 303 to 4. His total popular vote was 7,104, while Mouton received 9,669. Since he received the majority of popular votes, Mouton also received the election from the legislature.

Upon the death of Senator Alexander Porter in 1844 no less than six Whig and five Democratic possible candidates were suggested for the place. It was hoped by the Whig leaders that not more than one from each party would be put up. In this the Whigs would win as they had a majority of the legislature on a joint ballot. One paper said:"Let no sectional or other prejudice defeat their purpose, but let them send a true Whig for the next six years in the councils of the nation, who will be an honor to Louisiana."

On January 29, 1844, the two houses met in joint session at twelve

12 Baton Rouge Gazette, July 16, 1842.
13 Louisiana Senate Journal, 15 Leg., 1 Sess., pp. 7-8, (1842).
14 Baton Rouge Gazette, Jan. 27, 1844. Suggested candidates were Roman, Conrad, Chinn, Hunt, Johnson, and Derbigny by the Whigs; Downes, Mouton, Dawson, Lenard, Walker for the Democrats.
15 Ibid.
o'clock with 17 senators and 60 representatives present. Mr. Moore, of the senate, proposed Joseph Walker, a Democrat from Rapides, and Dr. Brashear nominated Henry Johnson, Whig leader, for the vacancy occasioned by the death of Mr. Porter. On the second ballot Mr. Johnson received 39 to Mr. Walker's 36 votes and was declared duly elected. The Baton Rouge paper stated the reaction to the election thus: "We are happy of the results, though we might have preferred some other member of the Whig party. Mr. Johnson is a staunch and well-tried Whig, and will leave no means untried to benefit the interest of a state he has so often been called to serve".

On March 4, 1844, Mr. Barrow presented the credentials of Mr. Henry Johnson in the Senate of the United States. He came forward, was qualified, and took his seat.

One of the most important questions before the country was the subject of the Texas Treaty. President Tyler, the successor of W.H. Harrison (who died one month after his inauguration) attempted to get the treaty as drawn up by Calhoun ratified, but like all the measures proposed by this man who was out of sympathy with the party that elected him, it met with failure. Johnson voted against the treaty. Those who wished for the annexation of Texas in 1844 made an issue of it so that the candidates of that year had to declare themselves one way or the other. Many of the states' legislatures sent in resolutions for or against annexation. Some declared annexation to be unconstitutional and dangerous to the stability of the Union. Others asked that it be added in order to extend our territory to its nat-

17 Baton Rouge Gazette, Feb. 3, 1844.
19 Ibid., p.652.
20 Stephenson, N.W., op. cit., p.91.
boundaries, to increase our commercial relations, and to prevent foreign
influence from controlling our future destiny.

Senator Porter, whose place Johnson had filled, had at one time
bitterly opposed the annexation of Texas, for he argued that would mean
war and sure ruin for the trade of Louisiana and Mexico. He also feared
that raids would be made. Needless to say Johnson was of a different at-
titude.

The Democratic candidate, Mr. J.K. Polk, the first "Dark horse" in
the political history of the United States declared himself in favor of
the re-annexation of Texas. Henry Clay, the Whig candidate, always the com-
promise, trying to maintain his position of neutrality, declared himself
in favor, if it could be arranged within the constitution; and "without
dishonor, without war, with the common consent of the Union, and upon just
and fair terms". The public was in no humor for such "pussy-footing" on
the question and Polk won the presidency.

In the "lame-duck" session of Congress, Mr. Tyler, hoping to gain a
little glory for himself on a question on which the people had already
given their sanction, attempted to get a joint resolution through Congress
authorizing the president to annex Texas. The bill was much debated and
amended before its final passage.

Mr. Johnson presented resolutions adopted by the Democratic legis-
lature of Louisiana, expressing the opinion that a majority of the people

23 Latane, op. cit., p.249; Stanwood, E., History of the Presidency From
of the state were in favor of immediate annexation by any lawful and constitutional means. He also stated that he concurred with the views expressed by the legislature, and that, if the Question was fairly put, free from all constitutional objections, he would examine it and be guided by what he considered to be right. His colleague, Senator Alexander Barrow, seemed surprised upon hearing these comments and felt it his duty to declare that he did not agree with Mr Johnson and that he would vote against the annexation of Texas in every form, at any time, and under any conceivable circumstances, as he believed it to be detrimental not only to the whole South, but particularly destructive to the best interest of his state. Furthermore, he believed that the results of the last presidential election in that state had been carried by the most infamous frauds.

Mr. Johnson observed that this was not the time to enter into a discussion upon the subject of election frauds and moved that the resolution from the Louisiana Legislature, that he had presented, be referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Before the question was settled many compromises were offered, passed, or rejected. Every man in the Senate expressed himself either for or against annexation by joint resolution with the exception of two Whigs, A.S. White of Indiana and Henry Johnson, both of whom were uncertain in their votes. It was said that twenty-four members had lined themselves up against the resolution and unless one of these two voted for it the measure must fail.

On February 28, 1845, the Texas resolution passes the Senate. Although Mr. Johnson was not the only Whig to vote for it, his vote was the decisive

27 The St. Landry Whig, Nov. 21, 1844. See appendix p.10.
28 The Daily Picayune, (N.O.), March 7, 1845.
29 Ibid.
one, as the other two had already voiced their support. Mr Henderson of Mississippi and Mr Merrick of Maryland, both Whig who voted for the bill, believed that annexation could be done within the constitutional rights of the central government. Mr. Merrick states further that as a Souther man, and a slave holder, he felt the need of annexing Texas to strengthen the South. By keeping the balance of power in the Senate, the Union, he believed, would be made more perfect, "justice better established, domestic tranquility secured, common defense better provided for, the general welfare better promoted and the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity better secured". All this could be accomplished by the measure, therefore he supported it.

In throwing the weight of his vote with the administration, Johnson was considered by many as committing political suicide all of which may have been true in view of the fact that it was used against him at another time. He claimed, however, that he was following the wishes of the majority of the people of Louisiana and the dictates of "his own conscience in what he considered the best good for the greatest number, regardless of party affiliations.

The analysis of the Texas vote was given by the Democrats of Louisiana in their party organ to show that it was not a question upon which slave holders had joined gorses but one on strict construction of the constitution.
The popular vote for the measure was 10,407,657 and only 6,583,408 against. The popular vote as represented by the 13 senators from the free states who voted for annexation exceeded that of the 15 from the free states who voted against the bill by 4,631,043. In like manner the popular vote as represented by the 10 senators from the slave states who voted against annexation, exceeded that of the 14 who voted for it, but only by 806,794 votes. These figures showed how idle was the attempt to bias the opinions of men by threatening the stability of the Union, and which likewise proved in error the supposition that the slavery question was the principal and exclusive grounds upon which the proposition was sustained. The 27 senators who voted for the bill represented a majority of the whole people of the United States by 3,824,249. Thus it was shown that the question was not decided upon local or sectional grounds; it had acquired a national character, and so its fate was determined.

