CHAPTER SEVEN

A New Frontier

John Waller's answer to his repudiation by the Kansas Republican party and to the ultraracism of the 1890s was a decision to participate in the development of America's New Empire. Specifically, he looked forward to establishing a vast plantation in some underdeveloped area of the world, an enterprise that he believed would inevitably benefit his race, his country, his party, and himself. Such a scheme, moreover, would not do violence to his long-cherished faith in individual and racial progress. In looking abroad for the key to realization of his personal destiny and that of his race, Waller reflected the growing interest among Afro-Americans in opportunities overseas, particularly in Africa.

Confronted during the 1890s by a rising tide of institutionalized racism, a substantial segment of the Negro community in the United States looked to the underdeveloped, nonwhite regions of the world as havens from prejudice and exploitation. Of this group, the most publicized were black nationalists like Henry McNeil Turner and Edward Blyden—men who argued throughout the closing years of the nineteenth century that the only alternatives to lynching, disfranchisement, and segregation were emigration, colonization, and the development of a unique black identity. For these men, as for others in the back-to-Africa movement, the primary purpose of emigration was separation. Convinced that America had nothing to offer the black man, they urged Negroes to seek a totally new environment. Only in a foreign land—Africa for Turner and Blyden—would the Negro be able to pursue his destiny and exercise his genius free from
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the blighting impact of race prejudice. Once in Africa, black Americans could use the only two things of value they had acquired in the New World—Christianity and Western technology—to uplift and civilize the "dark continent." Together, emigrant and native would build a strong, united Africa able to demand and obtain respect for black men the world over.

There was another group, however, that cast its gaze beyond America's shores but refused to reject American society, continuing to believe that the democratic premises of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence, together with the free enterprise system, would eventually lead to equality and full citizenship for Afro-Americans. Contending that the markets and raw materials of Asia, Latin America, and especially Africa offered an opportunity for group and individual advancement for blacks as well as whites, these individuals came to advocate a unique version of the New Manifest Destiny.

Despite a lull in formal diplomatic activity between 1865 and 1890, expansionism remained an important if latent force in American society during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Most citizens still believed that it was their duty to carry the blessings of democracy, Christianity, and capitalism to less fortunate peoples. With the coming of the Industrial Revolution—the value of manufactured goods exported from the United States exceeded that of raw materials for the first time in 1895—the economic impetus to expansion became particularly important. After Alfred Thayer Mahan laid down the ground rules which enabled the United States to convert from continental to overseas expansion, contemporary economic and psychological factors merged with traditional Manifest Destiny to stimulate American economic growth abroad and to produce a brief but vigorous adventure in formal empire-building. As a result of the New Manifest Destiny, the United States acquired between 1889 and 1899 the Samoas, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines.

Prominent Afro-Americans such as T. Thomas Fortune, editor of the New York Age, H. C. Smith of the Cleveland Gazette, Monroe Dorsey of the Parsons Weekly Blade, and T. McCants Stewart, a prominent New York attorney (who eventually settled in Honolulu in 1898), insisted that the New Empire presented a special opportunity for blacks to establish plantations, acquire mining concessions, and found profitable trading enterprises. As early as 1884, Fortune was urging blacks to take advantage of Africa's seemingly exhaustless resources. Later, in 1902, Theodore Roosevelt appointed the editor of the Age a special commissioner to study labor and race conditions in the Philippines and Hawaii and to report on
the possibility of colonizing black Americans in the nation's Pacific possessions. Upon his return to the United States, Fortune advised the White House that "under proper arrangements" 5,000 blacks could be settled on the island of Luzon alone. Fortune urged the government to give the Negro American "a proper chance to enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" in America's insular possessions. In arguing for retention of the Philippines in 1898 and acquisition of other "tropical or semi-tropical countries," the Coffeyville (Kansas) American asserted that "the black American has the same necessities imposed on him that fall upon the white. . . . He must move. . . . He must explore. . . . He must promote and establish. . . . The white American finds for himself new fields readily enough. . . . May not the black American find his in the new territories of the United States?" By 1895 Smith was predicting in the Gazette that "the Afro-American will inevitably find employment for his increasing wealth in foreign enterprises." Typical of those Negroes who urged black participation in the New Empire was the Reverend Dennis Jones, who declared in a speech delivered before the national convention of Negro Masons that from the very beginning of the republic "expansion has animated our most progressive statesmen, and we might as well attempt to stop the flow of Niagara as to try to stop the growth, grandeur, and mighty forces of America." He went on to praise the Republican party for opening the markets of the world to all men, black as well as white.

Black disciples of the New Manifest Destiny were reacting to many of the same historic impulses that impelled the white majority to endorse overseas adventure. As Charles Campbell and others have pointed out, a basic assumption of the founding fathers was that America would need an expanding economic and political marketplace to survive and grow. Such expansion, they argued, would provide the underpinnings for general material prosperity, sublimate domestic differences, and bind the nation together in a great common effort. Black leaders like T. McCants Stewart and Benjamin Arnett, no less than Albert Beveridge or Whitelaw Reid, accepted these as self-evident truths. In addition, blacks no less than whites supported overseas adventure in an effort to find diversion from the monotony of the factory system, the anxiety of labor-management disputes, and the political polarization of the 1890s. Indeed, the Afro-Americans' status as an oppressed minority made them even more vulnerable than whites to the seductive appeal of empire-building. Finally, a number of prominent blacks subscribed to the theory of the disappearing frontier. As evidenced by the marked interest within the black community in migration to Colorado, Minnesota, and Oklahoma.
in the post–Civil War period, many Negro leaders had looked to the American West during the nineteenth century as the answer to the problems of a closed society. By the 1890s, however, these same men were convinced either that the continental frontier was disappearing or that it was not the answer to America's social and economic problems. As a result, they began to look abroad for new regions to exploit.

Those Negroes urging their brethren to take part in the competition for overseas concessions and commercial advantages, or who participated themselves, were actuated by more than a desire for personal gain or by concern over America's status as a great power. They believed that the New Empire offered well-to-do enterprising Afro-Americans the opportunity to improve not only their own status but that of the community as a whole. Indeed, men such as Stewart, Fred Jeltz, and even Henry M. Turner argued that black business enterprises in other countries could redound to the benefit of the entire race. By enhancing the prestige of the United States, thus eliciting the approval of white America, and by adding to the community's collective wealth, expansion would augment the Afro-American's economic and political power base at home. This resulting increase in wealth, power, and prestige could be enlisted in the struggle for justice and equality in the United States.

