

The scandalous General James Wilkinson and  
His Connection with the Spanish, Aaron Burr, and Daniel Clark

by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Was James Wilkinson a traitor to the United States, or was he an example of an American entrepreneur during the late colonial and early Revolutionary period? From an American perspective, George Washington and the signers of the Declaration of Independence were American heroes, who threw off the shackles of tyranny imposed by King George III and the British Parliament. But to the British, they were traitors. Perspective is crucial. For James Wilkinson his fortune was crucial.

James Wilkinson epitomized the American character because he believed in the ideals of self-improvement and self-preservation by gaining advantages from his environment. His actions reflected the complexity of his character. He was a confidant of Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr, but was vilified by Daniel Clark Jr., Andrew Ellicott, and many others. Yet Wilkinson enjoyed the privileged rank of general in the US Army for nearly twenty years. He was friends to all, when it was beneficial to him, and was not above the practice of dueling for satisfaction and retribution. The general was intelligent enough to never be convicted of treason or abuse of power while obviously careless enough in his actions to be under suspicion by many including George Washington.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Clark, Jr., *Proof of the Corruption of Gen. James Wilkinson, and of His Connexion with Aaron Burr, with a Full Reputation of His Slandorous Allegations in a Relation to the Character of the Principal Witness Against Him* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1809), 41; Thomas M. Green, *The Spanish Conspiracy, A Review of Early Spanish Movement in the South-West* (Cincinnati, OH: R. Clarke & co., 1891; reprint, Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1967), 125. The reprint was used.

This present work investigates Wilkinson's relations with the Spanish, and offers insight into this complicated personality that helped shape the early history of the United States. Wilkinson's actions were complicated to say the least; it is difficult to ascertain his motives or foretell his reaction. He was an enigma to his contemporaries that has continued to confuse investigators. Documentation in the *Archivo General de Indias* provides a wealth of primary source material regarding his Spanish connection that has seldom been consulted. Utilizing such material clarifies details and theories presently available and helps unravel various errors that are all too easily encountered when researching James Wilkinson. This American General also reflected a personality type that was common among the settlers, citizens, and adventurers of the American Old Southwest. While Wilkinson was an extraordinary figure, his actions and emotions towards the Spanish and later Mexicans, and his desire for wealth and land were very common traits among the western population of the United States of America.

But compiling a biography is a difficult art. It is easy to present a person in varying light by either omitting facts or casting events in a different order to prove a point. It is recognized that the best biography of a character is written by an acquaintance because of their ability to depict the subject's overall psychological status from period to period and event to event.<sup>2</sup> The goal here, however, is not to write another biography about a controversial man, but to highlight critical periods in Wilkinson's life with the help of archival documentation. The historical study of the life of James Wilkinson has many limitations, and one must be aware of them. It is the writer's responsibility to

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<sup>2</sup>John A. Garraty, *The Nature of Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), 12-15: 25.

present the facts and logical conclusions, but the readers also have to understand the circumstances or reasons surrounding the subject. Times have changed and certain ideals of society have changed, too. New concepts and ideas have emerged. Today's perspective and understanding of Wilkinson is filtered by two hundred years of history, opinions, discussions, and literature surrounding his person and the nature of the American Southwest.

One thing is clear: James Wilkinson raised passions and pens! Everybody had something to say about his omnipotent presence in the Southwest. A contemporary, Daniel Clark, wrote *Proof of Corruption* in response to accusations made by Wilkinson about Clark's involvement in the Aaron Burr Conspiracy. Wilkinson's reaction to Clark's book will be discussed later as will many other publications about Wilkinson. The readers can draw their own conclusions, or at least contemplate the confusing and often puzzling actions of General James Wilkinson.

Wilkinson was born in Calvert County, Maryland, in 1757.<sup>3</sup> During the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 he served in the Revolutionary army, enlisting as a gentleman in a rifle company and ascended to the rank of General. His skills and abilities as a soldier and later as a general were mixed. He often used the tactic of threatening force but did not act aggressively. He was noted for his delays and inactions,

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<sup>3</sup> Royal Ornan Shreve, *The Finished Scoundrel: General James Wilkinson, Sometime Commander-in-Chief of Army of the United States, Who Made Intrigue a Trade and Treason a Profession* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs- Merrill Company, 1993), 16. James Wilkinson was probably born in Calvert County on the eastern side of the Chesapeake Bay located approximately fifty miles from Washington, DC. Royal Ornan Shreve places the birth of Wilkinson in Tidewater, Maryland, which no longer exists and may not have existed in the year 1757.

but still rose to the rank of Commander in Chief of “the Small Army” in the West. He was often described as a political general, but he never displayed allegiance to any particular party. In fact, at times he failed to show a strong allegiance to his country. Wilkinson was a complicated, ubiquitous character. At one point in his life, he held the military command in the west and had the power that could have split the nation and perhaps create his own country. During those days he was one of the most powerful men in the west because of his connection to every aspect of society: mercantile, military, and political. On the other hand, Wilkinson served his country for nearly thirty years and did not sever the nation. He helped expose the conspirators he believed involved in the Burr Conspiracy, and went to where he was posted. Although court-martialed twice, he was never convicted of abuse of power or treason. While his actions may have favored the Democratic- Republican Party over the Federalist Party, he was never too far away from the other.

Few contemporaries who knew him were indifferent to the man. They either helped further his plans or became alienated. There was no middle ground. He was dangerous to some and a charming host to others. If you knew a dirty secret about him, then he knew one about you, and if he did not, he knew enough information to create one.<sup>4</sup> But everybody knew and understood that General James Wilkinson was a man of

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<sup>4</sup> James Ripley Jacobs, *Tarnished Warrior: Major-General James Wilkinson* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), 263- 276. Wilkinson was able to clear his own name by darkening those of his accusers.

influence. He understood the human psyche of his fellow man. He believed that self-interest was the action that guided everybody, including himself.<sup>5</sup>

Wilkinson militarily was not a man of action. His victory at Mobile, Alabama, in 1813 was a bloodless battle. He gained the dignity of victory through negotiations and threat of force. Afterwards, he failed to lead an army to victory in the northern campaign in Montreal in the War of 1812, where he suffered many hardships due to tactical errors and poor planning. In the annals of American history, he will not go down as a Grant, a Sherman, or a Patton, but rather as a general who defeated the British, tricked Spanish, and nearly severed the United States through coercion and leveraging. Because Wilkinson never performed a dramatic act such as separating Kentucky and delivering it to Spain, his name is not remembered. And it was because of his military posturing on the Sabine River that hostilities in Texas were subdued and the eventual acquisition of Lone Star state to the United States was delayed thirty years.<sup>6</sup>

Wilkinson has been described by Ron Chernow, a historian of Alexander Hamilton, as, “The son of a Maryland planter, the hard-drinking Wilkinson was always ready for any mayhem...The plump, ruddy Wilkinson made a showy appearance, wearing medals and gold buttons on his braided uniform. Even in the backwoods, he

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<sup>5</sup> Shreve, *The Finished Scoundrel*, 161; [Declaration of James Wilkinson], New Orleans, August 22, 1787, Archivo General de Indias (here after AGI), Papeles Procedentes de Cuba (here after PC), legajo 2373, Seville, Spain.

<sup>6</sup> Issac Joslin Cox, “The New Invasion of the Goths and the Vandals,” *Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association*, 8(1914): 176-200.

rode around in gold stirrups and spurs while seated on a leopard saddlecloth.”<sup>7</sup> But Wilkinson came from humble beginnings and was educated in medicine before he heard his calling for the military during the American Revolutionary War. A major social achievement was his marriage on November 12, 1778, at Christ Church, Philadelphia, to Ann Biddle, who belonged to a merchant family based in Philadelphia. During that time and at certain social levels marriage was not always about love and endless passion. It was an institution for social mobility and advancement, or not. That is not to say Wilkinson did not love his love his wife. He did. She was the subject of several letters between Wilkinson and the Spanish governors. Wilkinson displayed a caring and sometimes worrying obedience to his wife.<sup>8</sup> Some concluded that the General’s constant absence due to military relocation showed his neglect of family, and that he was an unfaithful husband. But no records of illegitimate children speak of such dalliances.

The character of James Wilkinson was further illustrated in fictional novels. In David Nevin’s novel, *Treason*, the General appeared as a fat, corrupt tyrant in New Orleans.<sup>9</sup> Nevin based much of his depiction of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison from Joseph J. Ellis’s *American Sphinx*.<sup>10</sup> But it is important to note that Ellis received criticism for his depiction of Thomas Jefferson because of the falsification of his own

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<sup>7</sup> Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 568.

<sup>8</sup> James Wilkinson, Louisville, Kentucky, to the Baron Carondelet, [undated], AGI, PC, legajo 211, Seville, Spain.

<sup>9</sup> David Nevin, *Treason* (New York: A Tom Doherty Associates Book, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997).

personal credentials.<sup>11</sup> Nevin's novel clearly depicted Wilkinson as an insidious villain as a means to entertain. Much of the characterization of the General comes from historical articles. And of course, some of the historical works themselves have hidden agendas. In Janice Holt Giles's novel, *The Land Beyond the Mountains*,<sup>12</sup> James Wilkinson was characterized as a cunning former military officer from the east looking for financial success in the expanding territory of Kentucky. There exist definite differences between the two Generals depicted by Nevin and Giles. Why was that? One reason for a difference presented was a difference in the setting of the two novels. Giles novel occurred during the late 1780's before Wilkinson began communicating with the Spanish. Wilkinson was new to the country, and was starting a family. He did not have the backing of an officer rank since he was no longer a soldier, instead he relied only the prestige of his former positions. In Nevin's novel, the Wilkinson character had already long been a general in the West, and the allegations about his involvements with Spanish were more than whispers. Another reason why there was a difference in the characters was the sources used in developing the character of James Wilkinson. Both authors were exposed to a similar volume of source material regarding Wilkinson even though their works were published nearly fifty years apart. Giles in the 1950's used archival sources from Kentucky to portray an image of Wilkinson in territorial Kentucky, while Nevin used the biographical novels and other more recent publication about the Aaron Burr

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Charles Hoffer, *Past Imperfect* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 208-229.

<sup>12</sup> Janice Holt Giles, *The Land Beyond the Mountains* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1958).

Conspiracy, that would be considered pro-Burr, or *Burrite*, to development his Wilkinson. Whatever the case, both authors provided interesting depictions of James Wilkinson, and incorporated their literary license in developing their characters.

Even during the general's lifetime, books were written about his actions. Any study of the historiography of James Wilkinson must start with Daniel Clark's *Proof of Corruption of the General James Wilkinson*. Clark aimed squarely at proving the general guilty of treason against the United States of America. Clark provided "proofs" of corruption by the general who Clark accused of allegiance to the Spanish Crown. The author explored the relationship developed by the general with the Spanish governors of Louisiana before the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 in an effort to discredit Wilkinson's testimony against Aaron Burr.

It is important to understand why Daniel Clark published his accusations against General James Wilkinson. After the trials of Aaron Burr for treason, everyone linked to Aaron Burr was neither innocent nor guilty. Both Burr and Wilkinson, and their close associates, acquired a taint of treachery from the proceedings. The main witness at the trial was the general himself. His inability to give specific details and to explain his exact involvement with Aaron Burr led many to become suspicious of his involvement. One person particularly concerned was Congressman John Randolph of Roanoke, North Carolina. Clark's book may have been an attempt for Clark to advance his political career, while at the same time delivering a blow to Wilkinson, and distancing himself from the Burr Conspiracy. While the relationship between Daniel Clark and James Wilkinson will be discussed in more detail later, it is important to note that Clark's book

in the hands of John Randolph led to the trial of Wilkinson before of the House of Representatives in 1811.

In 1815, after being cleared of all charges and discharged from the army due to financial cut backs, Wilkinson sat down and wrote his memoirs. He believed that his career as a brevetted major-general in the War of American Independence and as an Indian fighter in the West would inspire others and would shine a patriotic light on his record that only a few others could compare themselves too. James Wilkinson spent several years writing, but his book was unsuccessful. His attempt to exonerate himself came in a verbose form full of ramblings that sold few copies to a reluctant public because the general was no longer relevant to the public spotlight.

After Wilkinson's death in Mexico in 1825, the controversies that accompanied him subsided. His correspondences with the Spanish government lay quietly hidden in the Cuban and Spanish archives, and his rivals had either died years before or shortly after him. Almost seventy years would pass before Thomas Marshall Green published in 1891, *The Spanish Conspiracy*, and revived the involvement of James Wilkinson with the Spanish. Much of Green's work was based upon the contributions made by Charles Gayarré in his multivolume *The History of Louisiana*.<sup>13</sup> Thomas Marshall Green was the grandson of Thomas Marshall, who had been a bitter enemy of James Wilkinson.<sup>14</sup> Green, however, provided a fairly biased depiction. In his argument, Green made every

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<sup>13</sup>Charles Gayarré, *The History of Louisiana*, (4 vols., New York: W. J. Widdleton, 1866).

<sup>14</sup> James Wilkinson, *Wilkinson, Solider, and Pioneer* (New Orleans: Rogers Printing Company, 1935), 148-159.

attempt to accuse Wilkinson of wrong doing as had Daniel Clark, but Green had no documentary evidence to support his claims. For its' time and level of research, *The Spanish Conspiracy* was an excellent book that explained the political and social environments of Kentucky and the western territories shortly after the creation of the United States of America. Many of the arguments expressed by Green would later be validated with the documentation from the Spanish Archives.