The bill passed the House by a large majority (132-72) and received the signature of the president on March 3, 1845, making the re-annexation of Texas complete.

The glory of annexing Texas went to the over zealous Tyler, but the responsibility and results, good and bad, were shouldered by James K. Polk. Of the major issues to be faced by the incoming president the Mexican problem loomed darkest on the horizon. When annexation was complete, the only hostile move made by the unsure, disrupted Mexican government was the withdrawal of their minister from this country and the request for the recall of ours to that country. Polk regarded the Texas question as closed and

and made several attempts to restore diplomatic relations with Mexico. 

Wishing to pay a compliment to one who had aided in his election, Polk sent John Slidell, of Louisiana, as agent plenipotentiary with instructions to settle all the claims of the two governments. It was a matter of great uncertainty whether or not the Mexican government would receive him. Simultaneous with the failure of this mission was the movement of the American Army from Corpus Christi to the Rio Grande, a movement that was considered a hostile act on the part of the Mexican central government. When news of the first skirmish was received by Polk, he immediately prepared his message wherein he reviewed the failure of Slidell's mission, the movements of Taylor, the capture of Thornton, and the fact that "Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon American soil", As war existed "by the act of Mexico herself" the House hurriedly passed a bill declaring that a state of war with Mexico existed and appropriated 10,000,000 dollars for its prosecution. The bill also authorized the president to call for fifty thousand men. In the senate the bill was held up over the question of whether or not a state of war existed.

Since the Mexican government had declared our annexation would be tantamount to a declaration of war, Mr. Henry Johnson was of the opinion that a state of war did now exist. "He was therefore not only ready y
repel invasion, but prepared to prosecute the war. He was ready to vote the declaration in the bill that war did now exist; and further than that, he was prepared to vote a declaration of war". The bill passed the senate with only two dissenting votes, Clayton and Davis.

Throughout the duration of the war Mr. Johnson supported the bills to raise, equip, and officer the army of the country. He favored the $3,000,000 Bill on March 1, 1847, which was designed to bring the war to a close. He was to support the bill if he could be assured that the money was to be used to settle just claims and not for a bribe to Mexican officials. In his opinion all of the Mexican territory taken during the war should be held until a treaty was made and ratified by both countries. Johnson believed in giving all aid possible to the president in order to bring about a just and honorable peace.

When the peace negotiations of 1847 did not show signs of success the administration gave out a call for additional military forces. In this, too, Mr. Johnson supported the "war party" casting his vote in favor of the "10 Regiment Bill", provided, however, that the president should not be authorized to nominate or appoint any officer or do any act until it had been ascertained that the pending negotiations with Mexico for securing a peace treaty had failed.

Johnson was not of the same feelings as the other Whigs who "asserted that it was a President's war, was unnecessary, and unjust, had its origin in a quenchless thirst for conquest, and would end in the subjugation of a rival race and the annexation of more territory". The Northerns Whig

40 National Intelligencer, May 14, 1846,
42 Ibid., p.501.
abolitionists were afraid that if new territories were added they would prove to be material for more slave states, and expressed their dislike of the war in all sorts of resolutions.

Both Johnson and Downs, also of Louisiana, favored the treaty with Mexico as the best possible terms that could be obtained. This treaty provided for the acquisition of California and the territories of Utah and New Mexico. The question of slavery in the new territories became the largest issue in the next two years and led to the secession movement of 1850, and also the Compromise of the same year. Although Johnson's term as senator expired before the passage of this Compromise, he was in favor of extending the Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific. In no case would he support the "Wilmont Proviso", but like most Southerners he was willing to give the Compromise of 1850 a fair trial.

The day following the signing of the Texas resolution James k. Polk became president. He was said to be an earnest and skillful leader of the Jacksonian Democrats, but still it was surprising that he could defeat the magnetic Clay, "Harry of the West", a born "leader of men, brilliant, dashing, and generous."

Clay was not defeated by Polk, but by the Democratic platform. Once in office, Polk set about fulfilling his campaign promises. In view of the slogan "54°40' of Fight", the paragraph of Polk's "inaugural address devoted to Oregon was briefer and milder than might have been expected."

44 Ibid, p.479; Pease and Roberts, op. cit., p.373.
The settlement of this question had been deferred many times.

No less than four countries had at one time laid claims to this Oregon territory, which was to bring these two countries within a brief time nearer to war than they had been since 1812. The claims of both the United States and England overlapped to such an extent that it was difficult to draw a line of demarcation. Polk opened negotiations through Buchanan in 1845 and offered to compromise with the English. The offer was rejected by the English minister, Pakenham, without referring it to his home government.

After much debate Congress authorized the president to serve notice to the British government that we intended abrogating or annuling the joint occupancy treaty.

Packenham, after receiving instructions from home co-operated with Buchanan and the treaty which was ratified on June 12, 1846, resulted. That Johnson supported this treaty was not all surprising. He was in favor of expansion as is proven by his support of both this treaty and the annexation resolution. His enthusiasm for extra territory did not extend to the support of the Cuban filibusters. At this time there was some agitation for Cuba's annexation, but Johnson was practical minded, alert to the interest of the planter class, and could see no good for the sugarc planter in exemption of Cuba's product. He was at all times willing to help bring about our "manifest destiny" on the continent.

51 McMaster, op. cit., Vol. VII, p.407; Russia, Spain, England, and U.S.
52 Latane, op. cit., p.232.
54 Pease and Roberts, op. cit., p.369.
This policy of protection of the planter was much involved in the tariff question. After the Whig successes in the election of 1840 the tariff was raised in 1842 to re-establish a system of revenue and protection. This bill did not remain long in effect. During the "Oregon Controversy" Polk made certain concessions that seemed to augment the suggestion, in a certain pro-British paper, that there was an understanding between Sir Robert Peel and Mr Polk for sacrificing the American tariff in order to settle the question of American expansion.

In his annual message of 1846 the president asked for a reduction in the tariff and the adoption of ad valorem rates. The struggle began. The party lines were broken. When it was learned that the Democrats of Pennsylvania, New York, and Maryland opposed the bill, doubt existed as to its passage. Johnson pointed out that the bill meant bankruptcy for the manufacturing interest of the country and ruin of the agriculture of his particular state.