Moreover, exponents of commercial expansion believed the New Empire offered a unique opportunity for black American concessionaires to demonstrate that Negroes could compete as successfully for the world's markets and raw materials as whites, that they no less than other Americans possessed superior energy and skill. Many expansionists believed that Negroes would prove more successful than Caucasians as agents of civilization because they would be physically better able to endure the rigors of a tropical climate and their black skins would facilitate relations with the natives. Even such an outspoken antiimperialist as Booker T. Washington believed that Afro-Americans had a duty to carry the blessings of democracy and capitalism to their less fortunate brethren in Africa and that they were best suited to do so. By 1905 Washington and other Tuskegeeans were actively involved in Togo, Sudan, South Africa, the Congo, Free State, and Liberia, uplifting and civilizing.

Some Afro-American expansionists like Kansas' F. L. Jeltz of the American and Monroe Dorsey of the Parsons Weekly Blade strongly supported the annexation of both Cuba and Hawaii. "We want these and other places as outposts of commerce and maritime power. . . . We want them for the development of our national energies, for extension of our trade and support of our flag." Jeltz, writing in the American in 1898, declared: "The Philippine Islands will offer an excellent oppor-
tunity for Negro colonization, not colonization for the purpose of getting out of this country, but for the same purpose for which the white man colonizes, for the purpose of making money." Others, more sensitive to the anticolonial struggles of nonwhite peoples around the globe and the implications of this struggle for the Afro-American, rejected overt colonization and instead supported an informal imperialism, that is, economic penetration without political annexation. Whether they were overt imperialists or commercial expansionists, it is safe to say that a significant number of educated black Americans believed that economically underdeveloped, nonwhite regions of the world constituted an environment where the Negro could avoid the blighting impact of proscription and discrimination, enhance their own and the race's power and prestige, and at the same time remain within the American milieu.

John Waller was particularly susceptible to the lure of overseas empire because he had spent much of his adult life in the midst of a community of people who had succumbed to the myth of a "promised land." who were convinced that the Negro would be best able to realize his potential in economically underdeveloped regions not yet exploited and controlled by the white man. The immigrationist impulse in Kansas, moreover, did not end with the Great Exodus of 1879–1882. In September, 1886, a group of Topeka blacks headed by George Charles and his son Charles Charles established an African Emigration Association "for the purpose of accumulating means to help that part of our people who wish to obtain homes on African soil." Expressing the conviction that slavery had so retarded the Negro's development that he could never hope to compete with his white fellow citizens on an equal basis, the Charleses called upon the persecuted blacks of the South and the unemployed Negroes of the North to join with them in establishing a haven for Afro-Americans in the land of their origin. As of January, 1887, the association claimed 500 members, with full-fledged chapters in Wyandotte, Wamego, Manhattan, and Osage City. Repeated appeals in the late 1880s and early 1890s to both state and federal governments for funds went for naught, however, and the A.E.A. was never able to finance transportation to Africa. Then, early in 1888, none other than Colonel John Brown and several other black Kansas "entrepreneurs" launched a scheme to colonize blacks in Brazil and the Argentine Republic. When several prominent Negroes stepped forward to denounce the South American project as purely a money-making scheme designed to enrich its creators, the "movement" collapsed. By far the most important of the post-exodus immigration movements launched by black Kansans involved a scheme to colonize the Cherokee Strip in Oklahoma.
The Indian Territory—that is, the lands that were to comprise the state of Oklahoma—was sold to the United States by the Creeks and Seminoles in 1866. It was clear from the language of the treaties that the region was to be used for Indian and Negro reservations. The Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, as well as the Creeks and Seminoles, had living among them at that time several thousand blacks, former slaves of Indians. The federal government anticipated that these individuals plus many newly emancipated southern blacks would want to take advantage of their freedom and establish homesteads in the West. In the years that followed, however, few blacks moved to the Indian Territory, and pressure from land-hungry whites halted the settlement of additional Indians on the treaty lands. These same whites demanded that a portion of the I.T., a forty-mile wide band of territory along the southern boundary of Kansas known as the Cherokee Strip, be opened to white settlement. The federal government procrastinated, for, under terms of the treaty with the Cherokees, the strip was to be reserved for friendly Indians. Nonetheless, federal troops proved unable to stanch the flow of white squatters that moved into the area during the late 1880s, and in 1889 Washington officially opened the strip. A number of black Kansans had long looked at the band of territory simultaneously as a potential haven for the oppressed blacks of the South and as an area which they themselves could exploit through farming or real-estate dealing. In July, 1889, W. I. Jamison, D. B. Garrett, H. W. Rolfe, and Bill Eagleson established the Oklahoma Immigration Association. The corporation proposed to establish immigration bureaus in several southern cities and all the principal towns of Kansas. The initiators of the scheme had little luck in attracting southern Negroes, but by February, 1890, more than 2,000 Kansas blacks had crossed into the strip. Traveling via the Rock Island and Santa Fe railroads or by buckboard, the colonists preempted some 145,000 acres of public land and laid out the all-black township of Lincoln, the center of the projected colony. According to the Capital, many of those who went were not destitute but were "worthy citizens prosperous in business beyond expectations." By early 1890 the prospect of creating a black utopia in Oklahoma had captured the imagination of blacks throughout the state. Negroes envisioned the establishment of a full range of black-controlled institutions—churches, schools, hospitals, orphanages, and asylums, as well as a government controlled by Negroes for Negroes. Indeed, during the opening weeks of 1890, Edward P. McCabe, who had been in Washington since 1889, actively campaigned for territorial governor of Oklahoma. The dream of a black homeland in Oklahoma was never realized, however. As the number of blacks moving
into the Cherokee Strip increased, so did the hostility of white "sooners" living in the area. Stories involving the shooting and beating of black squatters began to drift northward, discouraging would-be immigrants. Moreover, the Oklahoma Immigration Association became involved in a scandal when one of the directors sold land which the company did not actually own. Finally, McCabe lost out to a white in his bid for the governorship.²¹ The Oklahoma fever had served, however, to rekindle interest in Afro-American colonization among black Kansans generally and in John Lewis Waller particularly.