Another revival of literature on General James Wilkinson occurred during the first quarter of the twentieth century thanks in part to the discovery of correspondences in the Archivo General de Indias (A.G.I.) in Seville, Spain and the Archivo Histórico Nacional in Madrid. With the opening of the A.G.I. to American historians many of the accusations against Wilkinson in relation to his involvement with the Spanish could finally be answered. Historians like Issac Joslin Cox began to develop a detailed picture of Wilkinson in Louisiana. Cox may have been overly dramatic in his title, "The New Invasion of the Goths and Vandals," but the title was taken from Wilkinson's own observations about the Old Southwest.<sup>15</sup> Cox seemed less bias in his depiction of James Wilkinson than his predecessors and provided a clearer understanding of the general's activities in the west after the period of the "Spanish Conspiracy."

The revival of James Wilkinson's career in historical journals prompted a biographical boom in the 1930s and 1940s. Royal Ornan Shreve published the first of the biographies, *The Finished Scoundrel*, in 1933. Later historians and investigators of Wilkinson criticized Shreve as being uncritical and inaccurate in his information

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<sup>15</sup>Cox, "The New Invasion of the Goths and Vandals," 176-200.

regarding Wilkinson. Shreve employed archival correspondences to support his argument, but failed to cite where the documentation could be found. Verification of his information is a daunting task! It is clear from his title that Shreve believed Wilkinson was more a rascal than general. Shreve used a copy of Wilkinson's Memoirs from the library of the University of California at Los Angeles as his primary source.

In 1935, James Wilkinson, a grandson of the general's brother Joseph, published *Wilkinson, Soldier and Pioneer*. The descendent used this book in the same manner that the General used his memoirs. *Wilkinson, Soldier and Pioneer* exonerated James Wilkinson in the twentieth century. The book attacked many of the theories and accusations advanced by Shreve and others, but failed to discredit Wilkinson's well documented relationship with the Spanish. In fact some of the rebuttals are filled with historical inaccuracies.<sup>16</sup> Wilkinson wanted to honor his grandfather's brother's actions and service to the United States, but could only do this by attacking Wilkinson's former foes, such as Andrew Jackson. James Wilkinson must have been enraged by what he perceived as a disgrace to his family's name.<sup>17</sup> One of his motives for writing was that others, in their portrayal of the General, did not respect the honor of the dead. Yet he ended his book with hypocritical and slanderous remarks about General Wilkinson's

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<sup>16</sup>Wilkinson, *Wilkinson, Soldier and Pioneer*, 175-183. Wilkinson argued that one of the theories proposed by Shreve was inaccurate. Wilkinson believed Shreve was wrong in his account of the date of the death of the Viceroy Iturrigaray of Mexico, and wrote that the Viceroy actually died five years after what Shreve reported. Shreve was correct, however, in dating Iturrigaray's death in 1816. Wilkinson failed to weaken Shreve's argument while at the same time discrediting his own.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 177. At the time of the publication of *Wilkinson, Soldier and Pioneer*, the Wilkinson family had served the United States Armed Forces for five generations.

rivals, especially Andrew Jackson. He failed to clear his family's name, and he helped to cast more doubt about the true character of General Wilkinson.

Two other biographical works appeared shortly after James Wilkinson's work. *The Tarnished Warrior* written in 1938 by James Ripley Jacobs was followed by *The Admirable Trumpeter* by Thomas Robson Hay and M. R. Werner in 1941.<sup>18</sup> Both provide more accurate and unbiased presentations of the general. There is not a feeling of attempted redemption as in *Wilkinson, Solider and Pioneer*, nor is there an impression of disgrace and antipathy as expressed in *The Finished Scoundrel*. Jacobs, and Hay and Warner are better balanced, and portray a dynamic character that was secretive, egomaniacal, powerful, and arrogant. Both show that the main driving force for General James Wilkinson was self preservation.

A well researched biography of Spanish Governor Manuel Gayoso de Lemos by Jack Holmes, published in 1965, depicted Wilkinson as a close friend of the Gayoso family. In *Gayoso: The Life of a Spanish Governor in the Mississippi Valley 1789- 1799*, Holmes depicted the interaction between with the Spanish Governor of Louisiana, and how Gayoso perceived Wilkinson.<sup>19</sup> Holmes portrayed Wilkinson as a generous, thoughtful friend. Holmes portrayal of Gayoso was innovative because it provided a little known Spanish official to an English audience.

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas Robson Hay and M. R. Werner, *The Admirable Trumpeter: A biography of General James Wilkinson* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, & Company, 1941).

<sup>19</sup> Jack D. L. Holmes, *Gayoso: The Life of a Spanish Governor in the Mississippi Valley 1789- 1799* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1968, originally published 1965).

Some of the earlier studies were only based on English documentation and thereby only provided a small portion of the actual picture. The same can be said of numerous historical studies throughout the world. Historians are not only limited to the sources available, but also to understanding languages and precedence. If they are not capable of reading and understanding foreign documentation, they will be unable to provide an entire picture. For the history of Louisiana and Wilkinson it is vital to understand French, English, and Spanish.

The recent publications of *Aaron Burr Conspiracy to Treason* by Buckner F. Melton, Jr. and of *Fallen Founder: The Life of Aaron Burr* by Nancy Isenberg attempt to show the connection between Aaron Burr and James Wilkinson and to what degree the two men had responsibility over the planning and execution of the events that led to the trial of Aaron Burr.<sup>20</sup> Melton's conclusion was ambiguous and imprecise as to depth Wilkinson participated in Aaron Burr plans. The relationship of power was an important issue in the Burr Conspiracy. Who was the pawn and who was the king in developing and executing the plot? Melton believed that both were guilty to some degree. To Melton, it may have been more than just the idea and encouragement that Wilkinson promised Burr. Yet this question cannot be answered unless more evidence comes to light. Melton showed some admiration for Aaron Burr, but concluded his book with a remark by Aaron Burr confirming his aspiration for invading Texas and Mexico, thereby convicting the former vice president of treason.

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<sup>20</sup> Buckner F. Melton, Jr., *Aaron Burr Conspiracy to Treason* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002); Nancy Isenberg, *Fallen Founder: The Life of Aaron Burr* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2007).

Isenberg on the other hand would be classified as a pure Burrrite. Her Aaron Burr was not a victim of his own pride and desires, but the victim of political persecution by Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. For Isenberg, Wilkinson was a tool used by Jefferson to punish the innocent Burr in an attempt to hinder him politically. While the motive of *Fallen Founder* was obvious; it is still an excellent book and an exemplary new look at Aaron Burr.

When gathering information regarding Wilkinson, one of the constant issues is that some of the data and dates from the biographies and historical documents do not coincide with what had been documented by other authors. The incongruence in the information makes it necessary to look at the primary sources used in the compilation of the secondary interpretations. Some books such as *Wilkinson, Solider and Pioneer* do not give references, which make it difficult to verify the arguments. Certainly the best way of correcting the inaccuracy regarding Wilkinson's life is to utilize trustworthy sources and provide full citations. And the best material for understanding the personality of Wilkinson is his correspondence, which is held in various archives in United States, Mexico, England, Spain, and Cuba.

One of the principal archives for Wilkinson material is the *Archivo General de Indias* in Seville, Spain.<sup>21</sup> The *Archivo General de Indias* preserves an enormous volume

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<sup>21</sup> Estimates describe the holdings of the *Archivo General de Indias* as containing somewhere between 32,000,000 to 64,000,000 documents. Juan de Herrera, the architect of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, also designed the *Casa Lonja*, which once housed the *Casa de Contratación*. The building was completed on August 14, 1598. When the *Casa de Contratación* moved to Cadiz in the early eighteenth century, the building was abandoned and unutilized until 1778 when Juan Bautista Muñoz proposed the project of its conversion to an archive. The proposal was supported by the Minister of the Indies,

of the correspondence to and from Spain and their Americans possessions. While other archives in the America may contain additional information, they most likely do not provided the breath of levels of communiqués from local to regional to trans-Atlantic; from the Spanish court to the American colonials. Ideally the study of James Wilkinson would survey all of his writings, and those things written about him by his contemporaries, to establish as full a portrait as possible. But to canvas such a vast array of materials would take some time. In the AGI, however, there are three complete *legajos*, in the *Papeles de Cuba* solely dedicated to the correspondence of James Wilkinson with the Spanish administrators in Louisiana.<sup>22</sup> Some 4800 individual documents pertaining to the history of the United States were pulled and placed in *legajos* 2351- 2375 by Sr. González Verger and Professor William R. Shepard. The *legajos* 2351 to 2356 were copied for the Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi. The remaining *legajos* 2357- 2375 were to be calendared and transcribed for the Library of Congress.<sup>23</sup> Scattered throughout the other approximately 900 *legajos* of the *Papeles de Cuba* and the *Audencia de Santo Domingo* are many other documents that illuminate the character of Wilkinson. Some materials were damaged due to aging, treatment, and environment, but those about Wilkinson in the AGI are in fair to good condition and legible. Frequently, accompanying the original written messages in Wilkinson's hand are

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José de Gálvez. Presently, the *sala of investigación* is located in a building across the street from the *Casa Lonja*.

<sup>22</sup> *Legajo* are literally bundles of paper and each contains approximately 800 -1000 folios.

<sup>23</sup> Roscoe R. Hill, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Documents relating to the History of the United States in the Papeles Procedentes de Cuba Deposited in the Archivo General de Indias at Seville* (Washington DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1916), xxv-xxvi.

translations performed by the governor's staff. Much of the correspondences from Wilkinson with the Spanish officials tapered off after 1802. This coincided with the change of possession of Louisiana from Spanish to French and then to the United States. Wilkinson may have felt it was no longer advantageous for him to continue his correspondence with the Spanish, but he continued some correspondence until the fall of Mobile in 1813. The voluminous documentation in the Archivo General de Indias covers over twenty years, but of course only reveals what Wilkinson desired to show to the Spanish.

Also included among the *Papeles de Cuba* papers are Wilkinson letters written in cipher. A majority of the ciphers are decoded and reveal the intended message while some of the ciphers are incomplete, and the messages remain encrypted. What was so important and sensitive that Wilkinson felt it necessary to write to the Governors of Louisiana in code? If his true connections to the Spanish were purely commercial then why would it be relevant to correspond in cipher? The ciphers were composed by a series of numbers that corresponded with a pocket dictionary supplied to the governors by Wilkinson. On December 19, 1790 Wilkinson send a packet enclosed with two dictionaries to Gayoso and Miró. Within the dictionary were keys on how to decipher his future correspondence.<sup>24</sup> Wilkinson never mentioned the specific dictionary he sent. Several historians have noted that it was an Entick pocket dictionary, but more than twenty different dictionaries were published in the United States before 1800, and that

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<sup>24</sup> James Wilkinson, Louisville, Kentucky, to Manuel Gayoso de Lemos, February 6, 1790, AGI, PC, legajo 2374, Seville, Spain.

does not include dictionaries published in the United Kingdom that could have also been available to Wilkinson. The Entick pocket dictionary was cited in various articles in regards to Wilkinson deciphering Aaron Burr's message in 1806.<sup>25</sup> The dictionary used as the key with the Spanish officials could very well have been The Royal Standard Dictionary by Perry William because the changing edition dates coincided with the changing of the cipher. The first edition to be published in the United States was in 1788, shortly after Wilkinson's initial descent down the Mississippi River, and it measured 23 by 15cm, which is fairly compact, and comparable in size to the Entick pocket dictionary.<sup>26</sup> The first change to the cipher occurred on February 6, 1790. George Dunn was sent by Wilkinson to deliver to Esteban Miró two dictionaries that served as keys to future correspondence.<sup>27</sup> In 1793 the ciphers key was changed again when the General sent a letter presumably to Governor Miró explaining he could not find the same edition as before. The letter was delivered again by George Dunn, the nephew of Isaac B. Dunn and former business partner of Wilkinson.<sup>28</sup>

Along with the decrease in the number of letters between Wilkinson and Spanish authorities after the Louisiana Purchase, there were no longer any ciphers employed.

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<sup>25</sup> Melton, *Aaron Burr Conspiracy to Treason*, 105.

<sup>26</sup> Rolland H. McGiverin, "Dictionaries Published in the United States 1703- 1832," [http://library.indstate.edu/about/units/rbrc/cordell/american\\_dictionaries.pdf](http://library.indstate.edu/about/units/rbrc/cordell/american_dictionaries.pdf) (accessed on October 25, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> James Wilkinson, Louisville, Kentucky, to Manuel Gayoso de Lemos, February 6, 1790, AGI, PC, legajo 2374, Seville, Spain.

<sup>28</sup> James Wilkinson, [no place given], to Esteban Miró, [day and month unknown] 1793, AGI, PC, legajo 2374, Seville, Spain.

One reason for this was because the two principle recipients of the ciphers, Miró and Gayoso, were no longer alive, and the principle “objective” was no longer visible. The latest dated cipher to be discovered in the Spanish Archives is from March 10, 1799. It was written to the Spanish governor Gayoso shortly before he died, and the form of the cipher was not similar to other ciphers previously sent.

It would be possible to solve the uncompleted ciphers which are scattered throughout the *legajos* with the correct dictionary and correct edition. However there were several editions used in the correspondences which are outdated and difficult to find. Plus the dictionaries are not stored in the *legajos*. In principal if one had the correct edition of the dictionary, they would be able to translate the ciphers made by Wilkinson. Appendix A and B demonstrate what is encountered when working with Wilkinson’s ciphered letters. Appendix A is a transcribed cipher written by Wilkinson to Governor Gayoso on April 20, 1797. The Appendix B is the decrypted letter transcribed. It is important to note that the decrypted letters do not always accompany the ciphered letters in the *legajos*, and some decrypted letters are still scattered throughout other *legajos* in the Papeles Procedentes de Cuba. Appendix C is another cipher from 1799 when key or dictionary had changed. In later ciphers there is a lack numbers with inserted period and an appearance of new symbols and shapes. The symbols and shapes probably correspond to a proper name or place. A decrypted letter is not presented with this cipher.