The vote in the senate was even until Mr. Jarnagin received instructions from his legislature to favor the bill. His position was analogous to that of Johnson during the Texas annexation. Both were Whigs, both received instructions from Democratic legislatures, and both, believing that the voice of the people should come before their own wishes or party advancement, followed their instructions. Every Whig member of the senate except Mr. Jarnagin opposed the bill, nevertheless it passed on July 28, 1846.

57 The Albion, March 7, 1846.
58 Wright, P.B., Sugar in Relation to the Tariff, New York, 1924, p.90.
59 Polk's Diary, July 11, 1846, p.122.
60 National Intelligencer, July 30, 1846; See appendix p.13.
A protest was set up in every Whig newspaper. It was called a fatal measure, which would strike at the very roots of the industry of the country. Johnson, remembering the prophecy of the St Landry Whig during the campaign of 1844, felt that their worst fears were realized. Many complaints poured in from the Whig strongholds, especially from Louisiana, where they believed that they had been discriminated against. The sugar planter of Louisiana was also a manufacturer and had reason to believe in a high tariff, without which he could not compete with the sugars of foreign countries. From the parish of St. Mary, the largest sugar producing parish in Louisiana at the time, Johnson received a memorial asking him to present it to Congress for the inhabitants believed he would be interested in the petition and also in a position to demand favors of the administration. The argument on the petition centered on a technicality, and despite Johnson's plea that it was important to him as a planter, to Louisiana as a Whig stronghold, and to the country because of its great need for more money, nothing was done about it.

This same bill acted as a boomerang to the Democrats, for in the light of later history it has been proven that this bill led to the English repeal of her "Corn laws", the advantage that North western wheat found in the London market, and finally the sharing of the crown with "King Cotton". Against many petitions and memorials the administration stood firm, and in the long run the tariff did prove successful as a revenue measure. It was continued for many years or until conditions in the government became determined by the events of the civil war.

64 Owsley, F.L., King Cotton Diplomacy, p.567
Two other bills were passed during Johnson's stay in the senate that affected this tariff question. They were the sub-treasury act and the warehouse act. Johnson and the other whigs opposed these acts.

Due to the ever increasing number of immigrants that poured into the northern states, far sighted men in the south desired to extend the time allowed to enable them to become citizens so as to lengthen the time of Southern influence or domination in the central government. To effect this purpose Johnson presented the following resolution:

Resolved, That the committee on the Judiciary be instructed to inquire into the expediency of modifying the naturalization laws of the United States so as to extend the time allowed to enable foreigners to become citizens; ... and to prevent, as far as practicable, fraud and violence at elections, and to prohibit the introduction of foreign convicts into the United States.

In explaining the need for new naturalization laws, Mr Johnson observed that the facilities with which foreigners had been naturalized, the perjuries committed in effecting the object, and the fraud and violence by which the elections had been controlled, all prove the necessity of an immediate change in the laws, for the public sentiment everywhere called loudly for prompt action upon the subject. He cited cases where thousands or foreigners had been made into "over-night" Americans in order to swell the ballot in some states. Mr Johnson failed to call attention to a similar incident in his own state, known as the "Plaquemines Fraud". Most foreigners were ignorant of the nature of United States government and its institutions and played into the hands of designing politicians.

Mr. Johnson further explained that at the time of the passage of the

67 Congressional Globe, 28 Cong., 2 Sess., (1845), p.82.
68 Stanwood, A History of the Presidency, p.224; Appendis, p.10.
naturalization laws it was the policy of the government to encourage emigration, owing to the large extent of the land. Under the operation of these laws the settlement and prosperity of the country had been affected. It was not the aim of Mr. Johnson to stop the immigration of foreigners into the United States, but to control it and also to reserve the political rights until the immigrant had resided in this country long enough to become familiar with the laws and institutions, and to become identified in interest and feeling with the American people. In this way see that Johnson was following in the steps of that illustrious senator, Alexander Porter, who advocated a fourteen year residence for citizenship. "This question soars far above party considerations. It is a question upon which depends not only the purity of our political institutions, but the preservation of the government. All parties are equally interested in guarding against a repetition of the abuses complained of, which, if not prevented in the future may completely destroy our government."

The Whig party, at this time, leaned toward political nativism. This was shown by their defense of the nativists in the famous "Native American riots" which occurred at the beginning of the 1844 campaign. It might be said that this was also the reason for this outburst of Whig indignation led by the Louisiana senator. Perhaps the fact that most of these immigrants were joining the Democratic Party had something to do with the Whig feeling on the question of naturalization.

The resolution was adopted, and the committee authorized to investigate election practices. Mr. Johnson, though not on the committee, might be con-

69 Cole, op. cit., p.311.
71 Cole, op. cit., p.311.
72 See appendix pp.8-9.
sidered as the one who started the "ball rolling" in the right direction. As a good Whig it was his duty to strike at the Democratic administration, that he had reason to believe had reached power by means of frauds and evasion of the naturalization laws.

As a member of the Committee on Private Land Claims, Johnson received a deluge of petitions requesting adjustment of certain land claims. A great number of these came from Louisiana and can be classed as the "Houma Claims". Complications had resulted from the duel issuance of titles by the United States and Spain. Hoping to clear up this large claim he presented a resolution to that effect early in the "lame-duck" session of 1844. No immediate action was taken so he introduced another resolution to prohibit the "issuance of grants or other evidence of title upon a (this) Spanish land claim." The object of the resolution was to suspend the patents that were being issued and cause a recess until Congress was able to decide between the claimants. A Joint resolution authorizing the Attorney General to investigate all of the titles was supported by Johnson, who was called upon to defend his position, as there was a report circulated to the effect that he was interested in the claims to the amount of $100,000. He disclaimed any interest in a financial way, all he wished for was a judicial decision on the patents. He pointed out that the situation was just opposite to that which was suggested as he had proof that he had voted against his own best interest when he believed that the blanket adjustment would not be fair to all concerned, even though it would have profited him. Johnson stated

74 Ibid., p.98.
75 Ibid., p.387.
76 National Intelligencer, June 26, 1846.
that some of his personal and political friends were interested in getting these claims settled, and that it would give him much pleasure to help them if he could do so without violating the performance of his duties. If the claims were valid no harm could come from a test before a court, so he encouraged his friends to try the validity of their titles. Johnson closed his speech with these words:

Believing it (Houma Claim) to be unfounded myself, and that at all events it should be disposed of, as the other large claims in Louisiana are to be disposed of, under the act of Congress for the purpose, I have resisted the attempts made to confirm the claims, and have been uniformly sustained in my opposition by a large majority of the Senate. Hence it is that my motives throughout... have been intentionally misrepresented. Conscious of the rectitude of my course in regard to this matter, I have... disregarded all attempts (whether willfully or heedlessly made) to injure my character or to impair my standing here or elsewhere...