Given the milieu from which Waller came, his status as an upwardly mobile member of the black community, his anxiety over mounting racial tensions, and his commitment to the precepts of American society and to Social Darwinism and individualism, it was natural for him to turn to the New Empire as the solution to his quest for security and progress. Although he was responding to the immediate situation in Kansas and to contemporary events influencing other proponents of black empire, Waller's conversion to overseas expansion was also a product of his own experience and thought. He had, for example, always believed that the relatively open environment of the frontier offered the best opportunity for blacks to advance materially and intellectually, to gain confidence, and to improve the image of the race as a whole. In 1879, at the height of the Kansas exodus, he had urged Congress to appropriate one million dollars for the colonization of enterprising blacks in Nebraska, Colorado, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Kansas. There the oppressed and exploited former slaves of the South, free from the restraints imposed by racial prejudice, could achieve economic independence and gain experience in self-government. "I hope no man will quiet himself on the theory that the 'exodus' is over," he wrote. "It is not nor will it be unless the most implicit assurances can be given on the part of the law-making powers that we shall immediately be secured in all our rights."²² In the late 1880s Waller became caught up in the Oklahoma fever. Arguing that black pioneers would be able to "establish themselves so firmly that they could hold their own from the start," he recommended settlement of the Oklahoma territory by 100,000 Negroes.²³ Waller adhered to the theory that the migration and colonization of a substantial number of southern Negroes would improve their lot and the condition of those who remained behind. A new exodus would create a labor shortage in Dixie and dramatically increase the economic leverage of the farm and industrial laborers who chose to stay.²⁴

During most of the 1880s Waller was opposed to schemes aimed at colonizing abroad because he associated them with the ongoing efforts
of white supremacists to expatriate blacks and because he believed overseas colonization would involve loss of citizenship. “I insist that we, the descendents of that band of black people who came to Jamestown in 1620, have no more right to be exported to our mother country than the descendents of those who came over on the Mayflower the same year,” he wrote in the Topeka Capital. “In the face of anarchy, socialism, and all sorts of dangers threatening the perpetuity of our institutions,” Negros, some living “in the most distressing and squalid poverty,” had remained loyal to the flag, and they would never voluntarily relinquish their citizenship.25 By 1891, however, it had become apparent that land-hungry whites were not going to allow blacks to exploit an acre of western territory if they could prevent it. During the 1880s Waller had joined his fellow Republicans in accepting overseas expansion by the United States as beneficial to the economy and the party. It eventually occurred to him that the answer to his problems and those of his race lay in temporary exploitation, à la E. H. Harriman and Cornelius Vanderbilt, of some virgin wilderness overseas. Blacks would be free to mine, farm, and develop without having to worry about the “bulldozing” tactics of land-crazed whites. Conditioned by various assumptions about the value of frontier life and the need of blacks to acquire wealth, devoted to a social system based on competition and material achievement, stung by his personal misfortune, and depressed by the deteriorating racial climate in America, Waller decided sometime in the early 1890s that colonization and exploitation of a commercial empire, which had brought power and prestige to many white Americans, could do the same for blacks.

The opportunity for Waller to implement his schemes was made possible by a bizarre combination of white Republican anxiety over Negro voting trends in 1890 and aid rendered by a prominent black Democrat. Between August and November, 1890, the Democrats and Populists blitzed the Republicans with hundreds of speakers, rallies, and parades. As part of their massive election campaign, the Demo-Pops redoubled their efforts to win over the black vote. No less than fifty Democratic newspapers ran editorials detailing Waller’s untiring labors in behalf of the G.O.P. and blasting the Republicans for rejecting him. Foster appealed to Negroes to vote for the party of the common man—the only party which had chosen to recognize the Negro by placing one of his number on the state ticket. Meanwhile, Taylor and Eagleson campaigned tirelessly for Charles Robinson, the Democratic gubernatorial candidate. Belatedly, white Republican leaders recognized the threat. Republican editorials became increasingly shrill. Joe Hudson accused John F. Willets, the Populist gubernatorial nominee, of swindling his
widowed sister. Republicans frantically tried to persuade Negroes that if they voted Democratic and/or Populist they would be voting for L. L. Polk and Ben Tillman, two of the most irascible white supremacists who ever lived. The counteroffensive was too little, too late. Townsend, who stuck with the party of Lincoln, noted in mid-October that "the prospects are that there will be a strong falling off in the solid Negro vote." The Democrats, he noted, were quietly but steadily "working at the blacks to become full-fledged 'Johnnies' [Democrats] or to cast their vote with the Farmer's ticket." Townsend predicted that as a result "many of our prominent colored men were going to vote for either Foster or Robinson." November's election returns proved the editor of the Advocate to be a prophet. The Republican majority of 82,000 in the gubernatorial contest of 1888 was reduced to 15,000 in 1890. Moreover, the Populists and Democrats captured control of the House of Representatives. Desertion of the Republicans at the polls by black Kansans was clearly a significant factor in the party's declining fortunes. The Populist candidate for auditor, although not elected, captured 120,000 votes and ran as well as or better than other Populists. For example, Robinson carried the predominantly black first ward in Topeka, an area that had gone Republican in every previous election.

Some prominent white Republicans, anticipating disaster, began pressing the Harrison administration immediately after the state convention to provide a diplomatic post for Waller. United States Senator Preston B. Plumb wrote to Secretary of State Blaine in June that "it is exceedingly important that he [Waller] should be provided for right away." Praising the black Kansan as "a bright man, a man of good habits and unquestioned integrity," and calling him "the representative colored man of Kansas," Congressman B. W. Perkins urged President Harrison to appoint Waller to a consular position as soon as possible. J. H. Robertson, proprietor of the Commercial House Hotel in Seneca and a leading figure in the Kansas Republican party, was more explicit. "There was disappointment and consequent disaffection among the colored people because Waller failed of nomination on the State ticket," he wrote to Harrison in October, 1890. "His appointment would therefore have a good impact on the party's chances in November."