Also scattered throughout Wilkinson’s correspondence in the Spanish archives were letters written partially in cipher. In these letters a majority of the words were written in clear English, while the names people and places were encrypted. Such

encryptions were represented by a single number or a series of underscored dashes, each corresponding with an individual letter of the name or place.

Other, perhaps higher risk, letters were encrypted entirely with numbers. Single and double digit numbers that did not have a period following them represented proper names and places. Numbers that had a period were ciphered with the aid of the key and the dictionary. The numbers to the left of the decimal point represented the column or page number of the word, while the number to the right represented how many lines down the page or column the intended word was located. This theory was tested with the aid of an 1812 Stereotype edition Entick dictionary.<sup>29</sup> In the stereotype edition, each page had two columns as opposed to the editions available to Wilkinson, which had one column on each page. It is presumed that there were only thirty-four lines on each page because the numbers to the right of the period in the ciphered letters never exceed the number thirty-four. In the Entick 1812, edition the available line space was forty words per column. The results of this test were mixed, and occasionally the ciphered word from

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<sup>29</sup> John Robinson, ed., *Entick's New Spelling Dictionary, in Which the Parts of Speech are Accurately Distinguished, and the Syllables Accented According to the Just and Natural Pronunciation of Each Word; With a Comprehensive Grammar of the English Tongue, Teaching to Read and Write the English Language with Propriety and Ease. To Which are Subjoined, a Brief Account of the Heathen Deities, and Other Fabulous Persons, Together with Principal Heroes and Heroines of Antiquity: Recompiled from the Best Authorities. The Most Usual Christian Names of Men and Women. A Table of Precedency of Rank. Complete Directions for Addressing Persons of Every Rank in Society, Either Personally or by Letter. A Concise Explanation of the Most Common Abbreviations of Words Used in the English Language. An Alphabetical Arrangement of Maritime and Inland Counties, with Their Chief Towns and Rivers. A List of Cities, Boroughs, Market-Towns, and Principal Villages, in Great Britain, with Their Distances from London in Measured Miles, revised, stereotype edition* (London: W. Wilson, St. John's Square, 1812).

the deciphered letter matched the 1812 edition, yet the results were not accurate enough to be considered successful.

In the literature, Wilkinson was often referred to as Spanish agent thirteen. This was an error that resulted from researchers not being able to understand the handwriting of Wilkinson. In Wilkinson's cipher the number seventy-three was the code for himself, but because of his penmanship the seven could easily be mistaken for a one. One of the advantages of working with scores of Wilkinson's original documents is the skill acquired in reading his and others handwriting.

James Wilkinson was raised in Maryland, and educated in medicine in Philadelphia; however, he went into a career in the military at the outbreak of the War of American Independence. Wilkinson served with Benedict Arnold on the Canadian front. Arnold, of course, became the most famous turncoat in American history. But Wilkinson rose through the ranks of the military at a young age, thanks to his association with General Horatio Gates.

His early military career reflected the same accusations of controversy as did the rest of his life. He was involved in the plot to remove General George Washington from his position as commander of the Revolutionary Army and replace him with General Horatio Gates. Wilkinson was not a conspirator of the plan, but was the unknowing leak. General Wilkinson mentioned the plot after an evening of drinking. After his part in the Conway Cabal, Wilkinson resigned his position as brevetted brigadier-general in the U.S. Army. He was then appointed the position of clothier-general.<sup>30</sup> The rest of his

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<sup>30</sup> Wilkinson, *Wilkinson, Solider, and Pioneer*, 2.

military career was marked with patches of tardiness and his appointments and promotions were given out of necessity not always merit. After the end of the Revolutionary War and the acknowledgment of the rights of the United States of America, Wilkinson, like many others, left Maryland for Kentucky in 1783 in an attempt to secure a fortune in a new land.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Green, *Spanish Conspiracy*, 122.

## CHAPTER II

### WILKINSON'S MOVE OVER THE APPALACHIANS

*Un secreto vale lo que aquellos de quienes tenemos que guardarlo.*<sup>32</sup>

After the Treaty of Paris, 1783, and the establishment of the United States of America, its territories west of the Appalachian Mountains, Kentucky in particular, provided a rich, fertile region with abundant land for settlers. The physical environment of Kentucky was lush land optimal for agricultural cultivation and prosperity as compared to the lands in Virginia that were becoming depleted by continual farming. Kentucky offered new land and new opportunities for willing people. The Ohio River provided settlers with a valuable resource because of its connection to the Mississippi River and to further global markets. New Orleans was an inciting market because the Appalachian Mountains separated Kentucky from the Atlantic States and the possibility of easy commerce to the east. The entire Ohio valley became the target not only for poor farmers of the east, but it also represented opportunity for the speculator. James Wilkinson was a member of the latter group. He saw Kentucky as an opportunity for financial success and to establish himself in a position of extreme importance and wealth. Wilkinson realized as did every other citizens in the territory the only way to make a profit was by establishing a trading system to sell the products raised in Kentucky to local and distance markets. However, the Mississippi River was closed by the Spanish in 1784 and trade with the Atlantic States was slow and challenging.

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<sup>32</sup> Carlos Ruiz Zafón, *La Sombra del Viento* (Barcelona, Spain: Planeta, 2001), 17. “A secret's worth depends on the people from whom it must be kept.”

Kentucky during the late eighteenth- century was a land of political disarray. A majority of the people displayed characteristics of the backwoods culture. They were viewed as rugged individualists, who believed in high levels of personal liberties. The Kentucky territory of the 1780s was a “secondary domain.” It had an established delegation and was applying for statehood either with Virginia or as a separate state. Kentucky had judges, lawyers, and businessmen who were looking to build upon the foundation started by the initial settlers of the area. It was an agricultural society with a focus on an export economy.<sup>33</sup>

Wilkinson was an oddity in territorial Kentucky because he was not the prototypical frontier man; he previously held the rank of major- general, which was a rarity in the backwoods frontier. His military status represented law and order, which was antithetical of the frontier man’s desire for liberty and distances from society. His military status and training, however, was beneficial because he was looked upon to help establish a militia or armed force to fight off Indian attacks. To Wilkinson, Spanish New Orleans provided a wealthy market for trading goods, and a royal treasury full of silver from its American mines. In contrast, Kentucky to the Spanish was a territory full of rebels and adventures who were looking for a profit and their own land. The Spanish perceived the expanding settlers as a treat, while at the same time a valuable means of populating their own territory and checking the expansion of the newly liberated American nation by incorporating the settlers under the protection of the Spanish Crown.

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<sup>33</sup> Terry G. Jordan, and Matti Kaups, *The American Backwoods Frontier: An Ethnic and Ecological Interpretation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 1-5.

The people of Kentucky were courted from all directions, from the north and Canada by the British, from the south and New Orleans by the Spanish, and from the east and the Atlantic States by the Americans. The residents of the Kentucky territory were divided between their futures. The Americans on the Eastern seaboard wanted to impose taxes and keep the Mississippi closed in order to invigorate the Atlantic trade with England and Europe. Spanish and English agents in America and abroad offered the support and protection for an uprising by supplying arms and military assistances to create a new separate nation with allegiances and commercial ties to them. Spain wanted a separate nation between the United States and Louisiana to serve as an addition buffer for the mines in Mexico.<sup>34</sup> The British, who were still reeling from the loss of their former colonies, wanted to disrupt the political and commercial development of the United States in the hope they could regain their lost property.

Rule and government in Spanish Louisiana and the Old Southwest was quasi-anarchical. The governors of Louisiana and the other areas in the New World had still had to answer to the will of the king in Madrid. But the governors also listened to the *Cabildo* -town council-, the merchants, and the other citizens. Depending on the subject matter and the sensitivity of the issues, the governors of Louisiana communicates with their immediate superior the Captain General in Cuba, and the Viceroy of New Spain (Mexico), who technically was the highest ranking official in Spanish North America. These officials then had to write to the Minister of the Indies in Madrid, and the Spanish court would decide what course of action was to be taken. The reply was then returned

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<sup>34</sup> Jared William Bradley, ed., *Interim Appointment: W. C. C. Claiborne Letter Book, 1804- 1805* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 486.

through the same channels of communication. A trans-Atlantic request took three or more months for a message to reach Madrid and return to the American officials. On occasion, the governors and other officials on the frontiers of the Spanish empire had to react without direction from the Spanish court because of a lack time. This process was time consuming, and not advantageous for the administrators, but for historians it provided enormous amount of written records that were copied and relayed throughout the Spanish Empire.

As for the Americans, the communication process was much shorter because there was not an ocean separating the governmental procedure. Still correspondence in the Old Southwest took time because there were few roads and no established mail system. If mail was sent by land, delivery could be delayed by swamps, hostile Indians, or storms. Correspondences from New Orleans to Philadelphia or Washington were usually shipped via the Gulf of Mexico around Florida and along the Atlantic Coast to its destination. The less frequently used alternate route was up the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers to Pittsburgh and then over the mountains, a slow and arduous process. The response would then be returned either over land or by ship around Florida via the Gulf of Mexico and then to New Orleans. Either way took months.

Spanish officials in Louisiana became acquainted with James Wilkinson on December 20, 1786, when the general wrote to the Francisco Cruzat, Lieutenant Governor of St. Louis. Wilkinson informed the Spanish that anybody in the post of Vicennes who was harmed or abused by George Rogers Clark could come to Virginia to

file a suit for reparations.<sup>35</sup> This letter displayed the characteristics Wilkinson employed throughout the rest of the involvement with the Spanish. He flattered his correspondents and enclosed sensitive information in the hopes of appearing helpful and faithful. In the year 1787, Wilkinson met in New Orleans with Esteban Miró, the governor of Louisiana. From his contact with Miró, Wilkinson personally received the right to navigate and trade on the Mississippi River. Miró granted Wilkinson a monopoly on trade from Kentucky to New Orleans. Wilkinson was allowed to transport a guaranteed amount of tobacco duty free and these rights continued to be granted by succeeding governors of Louisiana until the Mississippi was opened to all in 1795.

It was during this time period, Wilkinson was accused of becoming a pensioner of the Spanish government. The right of monopoly and the payments received from the Spanish government were in cooperation with the plan of succession of the western territories of the United States to Spain. Wilkinson was to secure the annexation of the Kentucky territory by his influence and with the bribes paid by the Spanish to influential members of Kentucky society. During this time Wilkinson wrote to Spanish officials telling them which Americans could be persuaded and which were supportive of Spanish support (appendix E).<sup>36</sup> According to historian James Jacobs, Wilkinson was more than a stooge in Spanish Conspiracy. Wilkinson told Miró and the other Spanish governors

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<sup>35</sup> James Wilkinson, Kentucky, to Francisco Cruzat, December 20, 1786, AGI, PC, legajo 2373, Seville, Spain; Arthur Preston Whitaker, "James Wilkinson's First Descent to New Orleans in 1787," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 8 (Feb 1928): 92-93.

<sup>36</sup> James Wilkinson, New Orleans, to Andres L. Armesto, September 14, 1787, AGI, PC, legajo 2373, Seville, Spain.

what they wanted to hear in order to gain their trust and the financial resources necessary to repay his outstanding debts. Most of Wilkinson's requests were only in reference to the tobacco that he was transporting down the Mississippi.<sup>37</sup>

Miró soon informed Wilkinson that he should quit the tobacco business and focus on the primary objective.<sup>38</sup> James Wilkinson was not only employed by the Spanish for tobacco trade from Kentucky, but also as an agent to help foster the annexation of the Kentucky territory. His second objective was to promote immigration to Louisiana in the hopes of creating pro-Spanish sentiment among the American settlers. His third assignment was to protect his employers. He did this by informing the Spanish officials of possible attacks from filibusters and other renegades, and by keeping his affiliation with the Spanish secret.

Wilkinson never achieved his first objective, but he did put a price tag on the project of annexation. He requested more than two-hundred thousands dollars in order to start the process. This proposal was to be approved by the crown and relayed via the Spanish minister in Philadelphia. The decision was to be secretly sent in French to a Mr.

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<sup>37</sup> James Wilkinson, New Orleans, to Baron de Carondelet, March 25, 1797, AGI, PC, legajo 2375, Seville, Spain.

<sup>38</sup> Esteban Miró, New Orleans, to James Wilkinson, September 20, 1790, AGI, PC, legajo 2374, Seville, Spain.

Tardiveau.<sup>39</sup> This sum did not include the seventeen thousands dollars requested for bribes of prominent Americans in the Western counties.<sup>40</sup>

His third objective of protecting his Spanish employers he carried out exceedingly well. Many letters in the Spanish archives were from Wilkinson detailing possible attacks from English, American, or Indians. George Roger Clark was the target of several of Wilkinson warnings to the Spanish. Roger Clark with the aid of Doctor James O'Fallon was at the center of a land expedition for the East Yazoo Company. They wanted to settled land along the Yazoo River which was a Spanish territory at the time. Wilkinson got wind of a possible filibuster party and wrote Miró informing him to fortify his defenses in preparation for Clark.<sup>41</sup> The threat frizzled without any conflict. Wilkinson realized this information was worth a reward, and if the Spanish were removed from Louisiana he could not receive a pension.

The idea of allegiance was an interesting issue in the Old Southwest. People who lived in Louisiana, East Florida, and West Florida were under continually changing foreign sovereigns. They may have been citizens of France, Britain, or Spain over the years, but then their sentiments did not easily change. The inhabitants of these areas were considered subjects to the foreign nations, but were not always given the same

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<sup>39</sup> James Wilkinson, New Orleans, to Esteban Miró, April 30, 1790. AGI, PC, legajo 2373, Seville, Spain.