An important act fostered by Johnson was approved that aimed at the "adjustment of all suspended pre-emption land claims in the several states and territories". The commissioner was to report to Congress at adjudications classified as valid or invalid. Those that were judged to be invalid were to be offered for sale. In 1848 the act was extended for one year in order to give time for the final adjustment of all the claims.

A great amount of Johnson's time was taken up by work on the standing committees. When one considers the amounts expended by just one,

77 Ibid.
78 National Intelligencer, June 26, 1846.
80 Ibid., 30 Cong., 1 Sess., (1849) Act approved July 17, 1848, p.72.
81 Congressional Globe, 30 Cong., 2 Sess., (1849), p.27. Johnson was Chairman of Committee on Pensions, and member of Committee on Private Land Claims and Committee on Revolutionary Claims.
the pension committee of which he was chairman, one will readily agree to their need of efficient leadership.

To recapitulate it might be said that Johnson's term in the senate was marked by his support of the measures relative to territorial expansion, but entirely opposed to those that aimed to change the financial standing of the government. He spoke but a few times but these speeches were marked by their clearness and forcefulness. His style of speech was simple, convincing, and lacking all of the florid ornamentation of the usual bombastic sheepshes of the time. Whatever Johnson did he did well, no matter whether the question under discussion was great or small if it protected the rights of the individual, especially the Louisianian, Johnson gave it his undivided attention.

82 Appendix, p.11.
84 National Journal, Jan. 18, 1825.
CHAPTER V

RETIREMENT 1850–1864
CHAPTER V.

RETIREMENT 1850-1864

Johnson's political career seems to have been marked or punctuated every dozen years or so by his defeat in some campaign. In 1812 he was defeated in the congressional race; in 1829 he was again defeated for the office; and in 1850 he suffered his last disappointment. He was getting old and this was his last attempt at wielding power. There was a divided opinion on the question of his defeat. Some claimed that he was not defeated because he did not enter the contest, while others felt sure that had he been successful in obtaining the election he would have accepted the position regardless of the party backing it.

When in 1850 President Taylor died, Fillmore took his place and re-organized the cabinet. Mr. Conrad, then senator from Louisiana, was appointed Secretary of War. The Whigs of Louisiana immediately met in convention, and on the second ballot nominated Judge Bullard for the vacancy. There was some little trouble about a certain Mr. John M. Bach's credentials as a delegate from the City of Jefferson. He was denounced as a "dirty tool of a dirty clique". This expression of General Martin's who also denounced Henry Johnson, in whose support Mr. Bach was enlisted, as a recreant Whig, must have carried conviction; for, Bach was unanimously expelled from the meeting and Johnson did not get a second to his nomination. Mr. T.L. Hunt, who received the largest number of votes on the

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1 Lanman, op. cit., p.228; Biographical Sketch of the Governors of Louisiana, (pamphlet), pp.28-29.
3 Ibid., Aug. 17, 1950.
4 The Daily Delta, (N.O.), Sept. 11, 1850.
first ballot but failed to get an increase on those that succeeded, made a speech in which he declared his mortification of the results, but pledged himself and friends to support the nominee.

In this meeting Johnson reaped the fruits of his action while in the Senate. He, as it was known, had advocated the annexation of Texas, and this fact alienated from him the support of a large number of the Whig sugar planters who thought that he had not served their best interest. He, on the other hand, had obeyed the wishes of the State Legislature and the dictates of his own conscience. A side light of the time of his censured action can be obtained from the official organ of the sugar planter;

He who would let his feelings of personal attachment influence him more than his regard for his party, is not, in this crisis, a true Whig.

Johnson may not have acted as a true Whig, but he was not acting for personal advancement for he was also a sugar planter with as much to lose as they. His championship of their cause against the Walker Tariff of 1846 seemed to be forgotten.

The Democrats and Independents of the state held a meeting in New Orleans, and after a heated discussion decided to support Johnson for the same reasons that the regular Whigs had given in opposing him. The Democrats thought that with the help of Johnson's personal following they would be able to beat the Whigs with one of their own men.

Mr. Johnson, at the time of this controversy, was not even in the state. As was the custom of the political leaders of the state, he was in

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5 Ibid.
6 The Daily Picayune, Feb. 12, 1845.
7 The St. Landry Whig, Aug. 21, 1845.
the habit of taking regular vacations at the Virginia springs. Transportation at the time was poor, and communications little better. Johnson did not accept or reject the Whig nominee although he had said that he would run against Mr. Kenner, whom he thought would be the candidate. Whether he would enter the field against Judge Bullard or not was a much discussed question. His friends were staunch in their belief that he would, and allowed his name to be used as a candidate.

The possibility of Johnson's acceptance seemed to throw a scare into some of the Whigs. One said, "He will not (run), he must not, he cannot run; if he does, we are ruined."

The Democrats knew no bounds in their praise of Johnson. They claimed that he had done much for them, was more prompt in attending to all their state and private affairs than any other member of congress, and if they were to support a Whig, Johnson would be the only choice. It was the general belief that since no word was received from Johnson he would attract an alarming number of votes.

The Whigs also resorted to praise and said that they considered Mr. Johnson to be a Patriotic and a good Whig. They called his friends false, or at least friends of Hunt or other enemies of Bullard. Johnson's political career was reviewed and made much of by both sides; the one to gain votes for him, the other to show that he would be unwilling to allow his name to be used to weaken the party, of which he was a leader, and which

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9 The Daily Crescent, (N.O.), Sept. 13, 1850.
10 Stephenson, W.H., op. cit., p.103; Daily Delta, (N.O.), Sept. 13, 1850.
11 The Daily Delta, (N.O.), Sept. 13, 1850.
12 Ibid., Sept. 29, 1850.
13 Ibid., Sept. 29, 1850.
14 The Daily Crescent, (N.O.), Sept. 23, 30, 1850; Baton Rouge Gazette, Sept. 21, 1850.
had bestowed on him such marks of confidence and respect.