Adding his voice to those of Plumb, Perkins, and Robertson was C. H. J. Taylor, the prominent black politician and former minister to Liberia who had taken over the revolving editorship of the American Citizen in early November, 1890. Events had done nothing to alter Taylor's devotion to political independence. Both he and W. H. Eagleson had campaigned actively for Democrat Charles Robinson in the Novem-
ber, 1890, governor's race, and Taylor had run unsuccessfully as the Democrat-Populist fusion candidate for the House of Representatives from Wyandotte County. Taylor saw in Waller's frustration and subsequent desire for a position overseas an opportunity to enhance the prestige of the "Popocrats" among Kansas Negroes. At this point Waller was more than willing to serve Taylor's purposes. Despite the fact that only two years earlier he had referred to Taylor as "a low, scheming, unscrupulous ward politician," Waller late in 1890 joined the staff of the American Citizen. Taylor immediately began booming his new employee for a consular position. In return, Waller wrote a series of editorials criticizing the Harrison administration and, implicitly, the Republican party, for the president's refusal to appoint a significant number of blacks to patronage jobs. On February 5, 1891, Waller was named United States consul to Madagascar. Whether Taylor played a direct role through his contacts with the State Department and the black establishment in Washington, or an indirect part by hiring Waller and thus alarming Republicans at both the state and national levels, he clearly had a hand in the appointment. Both the Leavenworth Advocate (black) and Leavenworth Times (white) credited Taylor for securing Waller's new position.

Just precisely when John Waller began to formulate plans for the establishment of a plantation-colony in Madagascar is unclear. Such a course of action may have started taking shape in his mind immediately after his failure to obtain the Republican nomination for auditor in 1890, or he may not have conceived of himself as a foreign concessionaire until near the end of his tenure as consul in 1894. Whatever the case—the timing was not important—Waller bade farewell to Susan and the children on April 8, 1891, and departed Topeka for New York. He remained in New York for more than two weeks making the acquaintance of T. Thomas Fortune, T. McCants Stewart, and other prominent Negroes. Departing for London on May 16, 1891, the consul-designate made the eleven-day trans-Atlantic passage aboard the British steamship Etruria. One can only wonder if he drew any comparisons between his trip, made in a comfortable second-class cabin, and the notorious two-and-a-half month middle passage by which his ancestors were transported across the same ocean to their "homes" in the New World. Although Waller's travails consisted merely of a couple of rude Irishmen and temporary seasickness, his knowledge of history must have enabled him to empathize with his forefathers. Perhaps, though, he was too preoccupied with the future to dwell on the past. Among the passengers on board the Etruria was Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, one of America's most active com-
mercial expansionists. If Waller had begun to develop plans for a plantation-colony, he must have regarded Vanderbilt's presence as a favorable omen. During the voyage the black diplomat made friends with C. H. Cuppy, "a young humorist from Indianapolis," who subsequently showed him about London. After an extended stay in England—he was much impressed, he wrote, with the beauty of the English countryside—Waller left for Madagascar, arriving there on July 24, 1891. He officially assumed the duties of United States consul on August 1. Unfortunately for the black diplomat, Africa at the close of the nineteenth century was the scene of an intense Anglo-French colonial rivalry. Nowhere was this competition any keener than in Madagascar.

In 1890 Madagascar was a vast, underdeveloped land whose untapped resources beckoned to the great colonial powers. An island exceeded in size only by Greenland, Borneo, and New Guinea, Madagascar possessed what seemed to many international businessmen an unlimited potential. The land contained 30,000 square miles of virgin timber, and an unmeasured amount of rubber, mahogany, and ebony; rich mineral deposits; and thousands of acres of fertile land suitable for the cultivation of sugar, tea, coffee, and vanilla. Its two principal cities, Tananarive, a thriving metropolis of some 100,000 in the center of the island, and Tamatave, a busy port on the east coast, were bustling centers of trade. The Hovas, an olive-skinned people rumored to have come to Madagascar from Polynesia some 2,000 years before, governed its six million inhabitants with an iron hand. Though numbering only several hundred thousand, the Hovas used their control of the strategic central plateau, together with superior weapons, to dominate the other tribes. The political system under which the Malagasies lived was in theory an absolute monarchy, but the matrilineal dynasty was in reality a front for the prime minister, who was ex officio husband of six successive queens. His power, in turn, depended upon the support of the nobility. The Malagasy social structure was feudalistic, with rigid gradations from nobles to slaves. One curious aspect was the absence of private property; the monarch owned all the land. The Hovas were an intensely proud people. Although they had accepted Christianity, they remained determined to resist the political intervention and economic exploitation that so often followed in the wake of missionary activity.

The preeminent threat to Malagasy independence was France. French explorers claimed the island for Louis XIII in 1642. Shortly thereafter Cardinal Richelieu granted a trade monopoly to the Compagnie d'Indes Orientales. In succeeding years few nationals emigrated, and by the 1880s France could boast only a small colony and naval base at Fort
Dauphin, located on the southeastern coast. Commercial activity was restricted to one mercantile house, and total French investment amounted to no more than a hundred million francs. From this modest stake French citizens realized little more than a hundred thousand francs per annum. Although Paris always hoped that the huge island would become an important component in France's mercantilist system, the nation's deep and abiding interest there was not primarily economic. The Jesuits were extremely active in Madagascar and, by the end of the nineteenth century, claimed over 100,000 converts. The missionaries had long clamored for the establishment of a protectorate which would enable them to proselyte without competition from Christians of other nations or regulation by the native government. The editor of the *Revue Bleue* (Paris) in an article appearing in November, 1894, deprecated the lack of government support being shown French Catholic missionaries and proclaimed that the only alternative to submission to the Protestants was "to take possession of Madagascar by force, as we have done in Tonkin and Tunis." Even more important in determining French attitudes was the widespread conviction that it was the nation's "destiny" to hold sway over Madagascar. Gabriel Hanotaux, the foreign minister who ultimately presided over annexation, aptly summed up the reasons for France's acquisitive posture toward the island: "A colony is not a farm given to the mother country for exploitation, and which has no value unless it earns a rent by the end of the year. . . . Carrying and perpetuating its name, language, and thought to new countries, a civilized nation already accomplishes a good deal if it thereby prolongs its own existence in space and time." No less than in Egypt, North Africa, or Southeast Asia, the chief obstacle to French pretensions was Great Britain. Englishmen in Madagascar contested the French in virtually every field of human endeavor. Methodist missionaries arrived on the island in the middle of the nineteenth century, and by 1894 the London Missionary Society counted over 1,300 churches in this "the most fruitful field of English endeavor." A story on Madagascar appearing in a January, 1895, issue of the *New York Times* emphasized the degree of Methodist commitment to the Hovas and their subjects: "France might annex all the rest of the African continent and not stir these English mission-loving folk so violently as by a single armed attempt to advance the pretensions of Catholicism in Madagascar." Scarcely less important than British concern for Madagascar's spiritual welfare were the interests of numerous English merchants operating throughout the eastern half of the island. Because French colonial rule inevitably meant high tariff barriers, they were no more anxious than
the missionaries to see the establishment of a French protectorate. In
their continuing battle to restrict French influence in the island, British
colonists had by the latter part of the nineteenth century established
close ties with the Hova power structure. In fact, most members of the
Hova nobility were Methodist, the commander in chief of the Hova
military was an Englishman, and, prior to 1890 at least, the prime
minister was ardently pro-British.44