<sup>40</sup> [List of Prominent Men for Bribes signed by James Wilkinson], [undated], AGI, PC, legajo 2373, Seville, Spain; William R. Shepard, "Papers Bearing on James Wilkinson's Relations with Spain, 1778-1816," *American Historical Review*, 4(July 1904): 765-766.

<sup>41</sup> James Wilkinson, New Orleans, to Esteban Miró, April 30, 1790, AGI, PC, legajo 2373, Seville Spain; John Carl Parish, "The Intrigues of Doctor James O' Fallon," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 2(September 1930): 230- 263.

rights and protections from the changing governments. Wilkinson made a pledge of allegiance to the Spain crown, as Jacobs believed, in order to gain passage down the Mississippi River to fulfill his commercial needs. It was necessary to make pledge of allegiance to Spain in order to trade in the colony. One example to the contrary was William Panton, of Panton, Leslie & Company. He was of Irish descent and resided in West Florida, which was under British and Spanish control (depending on the time period). He owned several trading posts and had a near monopoly on the Indian trade. Panton, however, never formally pledged allegiance to the Spanish crown.<sup>42</sup> The Irish Panton was allowed to continue commerce in a Spanish territory while still not an official Spanish subject.

As for Wilkinson and many other aspiring settlers and traders a pledge of allegiance was mandatory. Andrew Jackson, later the President of the United States and known enemy of the Spanish, pledged allegiance to the Spanish Crown on July 15, 1789, along with seventeen other men. He swore to protect the Spanish Nation against threats and conspiracies in order to conduct business and own property in Natchez.<sup>43</sup> Andrew Jackson, however, is perceived as a shining example of ultra American Patriotism, and nobody doubts were his true alliance lied. So Jacobs' argument, that Wilkinson's pledge to the Spanish crown was only a façade by means to gain passage along the Mississippi River rings true. Daniel Clark Jr. further illustrated that this was common practice from

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<sup>42</sup> William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Panton, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783- 1847* (Pensacola, FL: University of West Florida Press, 1986).

<sup>43</sup> Robert V. Remini, "Andrew Jackson Takes an Oath of Allegiance to Spain," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 54(Spring 1995): 9.

the beginning of Spanish rule. And that the pledge was more of a formality to help populate the territory and promote commerce.

“The first indulgence was granted, by extending the privilege to residents, altho’ not naturalized. The second, by the officers of government contenting themselves with the simple declaration of any individual, commonly the consigner, that he was owner of the vessel. The declaration was not made under oath, nor was it in most cases supported by any documents. Sometimes it was even accepted from a person who, though not actually resident, had obtained license to introduce goods. It deceived nobody, but it furnished the officers of government with a very flimsy pretext for registering the vessel in their books as Spanish property, and thus preserving an apparent compliance with the law; but so little attention was paid to this formality, that the Governor and Intendant gave certificates that the vessel was American property, even while she stood on their Custom-house books as being owned by a resident.”<sup>44</sup>

It is more logical to believe that Wilkinson took the oath of allegiance because he was sincere about moving to New Orleans and becoming a resident, or because he wanted to gain favor with the Spanish officials with an overt act to convince them of his intention to advance their cause. Yet Wilkinson might have taken the pledge in order to show Miró that he was committed to undertaking the annexation of Kentucky.

Wilkinson made a declaration to the Spanish crown in 1787. While the topic of annexation of the western territories by Spain was mentioned, the document (Appendix E) showed what psychological motives were involved in Wilkinson’s decision making. He rationally explained that other nations had foreigners who conducted business within their borders, and an American in Spanish Louisiana was nothing abnormal. In fact, it was a continuance of a common trend. Wilkinson believed his utility to the American Armed Services and public had come to an end and it was time for him to look for other opportunities. After the general’s reasoning for his allegiance to Spain, the true motive

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<sup>44</sup> Arthur P. Whitaker, “Despatches [*sic*] from the United States Consulate in New Orleans, 1801-1803,” *American Historical Review*, 4(July 1927): 802.

presented itself. “Thus much, regard to my own Fame. Dearer to me signitely [*sic*] than Life, & respect for the Gentlemen whom I have the Honor to address, have induced me to premise; in any Issue of my future Fortunes.”<sup>45</sup> Wilkinson’s sole motive in life was not honor or respect, ideas which he laced in his letters; it was to garner a fortune by any means possible. Spain had a vast empire that contained mountains of perceived wealth as compared to the newly liberated United States, and Wilkinson was well aware of that too.

Jacobs dismissed the sincerity of the oath with Spain when Wilkinson accepted the position of Lieutenant Colonel Commandant and swore an oath of allegiance to United States on November 5, 1791.<sup>46</sup> It was from this date, if Wilkinson received any pensions from the Spanish government under the pretense of aiding a foreign enemy, he would have committed a treasonous act. In times of peace between the two nations, it was presumably okay to communicate between the two powers because of the limitation of the law. Wilkinson’s correspondence and communiqué would not be classified as treasonable under the law of the time.

Kentucky was granted statehood on June 1, 1792, at which time it would have been thought that the idea of separation and succession would be closed, but not for Wilkinson and the Spanish governors. Wilkinson suffered from bankruptcy, and he had an increasing debt to numerous people. According to Jacobs, his involvement with the Spanish was not treasonous. It was a commercial relationship. He believed Wilkinson fueled the paranoia of the Spanish towards the expansionist Americans, and Miró and the

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<sup>45</sup>James Wilkinson, New Orleans, to Esteban Miró, August 22, 1787, AGI, PC, legajo 2373, Seville, Spain.

<sup>46</sup> Jacobs, *Tarnished Warrior*, 115.

others were never the wiser. Did Wilkinson really intend to betray the United States or was he securing a trading monopoly on the Mississippi which would have provided fiscal rewards? Francisco Luis Hector de Carondelet de Novelles, Baron de Carondelet, governor of Spanish Louisiana after Esteban Miró told Thomas Power, in a letter dated May 26, 1797, to convey to Wilkinson the prospect of leadership of a sovereign independent nation supported by Spanish armed force. Wilkinson was to be the “Washington of Kentucky”.<sup>47</sup> Baron de Carondelet believed the ambition of power and greed of Wilkinson may have been the way to incite the general into attacking Fort Massack, thereby laying the seed of revolution. The attempt on Wilkinson’s vanity failed. The general never surrendered Kentucky to the Spanish, and according to Gayoso on June 5, 1798, Wilkinson was no longer championing the annexation of the western states because of the agreement reached with Treaty of San Lorenzo in 1795. Spanish power in North America was beginning to wane with the concessions agreed to by the Spanish crown to draw a boundary at the thirty-first parallel.<sup>48</sup> In the end, the General never received much payment for his services, and he continually wrote to the Spanish officials in charge about non-received payments.

At Fort Adams, in January 1802, Wilkinson wrote to the governor of Louisiana and its dependencies, Manuel de Salcedo, about some recent deserters. The letter expressed his desire to see a continuation of a peaceful relationship between the neighboring nations. “Believing that the great family of Mankind cannot be so happy, as

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<sup>47</sup>Clark, *Proofs of Corruption*, 49.

<sup>48</sup> Holmes, *Gayoso*, 176.

in peace, and the exchange of good offices, to tho' be my possession. I have uniformly labored in my humble sphere, to harmonize conflicting interests, and to promote amicable intercourse, by conciliatory arrangements, and a solemn regard to good faith."<sup>49</sup> In as little as a year's time his interests and labors were changed as a result of secret negotiations between the France, Spain, and United States.

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<sup>49</sup> James Wilkinson, Fort Adams, to Manuel Salcedo, January 13, 1802, AGI, PC, legajo 199, Seville, Spain.

### CHAPTER III

#### WILKINSON/ BURR CONNECTION

“I was only thirty years too soon. What was treason in me thirty years ago is patriotism today!”<sup>50</sup>

Spain first gained control of Louisiana from France as a concession for Spain's allegiance to France during the Seven Years' War. During the negotiations of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, France and Spain surrendered colonial territories to England for their defeat. Spain lost its prized Havana to England in 1762 and traded the Floridas as ransom for it. In return, France gave Louisiana to Spain to reimburse its lost of Florida territories.

Spanish administration over the colony of Louisiana was burdensome from the beginning. Antonio Ulloa, the first Spanish governor of Louisiana, did not arrive to the former French colony until 1766. His inability to govern his French inhabitants led to a pro-French rebellion in 1768. Ulloa fled from New Orleans. The following year, the insurgence was crushed by General Alejandro O' Reilly and two regiments sent from Cuba. O'Reilly executed and imprisoned various rebel leaders and left a lasting impression on the French citizens. The following year, Luis de Unzaga became the governor. He was followed by Bernado de Gálvez, the nephew of José de Gálvez, the Minister of the Indies in the Spanish court. Bernado regained control of the Florida territories through military victories during the War of American Independence. Esteban Rodríguez Miró was appointed governor of Louisiana in 1786 and remained until 1791,

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<sup>50</sup> Melton, *Aaron Burr*, 233.

when the Baron de Carondelet succeeded him. Carondelet was replaced in 1797 by Manuel Gayoso de Lemos. The often abrasive Sebastian Calvo de la Puerta y O'Farril, later Marques de Casa Calvo, was governor from 1799 until 1801. The final Spanish governor of Louisiana was Juan Manuel de Salcedo, 1801- 1803. All of these men served Spain with various degrees of success. They had to deal with insurgences, threatening Indians, border conflicts with Americans and the British, hurricanes, disease, and fire. Every governor after Miró was a correspondent with Wilkinson. Their isolation from the empire made it necessary for them to negotiate and position themselves with whoever could provide some security from the ever apparent decline of Spanish rule in North America.

The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 marked the end to Spanish predominance in the American South-West. Spain's control of Louisiana had transferred to French hands thanks to the insistent demands of Napoleon and the negotiations of Manuel Godoy, the *privado* to Charles IV of Spain.<sup>51</sup> The Treaty of San Ildefonso, 1800, gave Louisiana back to the French. To the Spanish, Louisiana was an expendable territory that was costly to maintain. Thomas Jefferson and the United States feared that Napoleon would use Louisiana as a launching point for an attack on the United States and a continuation of Napoleon's European conquest in the Americas. While Napoleon planned on using Louisiana as a breadbasket, converting it into an agricultural society to feed his ever

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<sup>51</sup> Manuel de Godoy y Álvarez de Faria (May 12, 1767 – October 7, 1851) was Prime Minister of Spain from 1792 to 1797 and from 1801 to 1808. He received many titles including *Príncipe de la Paz*, Prince of Peace. He rose through the ranks of the Spanish court from royal bodyguard to Prime Minister. It has been speculated the Godoy's rapid advancement was due to his intimate relationship with the Queen of Spain.

growing domains, it was expensive and difficult to administer. Spain, however, was reluctant to let go of Louisiana immediately, and the Spanish court directed its officials to remain vigilant to local unrest and to foment resistance from dissent citizens.<sup>52</sup> Spaniards as well as French citizens in Louisiana felt betrayed by Napoleon's rapid exchange of Louisiana to the United States.

The Jefferson administration's acquisition of Louisiana nearly doubled the size of the nascent American nation. The new lands also extended the American frontier farther south, and it exacerbated the already present conflicts between Americans and the Spanish and conflicts between Americans and various Indian nations. The exchange of the Louisiana was not a clear, decisive territorial exchange. The United States believed it had acquired all of the former Spanish territory including both of the Floridas and eastern boundaries of Spanish province of Texas. The conflict between the two nations led to many border confrontations. Americans believed they had rightfully obtained all the lands south of 31<sup>st</sup> parallel, while the Spanish remained present at Mobile and Pensacola. They believed they still possessed the Floridas because they obtained them through military victory against the British during the American Revolution and that they were separate from the Louisiana territory which was given them by the French in 1763.

It was during this tumultuous time period that General Wilkinson was most influential. The Louisiana Purchase was significant to Wilkinson because it symbolized the apex of his career. The General was a valuable commodity to the Jefferson administration because of his previous experience as an Indian fighter and negotiator, and

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<sup>52</sup>Bradley, *Interim Appointment*, 499-520.

his understanding of the western lands. In 1803, the citizens of New Orleans were anything but ready for American diplomacy. Neither were Americans in the Atlantic states ready for New Orleans. The United States did not immediately negotiate the admission of Louisiana as a state into the Union. Jefferson instead treated the inhabitants of New Orleans as children unable to govern themselves. Jefferson did not take into consideration the French pride that had long been established in New Orleans and his appointment of W. C. C. Claiborne as territorial governor of Louisiana further aggravated the situation because of Claiborne's lack of compassion for the French and Spanish natives of New Orleans. Also, because of his absolute support of Jeffersonian ideals, Claiborne was inflexible to certain citizens in New Orleans. Claiborne had reason to believe Wilkinson might have been a Spanish pensioner because of the many rumors present, but he accepted him as the general in the West because he was Jefferson's appointee. Yet, Wilkinson's prosperity and security would soon be challenged by his undying ambition for glory at the expense of the Spanish Empire.

Uncertainty not only surrounded the inhabitants of Louisiana but also the Jefferson administration itself. In the developing American nation nothing illustrated this anxiety more than the Burr Conspiracy. Investigators are still unclear as to what Aaron Burr was up to in the American Southwest during the period 1804 to 1806. The same can be said for General James Wilkinson. Wilkinson's previous connections to the Spanish raised questions of his allegiance to the United States during this time period.

The beginning of the Burr Conspiracy does not start with death of Alexander Hamilton, in Weehawken, New Jersey, although that event may have been the turning

point in Burr's life, when he truly began to consider his options the west. The Burr Conspiracy started with the events of the previous chapters: the Spanish Conspiracy, the lawless American frontier, ambitions of men, Spanish gold, and rumors.