Judge Bullard was no amateur in electioneering. One press, claiming to be neutral in the contest, published a brief sketch of the candidates. Both were old and eminent adopted citizens of Louisiana. Both were ex-Senators. Judge Bullard had migrated early in life to Louisiana and served in both bodies of the Legislature and on the bench of the Supreme Court. He, it was said, filled these positions with much ability. Ex-Governor Johnson was a veteran politician, likewise an adopted son, who "filled with credit and honor, the position of chief Executive of the state some years age, and was afterwards a candidate for the same office in 1842. . . . As a senator he faithfully and efficiently and efficiently represented this state in that august body. Governor Johnson's unvarying kindness of heart and urbanity of manners, his unobstrusive diligence and devotion to his duties, gained him the confidence of his brother senators, so that almost any measure brought forward by him was certain to pass." 17

Johnson's character was summed up admirably in this quotation:

"The Governor is a Southerner by birth, long residence, sentiment and feeling, and will if elected, maintain with zeal and fidelity the rights of the South".

The first word from Henry Johnson arrived on October 3d, after the election. It declared that he had not sanctioned the use of his name as a candidate for those who had fought against him through life. It was not his purpose to divide or defeat his own political friend, who had unwaveringly stood by him in every trial. The same day the Democrat organ

15 The Daily Crescent, (N.O.), Sept. 30, 1850; Appendix p.15.
17 Ibid., Sept. 29, 1850.
18 Ibid.
stated that Ex-Governor Johnson was on board the steamer "Douglas" aground in the Ohio, but that he had sent a telegraphic request for the withdrawal of his name from the race. It may have been resentment of just sarcasm that prompted them to add: "There is some advantage, after all, in those cursed sand bars of the Ohio. If the Governor should be elected under the circumstances, he would save his bacon with the regular Whig nomination".

The Whigs were elated over the Governor's message and claimed that "the Democrats were awfully 'picked up' when they calculated in finding a traitor in Henry Johnson".

The official returns showed that the majorities for Bullard were very small, totalling about 400.

"The honorable Henry Johnson, on whose face his friends would tack renewed congressional honors arrived in this city yesterday. He is in excellent health, and seems not all disconcerted at the success of Judge Bullard."

Thus ended the contest; however, just what his reaction would have been had he run, despite his rejection of the candidacy, can only be conjectured.

During the last fourteen years of his life, Johnson spent part of his time on a plantation "in the serene enjoyment of rural pursuits". Even though he had spent much of his time in the urban centers, Johnson had obtained much experience in the management of his plantation by the close supervision of his overseers.

Following the purchase of the "Chatham Plantation" some eleven miles

20 The Daily Delta, Oct. 3, 1850.
21 Baton Rouge Gazette, Oce. 5, 1850.
22 The Daily Delta, Oct. 10, 1850.
23 Ibid., Oct. 11, 1850.
24 The New Orleans Times, Sept. 1, 1864.
from Donaldsonville, Johnson can very easily be classed as a planter.

In this region sugar cane was the chief crop, although some cotton, corn, and rice was grown. Indigo by this time was no longer cultivated. Much interest was displayed by the planters in the sugar culture. An advertisement in the Baton Rouge paper at one time recommended highly the invention called a "cane coverer". Its advantages in the way of a great labor saving device was pointed out. The machine was demonstrated to a group of planters on a plantation near Iberville. This experiment showed that it could be used with much satisfaction; in order to allow others to profit, the committee that had written the article signed their names; Henry Johnson was one of the signers.

The tariff of 1842 had really created a "new deal" for the sugar industry. Many who had failed in cotton turned to the culture of sugar and invested large sums in it. Progress had been made ever since the introduction of the steam engine in 1822; however, the produce doubled in the years from 1842-1845. Cane was cultivated in 19 parishes and the possibility of its extension so as to supply the whole consumption of the United States was much discussed. The capital invested in land, slaves, machinery, and animals amounted to some $60,000,000.

In view of these facts it is easy to realize who the Whigs, of whom Johnson was the leader, favored high duties and fought the Walker Tariff of 1846.

That part of Louisiana, where Johnson spent much of his life, was and

25 See appendix letter number 4.
27 Baton Rouge Gazette, Feb. 17, 1844.
29 Ibid.
30 Congressional Globe, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., Jan. 8, 1847
is one of the prettiest regions in the state. Along its numerous bayous there were many extensive plantations, highly cultivated, neatly arranged, possessing all the traits which manifest the aptitude of the southern planter in the adaptation of his energies to the soil and climate. Sugar planting brought wealth and renown to the men who pursued this occupation. A typical plantation house was neatly built, spacious, and set in a background of evergreen foliage that gave to it all the air of comfort and tranquility. The slave quarters manifested comforts in their arrangement, and gave proof of the feelings of the proprietor for his slaves.

Just such a plantation was owned by Mr Johnson in Point Coupée parish. This plantation, "Woodly" by name, was and still is located on Bayou Grosse Tete and Maringouin near the town of Valverda. Being some 12,000 acres in extent, it provided ample refuge during the stormy days of the late 50's and early 60's. The working force numbered about sixty field hands and a house corps. Only those who showed a certain degree of intelligence were allowed to work indoors. This number of actual participants must be increased by a few super-annuated ones and many pickaninnies, all of whom would raise the total number of slaves.

Mr. Johnson's people were called "Free Negros". They were not free in the full sense of the word but fared so much better than those on the adjoining plantations that they considered themselves as such. Always solicitous of the welfare of the slaves, Mr. Johnson would not allow his over-

33 See appendix letter number 5; The Gazette and Comet, (Baton Rouge,) Sept. 3, 1864.

* Each such sign denotes that the information was derived from an interview with John Battiste, the son of a former slave of Henry Johnson called Aunt Medora. See appendix p.17.
seers to punish them without consulting him. While he was away in the service of his state, or on a vacation in Virginiathe plantation was left in the care of Mrs. Johnson's relative, Mr. Phillip Key.

Mrs. Johnson left all the management of the house to two very capable negro women, Lizzie and Juliana. They saw to it that the house was kept in good order and the meals on time. Even though Johnson was for the most part healthy, he was a delicate eater. Chicken and crab seemed to be his favorites. There was always an abundance of good things to eat, for Donaldsonville or Baton Rouge could be reached for any needed supplies or luxuries.