Even though British investments and influence in Madagascar tran-
scended those of France, Whitehall decided in 1882 to relinquish all
claim to the island in order to persuade France to recognize British
dominance in Egypt. Therefore, in December, 1885, when the French
resident general forced the queen of Madagascar to surrender control of
foreign affairs to his office, the British made no attempt to block the
move. Paris was unwilling to grant Britain a free hand in Cairo, however,
unless Whitehall explicitly recognized French dominion in east Africa.
Accordingly, in August, 1890, Lord Salisbury and William Waddington,
the French ambassador in London, signed a joint declaration on Africa
in which France recognized the British protectorate over Zanzibar
and Pemba (and tacitly over Egypt), and in return Britain acquiesced in
French control of Madagascar and all of the central and western Sudan.45

Despite the Salisbury-Waddington Pact of 1890, opposition to French
authority in Madagascar continued unabated both from Britons residing
there and from the Hova monarchy.46 The Madagascar News, mouth-
piece of British missionaries in the island, blasted London for its act of
appeasement and announced that Englishmen in Madagascar would rec-
ognize the French protectorate only as it concerned treaties the Hovas
might make with foreign powers. The Methodist archbishop of Madag-
ascar, Robert Cornish, begged the home government in vain for pro-
tection from the Catholic onslaught he believed was sure to follow
unchecked French rule. Even more apprehensive than the English were
the Hovas themselves. The monarchy, correctly perceiving France to be
the primary threat to Malagasy independence, had scoured the inter-
national community between 1860 and 1880 in search of allies against
France. Unable to find a European ally willing to enter into an anti-
French pact that would at the same time leave the nation’s independence
intact, the Hovas concentrated on building up their military establish-
ment. With the enthusiastic aid of British colonists, they had succeeded by
1890 in fashioning a force capable of making the French pay dearly for
any forcible attempt at annexation.47 In an address to the throne deliv-
ered in September, 1890, the prime minister issued an unmistakable
warning to the Quai d’Orsay: “This kingdom is a bed for only one
person and you are the sole Sovereign," he declared to the queen. "If anyone dare to touch this kingdom or any portion of it, even of the size of a grain of rice, we shall never suffer it." Thus, although discouraged by the Salisbury-Waddington Pact, the Malagasies were determined to resist to the end. Another local British paper, the *Madagascar Mail*, aptly summed up the sentiments of both the government and its English friends: "The Hovas look upon Lord Salisbury's actions as a betrayal of their interests and we English here are completely dumbfounded at the idea that we are now at the mercy of the French." Deserted by Whitehall, the Hovas and their British friends turned for aid to the diplomatic representative of the only other power with a significant interest in Madagascar—the United States. In doing so they provoked a confrontation between French imperialism and black America's version of the New Manifest Destiny, an encounter that ironically led to total absorption of Madagascar by France in 1895 and ultimately, if incidentally, to the thwarting of Waller's plans for a plantation and colony.

The United States consulate in Madagascar was located in Tamatave. Situated on a low, flat promontory jutting out into the Indian Ocean, behind a grassy and often swampy plain stretching inland, Tamatave was the island's chief port. The town's approximately 4,000 inhabitants lived in wooden homes along one narrow main street and a number of still narrower sandy lanes. Eight to ten miles inland a range of wooded hills rose steadily in height, forming a series of natural terraces. The hills culminated in a massive plateau in the center of the island, in the middle of which rested the capital city of Tananarive.

No sooner had Waller settled in the small but comfortable consulate than he was summoned to Tananarive to be officially received by Queen Ranavalona. The ceremony, certainly one of the most memorable events in Waller's life, was held at Ranavalona's palace. After resting overnight, the American consul was summoned to a huge inner courtyard. Presently the gates of the yard swung open and a grand procession entered. Rank after rank of Malagasy infantry paraded past the bedazzled American. The royal bodyguard of spearmen followed and then Queen Ranavalona and the prime minister. Behind her majesty and his excellency came the court singers and then, bringing up the rear, a body of Saklahava headmen in the picturesque costumes of their tribe. The royal pavilion which housed the throne was of Oriental architecture. A canopy of crimson and gold surmounted gold-lined pillars, whose corners were adorned with two crossed spearheads. From the summit of the canopy there rose a crown-shaped dome of gold and deep purple velvet. Silk curtains, green and gold in color, draped the eastern, southern, and northern sides of the
pavilion. From the queen's shoulders a magnificent train of crimson velvet flowed over a dress of white silk, whose skirt was decorated with panels of embroidered velvet. Atop the olive-skinned monarch's head was a golden crown and around her neck a diamond necklace.52

Once Ranavalona was seated, she and her consort received Waller in a brief but gracious ceremony. Two oxen, six sheep, and innumerable chickens were slaughtered for the feast that followed.53

Unfortunately, Susan Waller arrived too late to partake of the festivities. She, Minnie, John, Jr., Helen, Jennie, and Paul Bray left Kansas in August, 1891, but did not arrive until December of that year.54

There were few conveniences in Tamatave, but, as was her wont, Susan made the most of the situation. When she was not accompanying John to Tananarive for some social function, she tutored the younger children in math, English literature, and French.