Aaron Burr was a distinguished founder of the United States. He served as colonel in the War for American Independence. He was a successful lawyer and politician. In the Presidential election of 1800, Aaron Burr received the same amount of electoral votes for the Presidency as did Thomas Jefferson. Up until then, candidates were not running mates and were not classified as the Presidential or Vice- Presidential candidates. Every electoral voted the same amount for the Democratic Republican (Republican) ticket thereby resulting in a tie between Jefferson and Burr. The electoral tie went to the House of Representatives. On February 11, 1801 the House voted in deadlock for thirty-five continuous ballots until on the thirty-six ballots, when Jefferson was elected President and Aaron Burr became Vice-President.<sup>53</sup> A rift was created between the two men because Burr's failure to denounce the tie in favor of Jefferson. This led to one of the first electoral scares in American History. After the election of 1800, Aaron Burr became a ghost in the newly built White House. His nominees were not appointed, and he was left to preside over the House of Representatives. Jefferson along with John Adams, then the Secretary of State, was left alone to navigate America through tensions between England over impressments, the rising of Napoleon in France, and the conflicts created by the expanding young nation. Aaron Burr demonstrated in the

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<sup>53</sup> Melton, *Aaron Burr Conspiracy*, 35-37; Nancy Isenberg, *Fallen Founder*, p. 401. Isenberg accused Gore Vidal, in his novel about Aaron Burr, of spreading the rumor of an incestuous relationship between Aaron Burr and his daughter.

election of 1800 that he believed he was deserving of the prestige and power of the Presidency of the United States, and he was not going to stand down for anybody.

American politics in the early nineteenth century were just as personal as political, and when the Presidential election of 1804 came around Burr was not asked to run again with Democratic- Republicans. In response, he turned his ambitions to the governor's office of New York and began courting the Federalist for support. At that time, the governorship of New York carried more prestige than the Vice Presidency and preserved the possibility for a future run at the presidency, which Burr had nearly won before. Aaron Burr's plans were short lived, and he lost the election. His defeat came at the hands of Alexander Hamilton, who swung the favor of the Federalist support against him. Burr was destroyed politically, and he wanted to retaliate against the people who had hindered him in life. Burr challenged Alexander Hamilton to a duel for the public disgrace of his character and possibly because he blamed Hamilton for his loss in the race for governor. Another possible reason for Burr's challenge was a reported remark from Hamilton which charged that Burr and his daughter Theodosia "were caught in the throes of incest."<sup>54</sup> Whatever the reasons were, Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton met on the morning of July 11, 1804 in Weehawken, New Jersey. Hamilton's shot missed, but Burr's pistol shot found Hamilton's ribs. Hamilton died the next day. The Vice President of the United States of America became a fugitive in New Jersey for murder and in New York for challenging a duel which had been recently outlawed. With no

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<sup>54</sup> Melton, *Aaron Burr Conspiracy*, 48.

political career and two warrants for his arrest, so began Aaron Burr's exodus to the West.

On July 21, 1804, Burr traveled to Philadelphia and stayed at Charles Biddle's place. Charles Biddle was a long time friend of Aaron Burr and a well represented merchant in Philadelphia. His niece, Ana Biddle, also was wife to James Wilkinson. While still Vice President, Burr first traveled through the southern Atlantic States in 1804, where he was well received and not seen as an assassin of Hamilton. He surveyed the land and the people in order to plot his next move. The Vice President soon learned that the settlers and citizens in the west displayed an anti-government sentimentality. For Burr the west was a land of new opportunity for him. The Vice President soon returned to Washington in the winter of 1804 and finished his term as Vice President. During the winter of 1804, James Wilkinson met with Burr in Washington where they looked over maps of the American Southwest and Mexico.<sup>55</sup>

Aaron Burr and General Wilkinson's personalities may have been very similar. Both wanted to succeed and to obtain glory for themselves. Both were able to manipulate others to obtain their desires, and both made enemies easily. Burr historian, Nancy Isenberg, noted that there was a distinction between the two men. To her "Wilkinson represented the opposite personally type: Old world values of the eighteenth century, which measured worth according to rank, pomp, uniforms, and other surfaces indices."<sup>56</sup> This may have appeared true with the façade created by the general, but still deep down

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 65-66.

<sup>56</sup> Isenberg, *Fallen Founder*, 180.

inside Wilkinson was governed by the internal “nineteenth-century” desire of success through wealth. He used his rank as a means to garner financial success. In the end, it was these men’s friends and associates that spared their careers, but destroyed the reputation each.

When Burr’s term of Vice President ended, in early 1805, he began to make his way through the Ohio Valley towards New Orleans. Burr was exploring his possibilities, meeting prominent men in the West, such as Andrew Jackson, and surveying the land and rivers. Wilkinson in an attempt to help Burr acquire new, valuable connections wrote a letter of introduction to the Marques de Casa Calvo, the former governor of Spanish Louisiana. The letter, written in French, described Aaron Burr as a man worth a million.<sup>57</sup> Burr, however, failed to meet with the problematic governor and nothing came about a Burr- Spanish relationship. The former vice president may have already convinced himself of his intended target, and did not want to expose himself to the Spanish.

During the summer of 1806, a nationwide paranoia began to grow as rumors and reports about Aaron Burr spread across the nation. General Wilkinson was ordered by the Secretary of War to the disputed border of Louisiana and Texas where Spanish troops led by Lieutenant Colonel Simón de Herrera had taken position of Bayou Pierre. The General arrived in autumn, delayed as usual, and by then Herrera’s troops retreated without a fight. A “neutral ground agreement” was reached between Wilkinson and

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<sup>57</sup> James Wilkinson, Washington, D.C., to Marques de Casa Calvo, March 18, 1805, AGI, PC, legajo 2375, Seville, Spain.

Herrera outlining the Sabine River as the border between the United States and Spanish Texas.<sup>58</sup>

Whatever Burr's intentions were, his actions led Thomas Jefferson to outlaw anybody "conspiring and confederating together, to begin and set foot, provide and prepare the means, for a military expedition or enterprise, against the dominions of Spain," continuing the administration's support of the Neutrality Act.<sup>59</sup> If Wilkinson would have engaged Herrera troops at Bayou Pierre then Burr could have justified a filibustering expedition because United States and Spain would have been at war. However that was not to be so. And the uneasiness of the nation continued to grow as the mystery of Burr's whereabouts on the Ohio and Mississippi were spread.

On October 22, 1806, Wilkinson wrote to Thomas Jefferson explaining there was a growing conspiracy threatening the West.<sup>60</sup> The general did not take any military action to prevent Burr; instead on November 17, 1806 from Natchez, Wilkinson wrote to Viceroy Iturrigaray of New Spain warning him of a planned attack on Vera Cruz that was not authorized by the President of United States. More importantly, in the letter Wilkinson requested 85,000 pesos for shattering the plans and 36,000 pesos for

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<sup>58</sup> Isaac Joslin Cox, "The Louisiana- Texas Frontier During the Burr Conspiracy," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 10(Dec 1923): 274-284.

<sup>59</sup> "Thomas Jefferson Proclamation from a newspaper clipping," enclosed in James Wilkinson, New Orleans, to Vincente Folch, January 3, 1807, AGI, PC, legajo 2375, Seville, Spain.

<sup>60</sup> Isenberg, *Fallen Founder*, 312.

supplies.<sup>61</sup> It was not until after the General's warning to the viceroy, who had more direct contact with the treasury, that he wrote to governor of West Florida, Vincente Folch on December 6, 1806. Wilkinson told Folch to fortify the Spanish post of Baton Rouge because of a possible attack by American rebels.<sup>62</sup> Burr was not initially named in any of Wilkinson's letters to the Spanish. It was not until nearly a month later, when Wilkinson was more aware of President Jefferson's response, that he named Burr as the leader of the conspiracy to Folch in a letter dated January 3, 1807.<sup>63</sup>

Aaron Burr, who became aware of the President's denouncement of his travels in the west, surrendered himself on January 12, 1807. In early February that same year, Burr escaped his imprisonment and fled through Spanish West Florida. He was recaptured on February 18, 1807. Burr ran because he feared Wilkinson would send some body to kill him if he was imprisoned within the General's jurisdiction of Louisiana.<sup>64</sup> Burr's fears were well warranted because during this same time period, Wilkinson ignited a fire storm of controversy in New Orleans by declaring martial law and arresting anybody who was associated with Aaron Burr. Wilkinson's arrests were supported by the interim governor of the Orleans Territory, W.C.C. Claiborne. Wilkinson arrested and imprisoned citizens without provocation, challenging the

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<sup>61</sup> William R. Shepherd, "A Letter of General James Wilkinson, 1806," *American Historical Review*, 3(April 1904): 537.

<sup>62</sup> James Wilkinson, New Orleans, to Vincente Folch, December 6, 1806, AGI, PC, legajo 2375, Seville, Spain.

<sup>63</sup> James Wilkinson, New Orleans, to Vincente Folch, January 3, 1807, AGI, PC, legajo 2375, Seville, Spain.

<sup>64</sup> Isenberg, *Fallen Founder*, 320.

constitutional right of habeas corpus. Wilkinson later explained his rash actions in New Orleans came out of his fear of his own assassination.<sup>65</sup> During Wilkinson's reign of terror in New Orleans, he wrote to his former Spanish associates to turn over deemed fugitives who were fleeing to the Spanish Floridas to escape possible arrest by the General. Wilkinson wrote to Folch requesting the return of Jacob Dumbaugh, who had fled from New Orleans.<sup>66</sup> The General believed Dumbaugh to be a conspirator with Burr and dangerous if able to reunite with Burr and not be captured.

The fugitive Burr was recaptured and a preliminary trial was set for Richmond. The General was to be the lead witness for the state against Burr because of the evidence he had uncovered during his reign of power in early 1807. It was during this time that Wilkinson received further bad news that his wife Ana had died on February 22, 1807, which among chaos in New Orleans added more delays and excuses for his late arrival to the trial. On July 16, 1807, Wilkinson made his long-awaited appearance in the courtroom. The trial of Aaron Burr for treason began on August 3, 1807. The prosecution had a difficult task of proving Burr's guilt of treason for several reasons. One reason was because the former vice president was not present at Blennerchassett Island, where the said act of treason occurred. Second hurdle for the prosecution was that no hostile actions had been committed and nobody was attacked by a military force or a gang of rag tag young men. The third obstacle was the legal definition of treason within the American legal code was vague.

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<sup>65</sup> Bradley, *Interim Appointment*, 427.

<sup>66</sup> James Wilkinson, New Orleans, to Vincente Folch, March 27, 1807, AGI, PC, legajo 2375, Seville, Spain.

On the stand, Wilkinson was unable to provide the original copy of a letter written by Aaron Burr explaining the plot to attack Vera Cruz. According to the letter presented to the court by Wilkinson, Aaron Burr would embark from New Orleans and attack Vera Cruz from there they gain control of the silver mines of Mexico. Upon return from Mexico with silver and gold, Burr and his followers were to set up a sovereign nation with a capital located in New Orleans. This nation was to be led by Burr and its army was to be directed by General Wilkinson.<sup>67</sup> Another version of the story was told by General William Eaton to Thomas Jefferson. It was very similar to Wilkinson's version, but the story did not end at the creation of a separate country. After Aaron Burr became the emperor of his own nation, he would then turn his focus towards Washington and burn the capital into the Potomac River.<sup>68</sup>

John Randolph of Roanoke, North Carolina, who was chairperson of the jury, described Wilkinson during the proceedings as, "the mammoth of iniquity... [T]he only man I ever saw who was from the bark to very core a villain."<sup>69</sup> During the trial Wilkinson became the center of suspicion because of his inability to give conclusive evidence against Aaron Burr. The general was the one of several people to write to the Jefferson administration telling of a conspiracy to separate the Western territories under the leadership of Aaron Burr. John Randolph demanded the arrest and investigation of treason against the General.

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<sup>67</sup> Melton, *Aaron Burr Conspiracy*, 99-102.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-99.

<sup>69</sup> Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 568. This quote was made in reference to Wilkinson's misleading and inconsistent testimony during the trial of Aaron Burr for treason.

In the end, the Aaron Burr trial was, at that time, the highest profile trial in American History. Aaron Burr was found not guilty on August 31, 1807, due to the failure of Wilkinson to provide irrefutable evidence and his own implication within the scheme itself. What is more important was that everybody involved seemed to have a dirty connection one way or another due to the interpretation of Burr's message. The trial soon created enemies out of former friends, and soon saw its lead witness become a defendant in front the nation.

After the trial, Burr was a free man again, but he was still hunted. He was pursued by a misdemeanor charge that stemmed from his trial for treason and chased by his creditors. The misdemeanor charge was later dropped, and Burr went on to travel to England to escape his debts. He eventually reestablished his law practice in New York and died on September 14, 1836 in midst of a messy divorce.<sup>70</sup>

Wilkinson was well aware of Burr's plans in the West. The latter was close friends with the uncle of Ana Biddle Wilkinson, and the two men were friends before the trial of Burr. Wilkinson waited until he could collect as much money from whoever was willing to pay, and when the threat grew too large to control Wilkinson championed opportunity to turn in a traitor and become a savior of the nation. Wilkinson's plan backfired. Instead of becoming a national hero, he became the target of an investigation of his own actions and involvements. The general's reputation and career was soon to be tested by a former associate.

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<sup>70</sup> Isenberg, *Fallen Founder*, 403- 404.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DECLINE OF WILKINSON

“I have now completed a work which was forced upon me, in justification of my own character. I regret deeply, that the nature of this justification has obliged me to appear as an accuser; and that a task, which I cannot help repeating was the duty of a public officer, has thus devolved upon an individual. My regret on this occasion is not produced from any apprehension that my proofs are deficient, or my defence [*sic*] incomplete. My own understanding is satisfied with their force, and my conscience has always been at rest. Of the effect this address may have on my countrymen I cannot doubt. In common with the great mass of them, I anticipate much good from the approaching change in the administration; - and if I shall have furnished the new Cabinet with the means of throwing off this dishonour from the nation, I shall not regret the trouble of my research.