Transportation was poor in some parts of the state, but the roads between "Woodly" and the nearest towns were passable for the most part of the year. Mr. Johnson had a fine coach, coachman, and an excellent span of horses to conduct him on these excursions. The distance of some forty miles to Donaldsonville did not seem to prohibit Mrs. Johnson from attending her church occasionally. The religious affiliation of Mr. Johnson is not known to the writer. His wife was an ardent Catholic, who taught some of the slaves the simple truths of faith and enough prayers so that they might lead

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34 Daily Delta, (N.O.), Sept. 13, 1850.
35 The Courier, (N.O.), July 4, 1842; Mr. Johnson was considered a very wealthy man. Considering the size of "Woodly", the number of slaves, the amount of equipment on the plantation, and the fact that Johnson was considered wealthy, one can easily believe the tales of a treasure on the place. It seems that Johnson hid some money in the house under the stairs. Many people come to the plantation seeking the treasure. One couple, more brazen than the others, spent the night on the plantation. After accepting the hospitality of the caretaker, all settled down for the night. When the caretaker awoke the next morning, he found that they had gone. A search of the place showed that the third step of the stairs had been removed and the dust disturbed. Upon questioning the neighbors, he found that a small boy had carried their bag to the station. This young man, Willie Battiste, said that the bag was very heavy. Whether or not the couple really found the treasure is a matter of speculation.
in the religious activities of the negroes? By her example, the excellent qualities of faith, simplicity, and truthfulness were inculcated. Besides this interest in the religion of the darkies, she also taught some of the house servants the rudiments of an education. Here she found a rich field of usefulness that filled her days with enjoyment and had a far reaching effect. After the civil war many of the slaves preferred to stay on the plantation where they had received such good treatment?

Although the house was commodious, the Johnsons did little entertaining and had few guests. For amusement they turned to their library where they spent much of their time in reading. Mr. Johnson's speeches, delivered at various times during his political career, show the results of this constant, earnest, and laborious study. His style was simple and ornate, noted for its conciseness and perspicuity.

During the civil war Mrs. Johnson died and was buried on the plantation under a large liveoak tree. Her going was much mourned by her devoted and affectionate husband, many relatives and friends. Johnson was not long in following her. He retained, unimpaired to the last, his mental faculties, and viewed the approach of death with perfect resignation.

Attended in his last moments by the soothing care of relatives and de-

36 National Journal, Jan. 18, 1825; Of the furnishings and books the present writer has been unable to find but one piece. This is an old fashioned tester bed in the possession of John Battiste, son of one of Johnson's house servants called Aunt Medora. Mr. Henry Ford has been attempting to buy this relic, but this old man, who lives in the past, will not part with his treasure. The writer has no proof of this besides the word of John and his wife, Mary. The bed seems genuine as it is made of good lumber, colonial style, with the sides bolted to the ends. It looks as if it has been given much care. They say that many people have seen the bed. As the Johnsons had no children and rest of the furniture must have been scattered among friends and relatives.
voted friends, he breathed his last on Sunday, July 31, 1864. At the time of his death he was "commanding the respect alike of those who adhered to and those who had opposed him as a political leader" in Louisiana. During his life he exhibited many characteristics of the true Southern gentleman, a solid and useful citizen, who gained eminence both desirable and enduring while serving his adopted state.

37 The Gazette and Comet, (Baton Rouge), Sept. 3, 1864; The New Orleans Daily Picayune, July 26, 1868.
38 Lanman, op. cit., p.229.
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Letter from the Virginia Historical Society.

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INTERVIEW

The writer had a long and confidential talk with the son of a former slave of Henry Johnson, John Battiste, who lives in Point Coupée Parish near Johnson's old plantation "Woodly". (Livonia.)
BIOGRAPHY OF WRITER

Anna May Schmidt was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on July 20, 1910. She received her early education in the elementary schools of New Orleans, Hammond, and Ponchatoula. She attended high school in Ponchatoula, Louisiana, where she graduated in 1927. She entered Southeastern Louisiana College in 1929 and received her license to teach in 1929.

During the years 1929-1933 she taught in the upper elementary department in the Ponchatoula High School system. After taking a summer's work in 1932 at Louisiana State University she entered as a regular student for the term 1933-1934. She received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in August, 1934. She is now a candidate for a Master of Arts degree in History and Education.
APPENDIX
Miss Anna May Schmidt,
L.S.U., Baton Rouge, La.

Dear Miss Schmidt:

Answering yours relative to life of Gov. Henry Johnson, beg to advise that he was the owner of the Woodly Plantation, situated on Bayou Marin-gouin, at Valverda, Louisiana in this Parish. You will find deed of acquisition by him of this property and sale, in the records of this office.

If you contact Miss Judith Major, who teaches French at the University, she can, I believe, give you much information about the Governor. Her brother was owner of the Plantation, and she spent some years on the property.

Very truly yours,

J. P. Jewell,
Clerk of Court.
Miss Anna May Schmidt,
L.S.U., Baton Rouge, La.

Dear Miss Schmidt:

Except for two sales to Henry Johnson of the Island known as "Belle Isle" at the month of Atchafalaya River and sales of slaves I have been unable to find documents of interest in this parish.

I have no newspapers showing Henry Johnson in Public life, nor was I able to find Henry Johnson as District Judge.

The documents show that he lived in Orleans Territory in the Parish of St. Martin after 1802.

Very truly yours,

S. Chas. Willis
(clerk)
Miss Anna May Schmidt,
L.S.U., Baton Rouge, La.

Dear Miss Schmidt:

Your letter of April 3 was received this morning.

Henry Johnson was born in Tennessee 14th Sept., 1783; died in Point Coupée, La. on Sept. 4, 1864; studied law in Louisiana; in 1809 was clerk of the territorial court; judge of the parish court of St. Mary in 1811; delegate to the State constitutional convention in 1812; in the same year was a defeated candidate for Congress; was elected to the U.S. Senate in place of W.C.C. Claiborne, serving from 1818 until 1824 when he resigned to become governor of Louisiana which office he held for four years. In 1829, he was again defeated for the senate but served as a representative 1834-1839, being elected as a Whig. He was chosen to the U.S. Senate to fill the place of A. Porter who had died and served in this capacity from 1844-1849.

Very respectfully,

R.A. Lancaster Jr.
Corresponding Secretary
Donaldsonville, La.,
April 27, 1935.

Miss Anna May Schmidt
L. S. U.
Baton Rouge, La.

Dear Miss Schmidt:

This is in reply to your letter requesting information concerning Henry Johnson, once governor of the State of Louisiana.

We have no definite record of the time when Mr. Johnson was Governor and what little information we are able to give you has been gleaned from our old Conveyance and Mortgage records.

We found that Mr. Johnson lived in Lafourche Parish, near Thibodeaux, before he moved to Ascension Parish. The earliest date found in connection with his activities in Ascension Parish is 1833. He bought Chatham Plantation, which is about eleven miles from Donaldsonville. The home burned down several years ago. The records show that he was married to Miss Elizabeth R. Key, and seem to indicate that he was a native of the State of Virginia. He was at one time district judge of Ascension Parish. There are no remains of the capitol building which was begun but never completed in Donaldsonville.

We trust that this information will be of some aid to you in your work.