The elaborate festivities staged by the Hovas upon Waller's arrival reflected their hope that he would serve as a counterweight to French power, that somehow he would be able to protect Madagascar from complete absorption. No doubt the government believed that as an American and a man of color the new consul would sympathize with Madagascar's struggle to retain its independence in the face of European imperialism. Waller would surely view the Malagasies as nonwhite people threatened by the racism which inevitably accompanied colonialism. Predictably, he was equally well-received by the British colony. Prominent Englishmen such as H. Andrew and E. Underwood Harvey, editors of the Madagascar News, and Archbishop Cornish cultivated Waller, seeing in him a potential bastion against French Catholicism and mercantilism.55 It soon became apparent that the black Kansan was more than willing to serve Anglo-Hova interests, primarily because they happened to coincide with his own.

Shortly after his arrival in Madagascar, Waller became involved in a Hova-French dispute that went to the heart of the issue of Madagascar's independence. One of the concessions that France demanded but did not obtain when she negotiated the 1885 treaty with the Hovas was the right to grant *exequatur*—official authorization to operate, given to consular agents by the country in which they are stationed—to all foreign consuls assigned to Madagascar. According to A. A. Heggoy, a historian of French colonial policy in East Africa, the Quai d'Orsay was convinced that "should foreign consuls and other diplomatic officials receive *exequatur* from the Malagasy Queen or prime minister, the French protectorate would be but a fiction."56 The Hovas certainly shared this view. In 1887 the prime minister notified Secretary of State Thomas F. Bayard that "if
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consul of any nation having treaty rights with Madagascar applies for *exequatur* through the French Resident General, this government will consider it a breach of treaty."

To the delight of the Hovas and the outrage of the French *colonists*, Waller applied directly to the queen for his commission. Subsequently, French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot issued an official protest to the State Department, intimating that the consul's action could be considered a deliberately unfriendly act on the part of the United States.

Waller's action in challenging France's right to grant *exequatur* was in accord with past American policy toward Madagascar. Though Washington was hardly prepared to go to war to prevent French hegemony, American diplomats, for a variety of reasons, made strenuous efforts during the last quarter of the nineteenth century to preserve Malagasy independence. In fact, by the mid-1890s America was generally recognized as the only member of the international community willing to challenge French imperialism in Madagascar. "They [the Malagasies] have no reason to be grateful to any European nation," observed the *Manchester Guardian* in August, 1895, "for the only country which has shown a disposition to favor their cause is the United States."

Probably the most important motive behind the State Department's policy of resistance was a desire to maintain an economic open door. As Walter LaFeber has pointed out, the search for foreign markets dominated the foreign policy of the Harrison administration. Both the president and Secretary of State James G. Blaine were convinced that one of the "highest duties" of the United States was to enlarge the area of foreign trade. Commercial empire would inevitably enhance the power and prestige of the nation. More tangibly, underdeveloped regions would simultaneously furnish the raw materials necessary to fuel America's giant industrial complex and the markets to absorb its surplus. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, Africa no less than Latin America and the Far East had come to be regarded by United States diplomats and businessmen as a legitimate field of endeavor. Initially, the most important force pushing the United States into involvement in Africa was the fear within commercial and missionary circles that the continent would soon fall under foreign domination. The first steps toward a more aggressive African policy were taken during the administration of Chester A. Arthur. In his annual message to Congress in 1883 he argued that America could not afford to remain indifferent to the potentials of African commerce. He suggested that the United States cooperate with other interested powers in maintaining freedom of trade and residence in central Africa. By the 1890s American merchants were translating President...
Arthur's suggestions into action. "The American people are beginning to recognize the fact that Africa offers a large and profitable market for the commerce of the World," noted the Lagos (Nigeria) Weekly Record in 1892, "and that it will be to the commercial interest of America if her merchants will endeavor to participate with England and France in the large trade carried on with this [continent]." Commercial statistics bear out the Record's claim. Between 1890 and 1900 United States trade with Africa increased at a faster rate than with any other area. By the turn of the century it constituted approximately 20 percent of America's commerce with nonindustrialized regions. Reflecting this surge of interest in Africa by the United States business community, American diplomats attempted to commit the European powers to an economic open door in Africa. The American delegate who attended the Conference of Berlin on Africa (1884–1885) persuaded the European powers to endorse the "American Project," which called for the continued neutrality and independence of the Congo Basin. Five years later, at the Congo Conference of Brussels, the Great Powers acknowledged the United States' interest in Africa by pledging to notify Washington at once of any changes, contemplated or actual, in the map of the Dark Continent. Somewhat to their surprise, the American representatives responded by declaring that the United States reserved the right to pass judgment on all changes, in light of its national interest. "What a field for enterprise is here," proclaimed an article entitled "American Interests in Africa" appearing in the spring, 1890, issue of The Forum. "What an opening for our manufacturers among its fifty million of unclad inhabitants thirsting for trade; what an opportunity for exerting civilizing and christianizing influence."

