

for the speedy downfall of the plotting, perfidious, profligate Aaron Burr, and the immediate elevation of the conscientious, patriotic, and incorruptible General James Wilkinson, commander-in-chief of the army of the United States of America.

To lure Colonel Burr into a pitfall in which he could accomplish the ruin of his dangerous confederate, General Wilkinson immediately wrote him the letter, "postmarked the 13th of May," which was shortly thereafter followed by consequences, which as averred by General Wilkinson, "answered, in some degree, the purpose for which it was intended," for "after the receipt of it," Colonel Burr "ventured to communicate more of his designs than he had before dared to hazard."

"Whether the execution of the project should be attempted soon or late, depended," as Parton pertinently remarks, "upon the turn which affairs might take on the southwestern frontier. If war broke out, nothing could be easier than to organize an expedition against Mexico. Thousands of adventurous spirits would hasten to enroll themselves under the banner of a popular chief, and the people of Mexico were known to be disaffected. * * * *

"But there might be no war, or it might be long delayed.

"To provide for both these contingencies, a large purchase of land was contemplated, far to the southwest, beyond the Mississippi, on the banks of the river Washita, a branch of the Red River. * * * * There, if the grand scheme should fail, or be abandoned," Colonel Burr "would found a colony composed of persons of wealth, education, refinement, and talent, who would embark capital in the most productive region of the southwest, and form the most brilliant, accomplished, and enlightened society on the continent.

"In July, 1806, this purchase was made. It comprised four hundred thousand acres, for which Burr was to pay forty thousand dollars, the first installment of which, five thousand dollars, he did actually pay.¹ In this purchase several persons participated, most of whom were near relatives or connections of Burr. One of his relatives in Connecticut, a descendant of Jonathan Edwards, advanced a great part of his savings for this purchase. Mr. Alston² probably furnished money; it is certain he endorsed paper for his father-in-law. Burr's connections in New York were not backward in aiding him. * * * * Probably five hundred persons in all knew something of Burr's plans, and had entered into some kind of engagement to follow his fortunes. There were also four or five thousand whose names were on Burr's lists, and

¹ The tract belonged to Baron Bastrop, and lay at that time in the Territory of Louisiana, on the Washita River.

² Joseph Alston, Burr's son-in-law, who married his daughter Theodosia, was born in South Carolina, in 1778, of which state he was governor in 1812-'14. He died September 10, 1816.