Yours very truly,
Loretta Dugas,
Dy. Clerk of Court.
Woodville, Miss.,
April 30, 1936.

Miss A.M. Schmidt,
L. S. U.
Baton Rouge, La.

Dear Miss Schmidt:

My father, whose name is Henry Johnson, is a great nephew of Governor Henry Johnson.

Governor Johnson was born in Davidson County, Tennessee, the son of Isaac Johnson and Mary Durham who moved from southern Virginia to middle Tennessee about 1790. Isaac Johnson and family located in Wilkinson in Wilkinson county, Mississippi in 1803, Henry Johnson remaining in Wilkinson County, Mississippi only a few years moving to the state of Louisiana.

While in Washington Governor Johnson married Miss Elizabeth Key, the daughter of Philip B. Key, a distinguished lawyer and a cousin of Francis Scott Key, the author of the Star Spangled Banner. During the War between the States Gov, Johnson refugeed to Point Coupée Parish Louisiana, where he lived during the close of the war, living at the time at woody plantation, where he was temporarily buried and later moved to Donaldsonville. He has no relations in New Orleans.

Governor Johnson was the leading and outstanding Whig in the State of Louisiana in the early days.

The records in the various historical departments of the State of Louisiana will furnish you a detailed account of his political life and service.

Yours very truly,

Joe Johnson
Thibodeaux, La.,
May 3, 1935.

Miss Anna May Schmidt,
Baton Rouge, La.

Dear Miss Schmidt:

Your letter of the 29th of April, is received. I was unable to give the matter about which you wrote any attention until this morning due to pressing office work, but I took the time to run over the Indexes of our Conveyance Records and I found so much that is of interest to you that I will suggest that you make a trip to Thibodeaux, and go over the matter yourself. If you should come I will do all I can to assist you, and make your work pleasant.

Very truly yours,

Alcide Robichoux,
Clerk of Court
Vol. XX.  

(Summary of the vote on the bill to move the seat of government from New Orleans.)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yeas</th>
<th>Nays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Baton Rouge</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Donaldsonville</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. St. Francisville</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Alexandria</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Iberville</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. St. James</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The bill was killed by a vote of 19 yeas to 20 nays.)

Vol. XXVI.  

(Some idea of the trade on the Mississippi can be obtained from the following statement.)  

On April 6, 1824 there were in port for New Orleans 67 ships, 128 brigs, 52 schooners, 11 sloops and 16 steam boats. Flat boats and arks were from 150 to 200.

"Arrived Steam boat Florence, H. Murray, from Ft. Smith Ark. with a keel boat-cargo 226 pks. deer skins, 16 do. bear 16 do hides, 72 bbls. tallow to Nicks and Rogers on board, 33 pks. deer, 5 bear, 1 beaver, 1 otter, 1 bbl. bears oil, 1 bbl tallow to Mr. Webber, 85 bales cotton, 300 gals. bears oil, 2 bbls bee's wax to Col. Boswell. 6 passengers."

Vol. XXXI  

(Statistics on the export trade.)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cotton bales</th>
<th>Tobacco hhds.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1822</td>
<td>156,030</td>
<td>21,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>171,431</td>
<td>19,371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>143,945</td>
<td>5,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>204,557</td>
<td>16,849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td>251,924</td>
<td>18,180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the Whig ticket, you will find the names of nine lawyers—most of whom have grown rich by Bank favors and facilities—and all of whom are believed to be warm advocates for perpetrating that connexion between Bank and State, which has already proven so disastrous to so many of our people. These candidates, and their friends and supporters, have had the use of thirty or forty millions of Bank capital, during the last 10 or 20 years; but they are not yet satisfied; nor will they ever be, as long as a dollar can be wrung from business men, mechanics, and labourers.[sic.] In reality, they compose a class of men who live by their wits on the labour of others—reside in splendid houses, wear fine clothes and indulge in every luxury; . . . . . . . Yes, fellowcitizens most of the men on the Whig ticket from Mr. Henry Johnson down to the very last are known to be the very devoted, humble servants, if not conspicuous members,[sic.] and component parts, of that aristocracy, which has risen up, and swelled nearly to bursting, under the shade of our rotten banks, and the overgrown patronage of an executive, giving away offices worth half a million, annually.

To the Adopted Citizens, Natives of Ireland, Entitled to Vote: In all the other large cities of the U. S. all, or nearly all of our countrymen, are staunch Democrats, and as such constantly receive the vituperation of the Whigs, the descendants of the Anglo-Saxons. Find you no moral, no warning in this?... Rise up, and go to the polls, and give your vote to your friends, and the friends of equality. Go, and vote for A. Mouton....

VOTERS!—Remember that the Whig candidate for Governor, is the same man who three or four months ago, attended a caucus of Bank Directors and financiers in the second Municipality. Voters!—Recollect that should Henry Johnson be elected, Reform will be about as hopeless as the Miss. R. is of running up instead of down.

VOTERS!—Recollect that Henry Johnson is the candidate of the office holders, who now extract high salaries and extravagant fees from a people, little able to pay.
FROM THE CLINTON [La.] JEFFERSONIAN, quoted in the extra issue of the COURIER "New Orleans July 4, 1842.

The following objections to Henry Johnson, stand in full and unimpaired force. The people will consider their importance:

First—That he has been and is in League with White and Roman, to continue the office of Governor of the State, between themselves, BY ROTATION.

Second—That he and White, and Roman, have combined their influences and prostrated the patronage of the highest office, for perpetrating their joint succession in it.

Third—That he is opposed to the election of parish officers...

Fourth—That he is emphatically the candidate of the Bank power, and if elected, will be emphatically the instrument of the ROTTEN SHIN PLASTER ARISTOCRACY.

Sixth—That he is the candidate of the Clique, whose extravagant policy has been the means of running the state in debt to the Bank to the amount of 3,000,000s of dollars, and left the state Treasury in complete bankruptcy.

To all these charges, Mr. Johnson and his Trio, and the Bank Clique at their back, stand obnoxious, they cannot refute them, Mr. Johnson himself cannot, with truth, deny them. Again then, we repeat, let the people judge for themselves and we venture to predict, they will give a righteous judgment.
THE ST. LANDRY WHIG  Nov.21. 1844.