While those Americans concerned with the African market had focused their attention on the Congo region in the 1880s, by 1890 a number had shifted their interest to Madagascar. The Malagasy market was more than just a myth. United States exports to the island amounted to $584,770 in 1892, while imports in that year reached $271,108. United States-Madagascar trade constituted more than 30 percent of the total trade of the island, a figure made all the more important by the fact that France controlled but 10 percent. There were in 1891 two large American commercial houses in Tamatave doing a brisk business in cotton goods, rubber, and hides. In fact, American cotton merchants had for many years enjoyed a virtual monopoly on trade with the interior. With total investments in Madagascar amounting to well over a million dollars, Yankee entrepreneurs felt quite as threatened by a total French takeover as did their British counterparts. They labored under no illusions about
the economic repercussions of annexation. The consul at Tamatave notified the State Department in July, 1895, that customs regulations which would accompany the establishment of a French protectorate would mean a loss to American cotton trade of 25 percent on cost price and 40 percent on profits. It is hardly surprising, then, that as the French posture toward the Hova regime became more menacing a number of American business journals, including the influential Commercial and Financial Chronicle, called upon the State Department to take whatever action necessary to protect United States interests in Madagascar.66

The fact that in Madagascar, as in so many other outposts of United States' commercial empire, there was a community of interest between America's business and diplomatic representatives enhanced the importance of economic factors in United States–Malagasy affairs. The vice-consul in 1892, for example, was also the Madagascar representative of Ropes, Emmerton, and Company of Boston, a large commercial house. Moreover, the most persistent and effective advocate of those with an economic stake in Madagascar was John Campbell, Waller's predecessor at Tamatave. Throughout his tenure he had urged Washington to take every measure possible to block a French takeover. "Our commercial interests in Madagascar," he wrote Assistant Secretary William H. Wharton in September, 1890, "are larger and more important than those of either France or England, or indeed of any of the other treaty powers represented here. . . . Hence, I hope the Department will at once see the necessity of permanently settling these questions with the powers . . . which may lead to a requisition for a share in the Protectorate by our government."67

Also contributing to Washington's continuing concern over the fate of Madagascar was the bipartisan desire to attract the sizable black electorate still functioning in America during the last decade of the nineteenth century. As C. Vann Woodward has noted: "As a voter, the Negro was both hated and cajoled, both intimidated and courted, but he could never be ignored so long as he voted."68 Black ballots had been quite important to Harrison's election not only in Kansas but in other states as well, a fact not lost on either the Republicans or the Democrats. Both for political and ideological reasons, Harrison displayed a keen sensitivity to the opinions of the black electorate throughout his term in office. According to historian Richard Welch, "Harrison stood with such old time Republican senators as Hoar and Chandler in refusing to admit that the aims and ideals of Radical Reconstruction had been disproved or that the Republican Party had outgrown its concern for the Negro."69 Over the enraged protests of white supremacists, he appointed Norris
A New Frontier

Wright Cuney, a black and a prominent Texas Republican, as collector of customs at Galveston. In June, 1889, he promised a delegation of black Alabamans that he would work unceasingly to secure for the Negro "protection of life and property, and the right to vote and have it honestly counted." In response to Harrison's call in 1889 for federal legislation to protect Negroes in their voting rights in federal elections, the Federal Elections Bill was introduced in Congress in 1890. Although it did not pass, Harrison gave it his fullest support. Perceptive Republican politicians could not help but be aware that many black Americans identified with the Hovas as a nonwhite people threatened by European colonialism, and they perceived that the black community would respond favorably to any government that dared to challenge French efforts to establish a protectorate.

Finally, the decision to challenge the French in Madagascar was at least in part a reflection of the State Department's irritation over the efforts of the Quai d'Orsay to extend French control over areas long regarded by Americans as their private preserve. In 1888, for example, a Franco-American confrontation in regard to Haiti threatened to disrupt relations between the two nations. The Harrison administration was extremely desirous of acquiring a naval base in the Caribbean. A revolution in Haiti provided the opportunity. The nation had divided into a northern faction headed by the forces of Hippolyte, and the southern group led by Légitime. As European, especially French, influence began favoring Légitime, Washington began to tilt perceptibly toward the northern faction. Hippolyte, who finally gained control of the nation in 1899, at first promised the United States a base at Mole St. Nicholas but later reneged. The State Department and especially Secretary Blaine were convinced that France was responsible for the dictator's intransigence and that Paris was intent on converting Haiti into a protectorate.

No less alarming to American policy-makers were the attempts of the French Foreign Office to establish a protectorate over various tribes in Liberia. This west African republic, colonized by American ex-slaves, was sandwiched between the British colony of Sierra Leone and the French-controlled Ivory Coast. A number of factors rendered Liberia vulnerable to its imperial neighbors: boundaries of the black republic were ill-defined; Monrovia was unable to prevent Liberian natives from conducting raids against their neighbors in Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast; and, finally, the central government had borrowed heavily from European financiers. Even though the State Department warned the Great Powers as early as 1879 that the United States had special interests in Liberia and would take whatever steps necessary to preserve the
nation’s independence, European entrepreneurs and soldier-diplomats continued to violate Liberian sovereignty throughout the last quarter of the century. By the early 1890s Whitehall was busily engaged in implementing a rapprochement with the United States, and as a result British activity in Liberia decreased sharply. Défente with the United States did not rank high on the Quai d’Orsay’s list of priorities. Ignoring warnings from both Republican and Democratic administrations, Paris continued to plot a Liberian protectorate. When the French in 1893 compelled Monrovia to cede a strip of territory lying between the San Pedro River and Cavalla, Franco-American relations were strained to the breaking point. It is reasonable to assume that State Department officials believed that a firm challenge to French pretensions in Madagascar could not help but lessen pressure on Liberia and dampen French ambition in the Caribbean.

Nevertheless, the Salisbury-Waddington Pact and France’s obvious determination to control Malagasy affairs caused a momentary weakening of the State Department’s resolve. By 1891, however, those with a stake in Madagascar, particularly the black consul at Tamatave, had managed to persuade United States policy-makers that the national interest would be best served by continued resistance to French aggression. As previously noted, every party with an interest in Madagascar recognized the right to grant *ex e quatur* as the symbol of Hova sovereignty. After receiving the sharp note from the Quai d’Orsay on September 30, 1891, which demanded, among other things, that Washington order its representative to reapply through the French resident general and to communicate in the future with the Hovas only through French authorities, the State Department briefly considered pulling out of Madagascar. Waller pointed out that this would be interpreted by the monarchy as a gross insult, and that the United States could, by refusing to recognize French control over consular credentials, become the dominant force in the island. He repeatedly requested permission to go Tananarive and mediate between the French and the Hovas. Such authorization was never forthcoming, but Washington once again decided to resist a French takeover. Until the Chamber of Deputies voted in 1896 to formally annex Madagascar, the State Department took the position that because no consul who had applied through the resident general had yet received his *exequatur*, the United States could not acknowledge French authority.