Daniel Clark, New Orleans, March 1, 1809.”<sup>71</sup>

The decline of General James Wilkinson came at the hands of two men, Daniel Clark Jr. and John Randolph of Roanoake. James Wilkinson and Daniel Clark Jr.<sup>72</sup> first met each other when Wilkinson traveled to New Orleans in 1787. At the time Clark was serving in the secretary office at New Orleans and was a Spanish subject.<sup>73</sup> On August 8, 1787, Wilkinson established a commercial relationship with Daniel Clark, the senior. Daniel Clark Jr. was the nephew of Daniel Clark, and was employed as a clerk in his business affairs. The trading relationship between Wilkinson and Clark Sr. dissolved after a few years due to mutual reasons,<sup>74</sup> but the connection between Daniel Clark Jr. and Wilkinson survived for the next twenty years. It is worth noting that the initial relationship between the two men may not have been as amicable as reported by Daniel

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<sup>71</sup> Clark, *Proofs of Corruption*, 150.

<sup>72</sup> There does not exist a comprehensive study on Daniel Clark.

<sup>73</sup> Green, *Spanish Conspiracy*, 125.

<sup>74</sup> Clark, *Proofs of Corruption*, 10.

Clark Jr. In a cipher sent to Governor Miró, Wilkinson was concerned about his exposure as a pensioner for the Spanish to President Washington and others in the east, as early as 1790. He wrote “For Heaven sake urge our Friend to prohibit the intercourse without delay, and suffer no American to leave the Province by sea, because that will open a direct correspondence with President Washington who I am satisfy must have spy in New Orleans. Take care of D. Clark.”<sup>75</sup> From the context Wilkinson referred to Clark as a possible spy, but it was unclear which “D. Clark.” As mentioned, both were associates of Wilkinson. In another letter to Miró, Wilkinson advised the governor not to allow Colonel Richard Anderson to move to New Orleans. Because the General feared the relationship between Anderson and Daniel Clark “that malignant wretch” would be “employed against me personally, & our political views.”<sup>76</sup>

As time went on, Clark and Wilkinson obtained more social standing with Louisiana. At the time of his appointment as a consulate of New Orleans, Clark was one of the wealthiest men in Louisiana. This can be attributed to his mercantile connection with his uncle and others in merchants in Philadelphia as well as his own enterprises. When Louisiana was being transferred to the United States on Three Flags Day, Daniel Clark, serving as an American consulate, stood in the crowd viewing the exchange while General James Wilkinson stood rooted next to interim governor Claiborne. Clark wrote a letter to Thomas Jefferson about the events and the newly acquired territory. The

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<sup>75</sup> James Wilkinson, Lexington, Kentucky, to Esteban Miró, [unknown month] 3, 1790, AGI, PC, legajo 2374, Seville, Spain.

<sup>76</sup> James Wilkinson, Louisville, the Rapids of the Ohio, to Esteban Miró, February 1, 1790, AGI, PC, legajo 2374, Seville, Spain.

dispatch described the circumstances of the transfer of Louisiana from Spain to France and then to the United States and the overall social environment in New Orleans. While detailing the smooth transfer, Clark used the opportunity to inform the President and his staff of whom they should beware of in their new territory if they wanted to achieve security and prosperity. Clark, however, did not directly refer to Wilkinson or give any precaution about his past involvements with the Spanish. Clark, as he later stated, would have been well aware of Wilkinson's previous relations with the Spanish administration by this time; however, he did not use this chance to expose Wilkinson. Clark stated that he had previous relations with the Spanish and continued to hold a respectable understanding with the recently deposed French. And yet his main concern and warning was to be suspicious of any person that had received pensions from the Spanish, was pro-French, and supported the French cause.<sup>77</sup> Wilkinson would have been excluded by the two latter criteria.

If Clark believed Wilkinson to be a villain, he continued to cover up for Wilkinson for the next few years. A little while later in 1804, John Watkins, the mayor of New Orleans from 1803 to 1807, asked for an investigation into the financial relationship between Wilkinson and the previous Spanish officials. Watkins was told by Daniel Clark, that Wilkinson had never received ten thousand dollars from the Spanish.<sup>78</sup> So what caused this dramatic change of allegiance between Wilkinson and Clark?

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<sup>77</sup> Arthur P. Whitaker, "Another Dispatch from the United States Consulate in New Orleans," *American Historical Review*, 2(January 1933): 291- 295.

<sup>78</sup> Bradley, *Interim Appointment*, 385-386.

Historian Jared William Bradley noticed Daniel Clark's attitude and demeanor took a violence turn around 1808. There were several factors that led Clark to turn against his former friends. Clark often criticized W. C. C. Claiborne, the interim governor of the Orleans territory, because of his own political aspirations. By May 1807, the rift between the interim governor and the former consulate turned violent when Clark had enough of Claiborne's partisanship and said some slanderous remarks about him. In return, Claiborne demanded satisfaction, and a duel was fought between the two men. Shots were fired but neither was seriously wounded.<sup>79</sup> By that time, Clark had been implicated by Wilkinson as a conspirator in the Aaron Burr Trial, and Clark was lashing back at Claiborne for defending Wilkinson.<sup>80</sup> The governor stood by Wilkinson because of his allegiance to Thomas Jefferson. Clark's duel with Claiborne and criticism of Wilkinson not only attacked the two, but also against pitted him against Thomas Jefferson and the Democratic Republicans. Clark felt slighted when he was passed over for the governorship of the Orleans territory in favor of Claiborne. He believed himself to be an excellent candidate because he had served as the US consulate from 1801 to 1803 and had extensive knowledge of the political and social environment of New Orleans. In 1808, Clark realized that he would not advance politically under Jefferson's Democratic- Republicans and teamed up with John Randolph of Roanoke. Randolph had long before been a critic of the Jefferson administration and recently of Wilkinson. And if the Democratic- Republicans were not re-elected back to the White House, Clark's new

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 280.

<sup>80</sup> Roger G. Kennedy, *Mr. Jefferson's Lost Cause: Land, Farmers, Slavery and the Louisiana Purchase* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2003), 258-259.

affiliation with Randolph and the Quids would have helped reinvigorate his political career because the former US consulate would have been the one to expose the treason of Jefferson's trusted general in the west, thereby striking a blow against the Democratic Republicans.

While the decline of Wilkinson's social influence may have begun well before 1809, that year marked the date of Daniel Clark's publication of *Proofs of Corruption of General James Wilkinson: and of his Connexion with Aaron Burr, with a Full Refutation of His Slandorous Allegations in Relation to the Character of the Principal Witness Against Him*. In Clark's book, he accused the general of receiving upwards of some 30,000 dollars from the Spanish government and 600,000 acres of land. Clark reported Wilkinson received four payments in return for his aid in the annexation plot of the western territory of the United States. In 1807, Wilkinson and Clark had a falling out and their relationship was no longer beneficial.<sup>81</sup> This was attributed to the involvement of both in the trial of Aaron Burr in 1807. General Wilkinson was the one who informed Thomas Jefferson and the Spanish officials of Aaron Burr activities in the west. Daniel Clark's book defended his own character and reputation by deliberately attacking James Wilkinson.

Yet Daniel Clark's reputation was anything but crystal clean. According to Arthur Preston Whitaker, Clark was a molelike [*sic*] individual, who burrowed his way through the life of his generation in the Southwest, leaving many surface indications of his activity, but seldom giving any sign of what activity was all about. It cannot be

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<sup>81</sup>Clark, *Proofs of Corruption*, 9: 116.

proved that he was a rascal and yet one would hardly employ such terms as honor, probity, fidelity, describing him.<sup>82</sup>

Clark said it was not until he pledged allegiance to the United States, that he felt the urge to expose the treasonous acts of Wilkinson to Congress; however, it was some seven years after this pledge that his book was written. This explosion of patriotism appeared after Clark was unsuccessful at advancing his politic ambitions, because he was passed over for the position of interim governor of the New Orleans territory by Jefferson. Furthermore, the relationship between Wilkinson and Burr soured, because the General accused Daniel Clark of financing fifty- thousand dollars to Aaron Burr to help raise an army to capture American New Orleans, and from there attack Spanish territories in an attempt to establish an independent sovereign nation separate from the Unites States.<sup>83</sup>

It was not until after the Burr trial, that John Randolph of Roanoake began to question the General's role in the Burr Conspiracy to the House of Representatives, but his suspicions of Wilkinson's involvement were founded during the trial. John Randolph had served as chairmen of the jury during the Burr trial, and afterwards requested the General be arrested and charged with treason because of the flawed testimony given by Wilkinson. After the trial of Aaron Burr, John Randolph began gathering information about Wilkinson, and an alliance was formed between Clark and Randolph, in which Clark was to become the chief accuser against Wilkinson.

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<sup>82</sup> Arthur Preston Whitaker, *The Mississippi Question 1795-1803: A Study in Trade, Politics, and Diplomacy* (Gloucester, MA, 1962; originally published 1934), 92.

<sup>83</sup>Clark, *Proofs of Corruption*, 60.

Wilkinson believed the rupture in the relationship between himself and Daniel Clark occurred one night at a dinner party after the acquittal of Burr and before the opening of Congress in 1807, when Wilkinson made some remarks as to the financial status of Daniel Clark. A gentleman from Baltimore overheard the remarks and questioned the General about his statement. It turned out that Daniel Clark was courting the gentleman's daughter. The said gentleman then began asking for an expensive prenuptial financial settlement in exchange for his daughter's hand. In the end, Daniel Clark did not marry the girl, and his romantic relationships would latter catch up to his relatives in the Gaines Case.<sup>84</sup> With the separation of friendships between Wilkinson and Clark, Clark had the opportunity to advance his political career by sinking the General's, which was a Jeffersonian symbol.

Following the trial of Aaron Burr, while Clark and Randolph were complying evidence against Wilkinson, the General spend much of his time in Washington and surrounding areas defending his character against accusation made public by Randolph and Clark. He also began collecting evidence to support his defense. Fortunately for Wilkinson most of his former Spanish associates had died and were not available to give testimony against him. Also, the Spanish officials were not likely to implicate their own involvements in a possible scheme to garner land that was either intended to protect Spanish interest or in fostering a revolution that would have separated the western territories away from the United States. In 1808, before the publication of Clark's book,

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<sup>84</sup> Shreve, *Finished Scoundrel*, 242-243.

Wilkinson wrote to the governor of West Florida, Vincente Folch, from Washington the following letters:

Sir.

The inclosed pagette [*sic*] will exhibit my apology for this trespass; and expose to you one of the most villainous attacks ever made on a public character, by John Randolph & his infamous informer Daniel Clark. The motive of this murderous assault at this remote period may be thus resolved. For an injury done me, I called Mr. Randolph to the field of honour for reparation, he refused the Summons, and I posted [damaged] him to the world for a villain and a coward. Clark a member of the Mexican association, and an accomplice of Burr, fearing that his own party would expose him, if he did not fulfill his engagements to them to ruin me and also that I might detect him in the attempt {of which I now have proof} he made to have Baton Rouge attacked in the Summer of 1806. Believed it to be his interest to come forward & by vile perjuries to destroy my character & credibility. To these two other motives may be added; perhaps not less operative with Randolph, Clark, and their friends hostility to Mr. Jefferson & his own administration, & also to Spain. On the eve of a war with Great Britain as has been believed these Gentlemen who are the advocates of that Power, would wish to produce any ground of complaint against Spain, which might Serve to divert the resentments of the United States from the former power to the latter; and at the Same time believing the execution of the United States to be less friendly to Great Britain than Spain, they except by his ruin, to serve their favorite nation. Thomas Power has been corrupted to enter into this combination by Clark, and has Sworn he is a Spanish Officer; whereas I understand he was struck upon your Boles [Bowles] some years since. Indeed if he is an officer of Spain he merits the Gallows for the betrayal of his trust; when in New Orleans, and his virulent abuse of his King and all the officers of the Crown without exception; of which, I pledge you my sacred honor, I have written proof in my possession from his own Pen.

For aid of Burr projects, Clark made two trips to Vera Cruz, between the months of Sept. 1805 & April 1806 after Burr had visited New Orleans of which the inclosed [*sic*] copy of his letter to a friend, the Original of which I have in my possession will fully set forth. You are Sensible Gentlemen of the extent of my commerce with New Orleans, and of the large Sums which I received on that account, you must also be Sensible, that whilst I have imformly [*sic*] endeavored, in all my correspondence with Louisiana to preserve the peace of our two Countries that I have never conceded a single right or interest appentenant [*sic*] To my Government.

Shall I suffer in consequence of engagements strictly innocent or for a conduct strictly Amicable? I hope not\_\_\_ but will look to you Gentlemen, for such documental testimony as may dissipate the doubts which my enemies, your enemies & the enemies of our two countries have spread\_\_\_ around me \_\_\_ The monies received from Louisiana after the year 1790, and the subsequent with the

termination of my trade to that Province were reported to me by Philip Nolan, my agent, & certified by Don Gilberto, as the proceed of a quantity of tobacco, which had been condemned, for being in bad condition and was afterwards received by the crown; but I have lost or missed this accounts I think the quantity was 220,000 pounds weight; for which I received \$4000 by Mr. La Cassaque \$6000 by Capt. Collins, & \$9000 by Nolan to whom it was delivered by Capt. Power, leaving a balance in my favor. Certified Statement of this transaction, would enable me to repel Clark's Calumnies, which rest it would Secur [*sic*], on the authority of Spanish Officers; and I will entreat of you Gentlemen to furnish them to me, addressed to the care of Capt. Gaim Fort Sroddart. Who will see them carefully forwarded to me. Waiting your answers I remain [damaged] with high consideration and respect. Gentlemen Your Most OBD Serv.  
Signed Ja [James] Wilkinson  
1808 January 16<sup>th</sup> City of Washington To Excellency Gov. V. Folch<sup>85</sup>

Washington January 16<sup>th</sup> 1808.