Illegal Voting

We have been led into these reflections by the late frauds perpetrated upon the people at Plaquemines. A precinct that never has, heretofore given 400 votes, now swells that ballot to 1200—and that too in less than two years! The number of votes polled at Plaquemines in 1840 was 290, in 1842 it was 272. Here, then is an unnatural increase, in two years, of nearly 1000 votes. . . . It has been admitted by one of the locofoco gentlemen that was instrumental in carrying this business into execution that he did transport 130 men from New Orleans, for the purpose of voting at Plaquemines, and that they were legal voters! If they were intitled to a vote, why did they not vote in the city where they reside? He further says, that many others went on his boat that were not voters or who had voted before! Here, then, is the secret of this fraud. Men who were not voters, and men who were voters, (as this Tennessee gentleman affirms for, be it remembered, that the principal actor in this drama was not a Louisianian) but who would not vote at their place of residence— all, all, no doubt, amounting to about just 700—gives 970 majority for a man, where never 250 majority had been given before.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1840</th>
<th>1842</th>
<th>1843</th>
<th>1844</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whigs</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locofooco</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>1239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>290</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>1283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## PENSIONS

Pension appropriations for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congress Session</th>
<th>Appropriations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-eighth Congress First</td>
<td>$958,050.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-eighth Congress Second</td>
<td>$2,247,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-Nineth Congress First</td>
<td>$1,700,200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-nineth Congress Second</td>
<td>$1,303,700.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirtieth Congress First</td>
<td>$964,291.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirtieth Congress Second</td>
<td>$470,314.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$7,643,556.38</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The reason for the increase in three items seems to be that certain arrearages and deficiencies that had hung over the department were investigated and paid.)
SUGAR PLANTERS

Polk's position of the tariff as told in his canvass for the Gubernatorial Chair of Tennessee. He used the duty of the tariff of 1842 on foreign sugar as a theme or reproach to the Whigs. Stump speech is —his hobby—...(He is) endeavoring to prejudice the people against the "Nabob" for whose special benefit he claimed the country was taxed enormously. Item from the Nashville Union, Mr. Polk's organ—"Let it be remembered that the Democrats from Tennessee voted to make SUGAR and salt Duty Free, and that nearly all the whigs voted to make the taxes heaviest on them." This was the bone of contention.

THE TARIFF

The Tariff was the best friend of the poor man. Abolish it and we must fall back upon direct taxation. If the Tariff works hard at all it must be upon the rich man

The great American feature of the tariff, should recommend it to us in the strondest terms. With it we must become a great and powerful nation—without it, a weak and imbecile affair. It is a good maxim, that, in time of peace, we should prepare for war.
Progress of Ruin

(Extract to show how true the statements of ruin were, that resulted from the Tariff from 1842-1844.)

Gains
Increase of imports..............$17,092,477; equal to 17 per cent
Increase of exports...............$9,955,072;  "  10 "  "  
Increase of tonnage owned.........324,612;  "  15½ "  "  
Increase of tonnage built...........16,935;  "  "  21 "  "  

Losses
For any thing to put under this head we look in vain; and hence we come to the conclusion that, as losses are not shown by the official tables, they do not exist, except in the brain of ignorant and dishonest writers and politicians, who, were they able, would disturb the policy under which we are now so prosperous.

July 30, 1846.

(Analysis by the Vice president before recording his vote.)

In this Senate an analysis of the vote before me declares that while six States are equally divided, eleven are against and eleven are for the change. . . . . In a case free from constitutional objections, I could not justifiably counter act, by a sort of official veto, the general will.
The Next Governor

Considering the candidacy of Mr. H. Johnson for the gubernatorial chair as not the will of the people but that of a small number of individuals assembled in convention; and that the citizens of this state cannot be bound by the decision of that convention because many of the Parishes were not represented and besides of many of those that had a voice therein, some were represented by members of the Legislature having no instructions or authority to that effect: Considering, we say, that it would place us, at present, in a ridiculous position, and subject us in the future to excessive abuses were we to support the flimsy pretensions of Mr. Johnson for Governor.

We, the independent Whigs, hereby declare that we will for the above and following reasons oppose his election.

1. Mr. Johnson has not, in our opinion, the qualifications and talents that the first magistrate of the state should have. His first administration was marked by no one act that would recommend him for a second time.

2. It is contrary to the spirit of our institutions that the executive chair should become the heirloom of two or three individuals.

3. Because in 1815 at the time of the English invasion Mr. Johnson did not prove himself a Louisianian at heart by defending his adopted state.

4. Because of his part in the Convention of 1812, sacrificing rights of the state for admission to the Union.

5. Other things being equal it is more proper to give preference to those born within the State.

Signed:
The Whigs of East and West Baton Rouge
Ex-Governor Henry Johnson

We consider it our duty as faithful chroniclers, to state that the friends of Ex-Governor H. Johnson are determined to keep him in the field as a candidate in the second District. A large number of Democrats are willing to support the ex-Governor and are opposed to any party nomination. His name was proposed at the Whig convention but received no second. A distinguished member of the convention denounced the ex-Governor as a recreant, who had long ago been repudiated by the Whig party. His advocacy of the annexation of Texas, some years ago, alienated from him the support of a large number of the whig sugar planters, who regarded that measure as very prejudicial to our interests. This course attracted to the ex-Governor the favor of the Democrats, who talk of supporting him in preference to Judge Bullard, the regular candidate. Should the ex-Governor conform to the pledge and assurances of his friends, the contest in this district will be quite a warm and earnest one. Both candidates have passed, considerably, the meridian of life, and are veteran politicians, who have filled high posts in the state, and have a large number of friends. Should the Democrats, however, make a nomination, the contest will be a triangular one, and even more exciting. We shall stand by and see a fair fight, and duly and faithfully chronicle the movements of the different parties.
John Battiste

John Battiste is now sixty-five years of age. He was born in the big house at "Woodly" in Point Coupée Parish near the end of the Civil War. His parents were Louis and Medora Battiste, slaves of Henry Johnson. His mother was the special maid in waiting for Mrs. Johnson.

John says that Mrs. Johnson was a Catholic. She attended the church in Donaldsonville. She would at times use her leisure in instructing Medora and other slaves in religion and some phases of education. Her faith inspired others to join the church. (John wore a scapular medal on a cord about his neck even to this day.)

Mr. Johnson as far as he could remember his mother's stories did not belong to any church, although he went with his wife occasionally. (In the Story of Ascension written by Mr. S. A. Marchand there is mention of Johnson giving land to the Episcopal Institute)

Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University
Other points that John Battiste told of concerned the treatment of the slaves. He said that they considered themselves as Free Negroes because of the relative freedom enjoyed by them. He also dealt with the condition of the plantation, the house, and the customs and habits of the family.

A spirit of pride still remains after a half century has passed for John likes nothing better then to recount the stories that his mother has told him of the Johnsons and their times.
APPROVED:

Charles W. Peirce
Dean of the Graduate School

Walter Reuter
Head of the History Department

[Signature]

[Signature]