Dear Sir.

I this day addressed a publick [*sic*] letter to you and to Mr. Morales on the Subject of Clark's infamous attack on me, to gratify his political views and the vengeance of Burr and his associates to whom Clark is nearly connected and I will pray your Justice to enable me to detect the infamous Calumniator. You will perceive that Capt. Collins is higgged [unreadable] into this business, and I must beg you to procure his deposition for me in reply to the Quere [Query]. under cover, and to transmit it to me as soon as possible Collins can prove Clark perjured in several instances Vir; Collins visited New Orleans on his own business, with a boat load of Flour two years after Owens was in that City and was requested to bring me round a sum of money, which was due me on account of my commercial concerns; He fitted out the boat which he Descended in and Brought on \$6000 with him of which I made no mystery. Now Clark Says he went down as my Agent and in the Same Season with Owens, that his boat was destroyed by the Hurricane and that he brought away at least eleven thousand dollars. I beg that Captain Collins may state these things fully and to say whether he did understand the money he received for me was on account of my former commercial business with Louisiana. I beg you to transmit your dispatches for me to Capt Collins who will carefully forward them. I wish you health and happiness and remain with great Personal respect and esteem. Your OBD Serv. Ja Wilkinson  
His Excellency Govt. Folch. N.3. Power declared publicky [*sic*] in Richmond that you were a man of such character that no person who know you would believe what asserted.

Copy of a letter from D. Clark to his correspondent in the Western Country. I have been twice, Since I last wrote you to the Land of Promise, but what is more

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<sup>85</sup> James Wilkinson, Washington D.C., to Vincente Folch, January 16, 1808, AGI, PC, legajo 2375, Seville, Spain.

surprising I have got safe back from it after having been represented to the Vice Roy, as a person dangerous to the Spanish Government and who had visited that country with no other view, than that of acquiring information of its Strength & how & where it might be afraid with greatest probability of Success. I knew all this before I undertook the cost [damaged] voyage but was fool-hardy enough to attempt it. I have made some money & acquired more knowledge of the country its productions & resources and made those of our own Country better known to them than before there is you know no harm in this interchange of useful information & at a future Day, I shall communicate to you all I have picked up during my Stay there. Vera Cruz

A true Copy from the Original in my possession upon my honour. Ja [James] Wilkinson

Washington Jany [January] 16<sup>th</sup> 08.

Clark has lately shipped a large quantity of goods from Philadelphia, Said to be for Vera Cruz in the Ship Comet & Power it is said went in the same vessel thus he receives the hire of Corruption.<sup>86</sup>

Wilkinson pled with the Spanish to help provide evidence to counterattack Daniel Clark.

The general depicted Clark as an enemy to Spain who led a reconnaissance mission into Mexico, the “land of promise.” The original copy of the letter Wilkinson said he possessed was not enclosed in the packet, and it may never have existed. Wilkinson’s motives were to secure the assistances from the Spanish to defend his reputation against Clark by reiterating Burr involvement in the Burr Conspiracy. On December 30, 1808, in Washington D.C., Wilkinson wrote to governor Folch saying that he had received his alibi.<sup>87</sup> The General had the insurance necessary to fight back against his accusers. And in the following year Clark’s book was published and all of Wilkinson’s intrigues were open to the public. Not everything was so bleak for Wilkinson. The General remarried

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<sup>86</sup> James Wilkinson, New Orleans, to Vincente Folch, April 14, 1808, AGI, PC, legajo 2375, Seville, Spain.

<sup>87</sup> James Wilkinson, Washington, D.C., to Vincente Folch, December 30, 1808, AGI, PC, legajo 2375, Seville, Spain.

on March 5, 1810 to Celestine Laveau Trudeau. Celestine was the widow of Thomas Urquehart and daughter of Charles Laveau Trudeau, a former associate of Wilkinson.

On July 7, 1811, Wilkinson received his first orders to appear in front of a court-martial at Frederick, Maryland. The General had to answer to twenty-six specific charges under eight accounts. The charges filed against him were from events throughout his lifetime starting with his transactions with Governor Miró, to his relationship with Aaron Burr, and finally his military expenses and negligence.

The first charge alleged the General received payments from Spain with ten specifications of crime. The second charge was “Combining and confederating... to dismember the United States.” The charges were derived from the *Proofs of Corruption* by Daniel Clark. Wilkinson faced his accusers by addressing their character in the same manner they addressed him, by throwing mud and doubt on their reputation. The principal witnesses were Daniel Clark, Thomas Power, and Andrew Ellicott. Thomas Power at the time of the said crime was acting as a Spanish pensioner and the middle man through which Wilkinson communicated with the Spanish Governors. Wilkinson dispelled Power’s credibility by saying he was a proven Spanish spy and his testimony could not be trusted. Also if the court was to believe the testimony of Power, the General had written proof of no such corruption from Governor Folch, whom Power had public exalted as trustworthy. Daniel Clark’s testimony was discredited by the number of allegiances to different nations he had. Finally Ellicott’s character was also discredited by the testimony delivered by Thomas Freeman about Ellicott and his son’s sexual relations

with the family's washerwoman, Betsy.<sup>88</sup> Ultimately the General reiterated that all the money he had received was accredited to a tobacco sale in 1790 were his payment was not received in full by then Governor Miró. This was always his defense when explaining the money received from the Spanish.

The third charge of "Conspiring with known traitors...viz., Aaron Burr...to dismember the Union" stood on no ground considering Burr was previous found not guilty of the charge of treason; therefore, Wilkinson was not conspiring with known traitors. Now say if Burr was found guilty of the charges in 1807, Wilkinson trial for being a traitor would have occurred much sooner than 1811. The fourth charge "Conniving at and permitting a treasonable conspiracy and aiding and abetting the same" spawned from the uncertainty of the General actions before Aaron Burr arrest. The lack of military movement and attention by Wilkinson led to the speculation that Wilkinson was waiting for Burr's descend down the Mississippi; however, once again the charge of treason had already been disproved in the court of law. The sixth charge was of disobedience to orders to move troops from Terre aux Boeuffs to Natchez and Fort Adams. The order was issued by Dr. William Eustis the Secretary of the War Department on April 30, 1809, but the camp at Terre aux Boeuffs was not abandoned until September 14. Wilkinson blamed the war department for the tardiness: poor supplies, and poor transportation. Also the area that was picked out for the new encampment was full of diseases typical of the swamp ground. Wilkinson picked out the campsite because it was the least flooded and as close to New Orleans as ordered, but

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<sup>88</sup> Shreve, *Finished Scoundrel*, 266.

nearly every location selected on the Mississippi River in Louisiana was a swamp. The seventh charge was neglect of duty in the Terre aux Boeuffs affair. Somebody had to pay for the number of deaths, and the weakening of the military in the west. Neither Wilkinson nor the Madison Administration, who had appointed Dr. Eustis as the Secretary of War, however, did.

The final charge of misappropriation and waste of public money and supplies was created by John Randolph's discovery of the receipts for Wilkinson's expenses due to traveling and his expectation of reimbursement for the losses due to him for his involvement in the military. John Randolph believed the law stated the Commander-in-Chief was responsible for all cost and expenses that occurred outside of his position and the General's two hundred and fifty dollar monthly salary should have sufficed for all expenses incurred.<sup>89</sup> The senator felt that Wilkinson was abusing his position and was asking for excessive compensation of his travel expenses from the US government.

Wilkinson was cleared of all charges. One reason why he was spared was because of the growing tension between England and the United States. The War of 1812 seemed imminent and James Wilkinson was restored to the rank of General. After his trial, he was ordered to go to New Orleans and to prepare his troops for a defense from a possible invasion from the English. Another reason why Wilkinson was found not guilty was because the General was able to rely on his former Spanish associates to solidify his defense and provide a counterargument to Clark's accusations.

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<sup>89</sup> Shreve, *Finished Scoundrel*, 257.

## CHAPTER V

### WILKINSON'S FINAL YEARS

James Wilkinson saw a short revival of his career after his court martial. The general was sent to New Orleans on April 10, 1812, to take command of the troops in the west. Wilkinson delivered one of the last blows to his former employers when he took Mobile, Alabama on April 13, 1813. The General's capture of the Spanish in Mobile was an example of Wilkinson protocol. On April 13, Wilkinson wrote to Mauricio Zuniga explaining the situation surrounding the attack on Spanish Mobile. "In taking possession of the Fortess [Fort Charlotte] I have obeyed the orders of the President of the United States, to assert the laws of the Government & enforce the civil Institutions of the Mississippi Territory as far as the River Perdido." The 600 troops led by Wilkinson captured Fort Charlotte without the "effusion of a drop of Blood."<sup>90</sup> While the rest of the Florida territories were not obtained by the Americans until the ratification of the Adams-De Onis Treaty in 1819. The declining Spanish presence in continental North America had become apparent since the transfer of Louisiana to France.

After the War of 1812, Wilkinson was again court martial led for his military campaign in the north after the battle of Montreal. Once again Wilkinson was cleared of all charges blaming the War Department's mismanagement of the campaign as the reason for failure. Wilkinson's relief was short lived. After the war, the United States Army began to cut back on its expenses. Wilkinson, who was ineffective in the north and had advancing age, was selected for release. Wilkinson retired from the army in 1814. The

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<sup>90</sup> James Wilkinson, Fort Charlotte, to Mauricio Zuniga, April 13, 1813, AGI, PC, legajo 2375, Seville, Spain.

General was awarded, in December of 1815, a 3,500 dollar retirement pension for his long years of service. After his retirement Wilkinson began to write his Memoirs that were released in a three volume set.<sup>91</sup>

The American borders did not stop expanding after the Louisiana Purchase. Settlers were still looking for cheap, unsettled land. The retired General among many others realized the opportunity in land speculation in the province of Texas was lucrative. After some years spent writing his memoirs and raising cotton in New Orleans, Wilkinson believed he could be of some service to the developing nation of Mexico and at the same time serve the United States of America as ambassador to Mexico. Although he never served officially as ambassador, he was able to submit a proposal to Agustín Interbide, who later became Emperor Agustín I. In 1822, Wilkinson wrote to the Emperor Interbide his observations about the current state of affairs for the newly created Mexican government. These suggestions were discovered by the historian Herbert E. Bolton in the Archivo General de la Nación of Mexico. One of the articles was titled “*Observations about the Important Branch of Commerce that Respectfully Presented to the Emperor.*” The aged Wilkinson still relied on his tactics of written observation and suggestion of commercial policy that he employed nearly thirty five years earlier with the Spanish governors of Louisiana. However in his “Observations” of 1822, he does not request a guarantee of exclusive trading privileges. Instead, he suggested that the Mexican government should look to the United States as a possible trading partner, because the US was the most modern nation in the world that did not rely on outdated

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<sup>91</sup> Thomas Robson Hay, “General James Wilkinson- The Last Phase,” *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, 19(April 1936): 409.

trading policies that helped corrupt and weaken the European Nations such as Spain. In his second letter, he addressed the topic of immigration to Texas, but instead of using western settlers from the U.S., Interbide should recruit Catholic citizens from the former colonies of Florida and Louisiana. He also recommended that the province of Texas be divided into two territories. One of the territories should be governed by a person with experience and prestige.<sup>92</sup> The hint of his own appointment was clearly expressed in his proposal.

In his final attempt to establish a lucrative position for himself, it was clear where his allegiance truly lay. While Wilkinson advocated a commerce relation with the United States, he was negotiating with the former Spanish subjects by himself.<sup>93</sup> And after all of his Hispanic relations and intrigues, Wilkinson died in a foreign country under a foreign flag still looking for his fortune. Investigators of Wilkinson believed that he suffered problems caused by diarrhea and used opium, laudanum or opiates to help battle the discomfort and pain.<sup>94</sup> It seems unlikely to think that Wilkinson might have died from diarrhea, or an acute overdose of medication, when it is more probable to believe his advanced age and many years of traveling had finally caught up to him. Whatever the reason, Wilkinson died on December 28, 1825. His body was buried at the Church of San Miguel in Mexico City.

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<sup>92</sup> Herbert E. Bolton, "General James Wilkinson as Advisor to Emperor Interbide," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 2(May 1918): 164- 174.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 178- 180.

<sup>94</sup> Jacobs, *Tarnished Warrior*, 340; Shreve, *Finished Scoundrel*, 294-295.

In conclusion, “The founders [of the United States of America] were far more numerous than popular history suggests, and far less righteous and dignified... [they were] imperfect men in a less than perfect nation gasping at opportunities.”<sup>95</sup> They fought against the English and bickered amongst themselves. And like the founding fathers, General James Wilkinson was a sterling example of an early American patriot. He was imperfect, flawed, vain, deceitful, ruthless, intelligent, and manipulative. But he fought and serviced his country for over twenty years. He was a man that “followed a policy of controlling his competitor.”<sup>96</sup> Wilkinson wanted what was best for himself, and that was to watch, wait, and see whom the most secure investment was. The General could not be called an idiot or a fool. He was a shrewd and calculating man who believed himself to be the epitome of gentry and the United States Army.

The Archivo General de Indias (AGI) helps investigators to understand the full complexity and development of James Wilkinson. The AGI proved Wilkinson along with many other prominent Americans pledged allegiance to Spain in order to trade, own property, and promote the interests of the Spanish Nation. It also unraveled many plots, conspiracies, and accusations that other archives could not provide. As previously mentioned, the AGI contains few correspondences between Wilkinson and the Spanish in the Old-southwest after the Louisiana Purchase, however, the few letters here revealed display interesting tidbits that help to shed more light on the still perplexing actions of Wilkinson, Burr, and others. The AGI also illuminates how the General relied on the

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<sup>95</sup> Isenberg, *Fallen Founder*, 414.

<sup>96</sup> Parish, “Intrigues of Doctor James O’ Fallon,” 240- 241.

testimony of Vicente Folch to support his defense against Daniel Clark and John Randolph of Roanoke. Finally the AGI shows how the Wilkinson was able to able to capture Mobile, Alabama in 1813 using only a pen and paper.

In the end, General James Wilkinson was well aware that his relationship with the Spanish was not copasetic with his position in the United States Army, and he took numerous measures to secure that his exposure would never be brought to public view. Was the General guilty of treason? Wilkinson was never proven guilty of treason in a court of law for various reasons. One reason for his acquittal was the limited definition of treason in the untested American legal system of that time, another being his political association with the Democratic- Republicans, and finally his ability to provide a strong defense. But by today's standards, Wilkinson would most certainly be court- martial and convicted of treason. We cannot judge the past with the standards of today, however, General James Wilkinson will remain an innocent scoundrel.

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APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIBED CIPHER<sup>97</sup>

697.70. 1068 7[Damaged] 18.8 7971  
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E---T 384.18 48.2 666 788 150 246.26 799, 162 [Next page]  
356.29 375.14 17.10d 151.14 1096 1024 1139 1068  
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95.15 387 618 481d en 150n 222.17 286.30 1187 190 999  
33.24 560 113.17 959.

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<sup>97</sup> [Cipher] James Wilkinson, New Orleans, to Manuel Gayoso de Lemos, April 20, 1797, AGI, PC, legajo 2375, Seville, Spain.

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1068 349.26s, 1176 167 19.12d 162 1176 4.27 1225y 223.26s  
167 1096 219 190.28d 168 1113d 173 1222 797s: 301 955 1223  
219 en 1208 249.8 1096 330.27 1078 378nd 447 1068 283.20 [Next Page]  
1198 1181 219 356.29 772 836d 176 1223 969 1096  
909 1068 713 1068. 25. 742 794 E---T 112.3 167 637ly  
326.3. 1206 1181 618 1068 596 1206 310.14  
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84.24d 176 1208 223.26, 162 1096 1068 238.19 1206 749  
166.16: 654 618 581n 1096 249.8 1068 295.1 794 1068  
188.35s 58.4 1187 50. 98.29s 208.25 176 1208 270.23:  
36 178.15 790 634. 654 1181 102.22 106.32 1068 223.10  
794 219ng 377.23, 1096 1224: 654 Suis 788. 2.3 794  
586ng 120.25 303 1086 301.3 794 1095 162 1068 253.18  
794 1067 396.1 1172 237.12 s 1225 222.5 1096 64.28 1187  
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618 794 69.25 1068 1225 794 1208 350.3 6.10 1096  
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599test 8.30 162 769 303.29 22.20 1208 769 119.6  
8.31 132.10 101

APPENDIX B

DECRYPTED LETTER <sup>98</sup>

Sir

I acknowledge the receipt of your last [unreadable] of 22<sup>nd</sup> September & at the same time I inform you that till after the receipt of a letter of the late G. Wayne, & of another sent to Gayoso by the comissary [*sic*] of the same [damaged] Its Mr. Elicot [unreadable] it was not terrible to find a plausible pretext of dilaying[ *sic*, delaying] the evacuation of the Posts: so that the Fort of Chicasaw Bluffs was totally destroyed & the evacuation of those of Walnut Hills & Natchez already began when availing myself of the pretense that Wayne & Elicot claimed and excepted that the afore said Posts were to be delivered with their fortifications & building I put off everything making known to Elicot that until the revolution of our respective Courts upon the true sense or construction of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Article of the Treaty the Posts of Walnut Hills, Natchez, & Tombeebe [Tombigbee] shall not be rendered (with a line through it) neither / rendered not evacuated, without that disposition being against the Cummuning [*sic*] of the boundary line which is to be marked out.

Elicot whose character is not political one & very unwise aplied [*sic*] himself to stir up the inhabitants of Natchez & to dislike the orders of Governor Gayoso fancing [*sic*] that he had excited a party of Chactaw to act, against his safety & that of his escort and fellows with whom at the time the Indian were entoxicated [*sic*] had trully some dispute which ended in some cuffs & cudgellins at his arrival he hoisted the American colours oposite [*sic*] to his tent, he had thousand cross storyes [unreadable] With Gayoso; both even went so far as to make use of swering [*sic*] and undecent [*sic*] words till the present time Elicot disdained to give me an official account of his arrival to the Province of which, I am the commander in chief, nor even to our [damaged]ten to me his pretended causes of his dislike, or discontent with Gayoso, so much that should I not have send, should not some wise men have interfered the dispute, could have ended in an open rupture with a great bloodshead [*sic*] from every side.

It will be highly convenient that Congress might circumscribe Elicot to his commission & to send an officer of character and wisdom to take the commandement [*sic*] of the troops who are arrived; & who according my orders are to be lodged, & treated as Spanish ones: but should it be in your power to suspend their coming down the river wee [*sic*] will be very much pleased, at it since to run of the line the 25 men of Elicot escort are highly sufficient.

You will have the Grant you sollicit [*sic*] in the Illinois Country, & you ought to depend upon an annual bounty of four thousand dollars which shall be delivered at your order & to the person you may indicate; I have given to Power the secretaryship [*sic*] of the [unreadable]mits commission with fifty dollars per month at your recommendation: Philip Nolan is with me I will eagerly embrace the oportunity [*sic*] of being useful to him: I am not able of going farther by the Shortness of time and the pressure of this vessel

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<sup>98</sup>[Decrypted Letter] James Wilkinson, New Orleans, to Manuel Gayoso de Lemos, April 20, 1797, AGI, PC, legajo 2375, Seville, Spain.

which permits me only to congratulate with you upon the rank of commander in chief of the army you obtained Your Antagonists death & the opportunity you have to convince the pain of your truly adhere on to his interest in the mean [*sic*] time I remain with the greatest affection [*sic*] & most sincere attachment [*sic*] your most faithful affectionate friend.

APPENDIX C

CIPHER LETTER FROM 1799<sup>99</sup>

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4645 4837 414 4300 884. 3929 4173 2 1618 4242 3228 4300  
3728 2769 414 1448 225d. 4300 3656ed 2431s 4299 2063  
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958 1929ed 3004 1746s 4299 4308 2590 2 1859ed 1204 2267  
4300 1806 2006 4367 4479 3041 4302 2947 3007 591  
4300 328 202 1665 2987 3282s 4714 591 4300 902  
588 591 4300 2240 2987 4665 5718s 4813 2593 2590  
32ly 2241 1889 4302 4367 417. 4607 4322 712s 4308  
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<sup>99</sup> James Wilkinson, Louisville, to Manuel Gayoso de Lemos, March 10, 1799, AGI, PC, legajo 2374, Seville, Spain.

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APPENDIX D

COPY OF A LETTER FROM WILKINSON TO ANDRES L. ARMESTO<sup>100</sup>

My Dear Don Andres.

You will find enclosed a list of characters for your Government. There are many Men of Indifference whom I have not mentioned, & still more Rascals.

If Providence spares me, you shall again hear from me in December, but if the Fates should prove unpropitious, & my Death should be the Consequence of my depending voyage. In that case let me implore you good offices, in obtaining for my wife & children, the indulgence which his Esq. & the Intendant, have been pledged to give me; I Humbly conceive, that in Equity, they would have a Tithe to this consideration, and sure every principle of generosity & humanity must plead in their favor. You will be so good as to consult & take me assure with our common Friend Mr. Clark in this Business who has my particular arrangements in the Case of Misfortune to me.

Adeau my good Sir. My Heaven protect. Bless & make you & yours happy, is the fervent prayer, of your affectionate & obliged Friend.

Signed: James Wilkinson

Enclosed:

Daniel Brodhead, the Bastard Son of a General in the American Service, of the Same Name. He is plausible, has some ingenuity, & Enterprize, but is destitute of Liberal Education, and is as unprincipled a Scoundrel as ever went unhung. He has a good property, in Land Bonds & the paper Securities of America.

Patrick Joyes, an Irishman, Educated in Spain, a Merchant & in equivocal Circumstances. He is a Fool, a Knave, & a most abominable liar.

Maurice Nagle, another Irishman, without principle or property.

William Dadge [Dodge], a third Irishman, awful, subtle Scoundrel, in desperate circumstances.

B Tardiveau, a French Man, of considerable abilities, with the Arts& address peculiar to his Nation, he speaks & writes English elegantly, & is a great Seheman [shaman], both in politics & commerce, but always deceives himself.

P. Tardiveau, the Junior Brother, a Man of good parts, but much addicted to drink.

John Rhea, a young Gentleman of Philadelphia a Merchant of good Character and Family.

McCaughey, a Irish young man, an Agent assistance of Mr. Hares, a Merchant, & I believe honest.

There are the only Persons who I expect may come down the River before my return. In general it may be card down as a such, that no man of worth will come down without bringing letters to some person here.

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<sup>100</sup> James Wilkinson, New Orleans, to Andres L. Armesto, September 14, 1787, AGI, PC, legajo 2373, Seville, Spain.

Brown, Innes, Hunter, Wallace, Marshall, Garrett, Bullitt, Shelby, Lyne, Taylor, Groonus, Logan, McDowell, Todd, Craig, Johnson, McClung, Campbell, Anderson, Sebastian, Phillips, Cox, Edwards, Scott, Cohaun & Peterson, are the men of influence in the country. But Mr. Brown is unquestionably, superior, both in personal Influence & abilities and I must recommend in Case any misfortune should happen to myself that application he made on the subject of my Essay, the my name must not be mentioned, & the first proposition to him must be made in a private manner & on the general ground of negociation [*sic*]. Engage his attention, without alarming any idle Fears, and I think you may be sure of him.

His address

John Brown Esq.

Attorney at Law

In case Mr. Brown Death

I should recommend.

Benjamin Sebastian Esq.

Attorney at law

APPENDIX E

TRANSCRIBED COPY OF WILKINSON'S DECLARATION<sup>101</sup>

Declaration

Interest is the ruling Passion of Nations, as well as of Individuals, and He who imputes a different motive to human conduct, either deceives Himself, or means to deceive others: the [damaged] I contend for this truth. I will not deny that every Man owes something to the Country, which gave Him Birth & Education. This something, in whatever way it demonstrates itself, is founded in Self-Love, For example, an Irishman in Spain, A Spaniard in France, a French man in England, or an Englishman any where, will each take pride in recapitulating, the Virtues & renown of their respective Nations, and are pained & disgusted at any Instance of their disgrace or dishonor: But to assert that an intelligent being, endowed with powers of free agency, should be fixed, like the regitable [regrettable] creation, to the spot which happens to witness his Birth would be to arraign the Wisdom of providence, & to condemn the inavey practice of mankind.

But when an Individual of Distinction, intends to expatiate Himself, he should proceed with extreme circumspection & caution, he should weigh well the obligations, subsisting between Himself & His country, and examine impartially, whether he is bound to Her Service by any existing tie of public trust, positive or implied: He should recollect, that to measure must wound the self- Love of those whom he abandons; consequently will subject his whole life & actions to the feverest scrutiny, and expose his Fame & character, to the Shafts & arrows of Calumny & do traction deeply impressed with these importance truths, after silencing every passions & every prejudice, I appealed to those reflecting faculties, with which a bountiful God has endowed me, and matured my decision conformably to the dictates of Reason. Honor & conscience.

Professing these principle & believing in these opinions, I hope it cannot be said of me, with Justice, that I transgress any law of Nature or Nations, of Morality or Honor, in changing my allegiance from United States of America, to His Most Catholic Majesty.

Born & Educated in America. I embraced Her cause in the Late Revolution, & steadfastly adhered to Her Interest, until She triumphed over Her Enemy; This Event, by rendering my Services unnecessary discharged me from my Engagement, dissolved every obligation, but those of Nature, and left me at Liberty after having contended for her happiness, to look for my own: the Circumstances & Policy of the United States; rendering it impossible for me to attain, this most defineable Object, under their Government. I have determined (without wishing them Evil) to search for it in Spain where, I am persuaded, my Conduct will be directed, by such principles of loyalty to my Sovereign, & of justice to my Fellow Subjects, as will See to myself, the "Mens sisie consced recti" and transmit my Name fullied to posterity.

Thus much, regard to my own Fame. Dearer to me infinitely more than Life, & respect for the Gentlemen whom I have the Honor to address, have induced me to

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<sup>101</sup>James Wilkinson, New Orleans, to Esteban Miró, August 22, 1787, AGI, PC, legajo 2373 Seville, Spain.

premise; in any Issue of my future Fortunes. I call upon you Gentlemen, as the Guardians of my Honor to bear Testimony to my \*\* that the Motives of my Conduct were the real good of the Country in which I live, as well \*\* as the Interest & aggrandizing \*\* Spanish Monarchy [the rest of the letter is heavily damaged but it is signed by James Wilkinson in August 22, 1787]

PERMISSION TO COPY

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree at Texas Tech University or Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, I agree that the Library and my major department shall make it freely available for research purposes. Permission to copy this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Director of the Library or my major professor. It is understood that any copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my further written permission and that any user may be liable for copyright infringement.

Agree (Permission is granted.)

Austin Travis Wheeler

July 13, 2009

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Student Signature

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Date