Though Waller’s position was sanctioned by the State Department, France—and particularly Frenchmen in Madagascar—chose to believe that America’s refusal to acquiesce in their protectorate was primarily due to the black consul at Tamatave. Further alienating the French were
Waller’s unceasing efforts to halt a projected “free labor system” whereby France would enslave the Malagasies and members of other tribes, and export them to various parts of the empire. The United States consul’s frequent and vociferous public denunciation of this trade embarrassed French authorities and caused them to delay implementation. French authorities concluded that Waller was at worst an official agent of Anglo-American imperialism and at best a tool of the Hova prime minister. By the end of 1891, no matter which role they attributed to him, the French colony viewed the American as a threat to their interests.

The altercation over granting of *exequatur* was the first but not the most important episode in what quickly became an undeclared war between Waller and the French. The second bore directly on the Kansan’s scheme for establishing a black colony in the island and ultimately helped to convince the French that annexation was the only solution to the Madagascar problem.

In June, 1893, Waller learned that he would be replaced by a white Democrat from Georgia, under the new administration of Grover Cleveland. The Kansan welcomed his dismissal because, relieved of official duties, he was free to negotiate with the Hovas for a land concession. As indicated by a letter he wrote to James Ruff of Coffeyville in June, 1892, Waller had found Madagascar eminently suitable as a field for black development and investment:

"We are much pleased with this country and we are surprised at the high state of civilization of the colored people here. It is true that the country is only partially developed, but it is also true that there is a great awakening among the people and I think ere long the whistle of the steam locomotive will be heard in this part of Africa, even as it is heard at Capetown, Natal, and Mauritius. . . . You would be astounded at the thrift of the colored people in this "dark" continent, as it is called by the highly civilized portion of the world. Here the colored man is found in all the different mechanical avocations of life. There are carpenters, blacksmiths, printers, lawyers, doctors, and merchants. The Queen is a colored lady of rare culture and beauty. . . . Madagascar is a beautiful country and when it becomes known to the world and her capabilities are shown [they] will place her among the great countries of the world. The resources, both agricultural and mineral, are inexhaustible. An abundance of living water is everywhere to be seen. Millions of good beef cattle roam the beautiful valleys and feed upon the many mountains."
In January, 1894, the new consul arrived in Tamatave and Waller abandoned the consulate that had been his home for the past two and a half years. He, Susan, Helen, Minnie, Jennie, and the boys moved to Tananarive where Waller, in partnership with an Englishman named George Tessier, opened a large grocery store. The ex-consul became a grocer merely to keep food on the table, so to speak; this vocation, like barbering, was to be a means to an end. In January and February Waller obtained a series of audiences with the queen and prime minister and harangued them on the wisdom of drawing American investment capital to the island. American commerce was already dominant in Madagascar; the more the Hova government could increase this economic stake, the greater the likelihood that the United States would interpose its authority between the Malagasies and the French.

In March, 1894, two months after Waller officially stepped down as United States consul, the French were stunned by news that the queen had granted the ex-diplomat a 150,000-acre concession in the rubber-rich south. The land grant, only the third ever made to an individual by the monarchy, was for a period of thirty years and subject to renewal. Waller’s emphasis on the political benefits to be derived from the granting of concessions to Americans had paid off.

As far as the Hovas were concerned, the Waller concession was part of the government’s continuing effort to sidetrack French imperialism, which by 1894 appeared bent on nothing less than outright annexation. In 1893 the Hovas, encouraged by Grover Cleveland’s actions in connection with the Hawaiian revolution, had appealed to the new chief executive to block a French takeover and thus further enhance his reputation as champion of the downtrodden. When Washington refused to go on record as the guarantor of Malagasy independence, Tananarive turned to Waller’s projected plantation as an alternative method for involving the United States in Madagascar’s problems. The Hovas were well aware that the ex-consul intended eventually to establish an Afro-American colony on the concession. They reasoned that Washington would be as willing to protect black Americans in Madagascar as in Liberia. The prime minister hoped that the United States, in defending the rights of Waller and his colonists, would simultaneously preserve Malagasy independence. The fact that the boundary of the Waller concession overlapped that of Fort Dauphin, the site of a projected French military installation, was further indication that Tananarive’s prime motive in making a grant to Waller was a desire to use American power as a counterweight to French ambitions.

English colonists were, needless to say, enthusiastic supporters of the
projected plantation. Significantly, the Reverend James Richardson of the London Missionary Society had witnessed the transaction. The British-owned *Madagascar News* praised Waller as one of the most progressive agriculturalists in the island and hailed the concession as an unqualified blessing.\(^87\)

The French did not agree. Announcement of the Waller grant was made just as the Franco-Malagasy conflict was coming to a head. Relations between Paris and Tananarive had deteriorated steadily after 1891. Throughout the summer and fall of 1893 the resident general reported to the Foreign Office that the Hovas were importing large quantities of arms and ammunition. In early 1894 news that roving bands of Malagasies were attacking French *colons* and destroying their property aroused public ire in both Madagascar and France.\(^88\) On January 26 the Chamber of Deputies voted unanimously to “sustain the government in whatever it undertakes to maintain our situation and rights in Madagascar, to restore order, to protect our nationals and to make our flag respected there.”\(^89\) At the time there was an intense debate within the cabinet concerning Madagascar. The leading military men and their representatives argued for direct control to “prevent past abuses and misunderstandings,” while moderates argued that direct rule would be cumbersome, expensive, and offensive to the other powers. For many Frenchmen, the Waller concession was the last straw.\(^90\)

France’s decision to force the Treaty of 1885 on the Hovas had been prompted not only by a desire to cut all formal diplomatic ties between the Great Powers and Madagascar, but to force the queen to make long-term land grants to French citizens. Although the Hova monarch had agreed in principle, she had refused to do so in practice.\(^91\) Not surprisingly, French authorities viewed the Waller concession as a “slap in the face.”\(^92\) Terming it an unmistakable challenge to French hegemony, as indeed it was, the resident general declared the land grant “null and void.”\(^93\) The semi-official French newspaper *Le Madagascar* demanded that the “colored gentleman” and his Hova patrons be put in their place. “The future American colony,” declared the editor, “will be most detrimental to us . . . Even suppose that this little Republic should desire to have the honorable Mr. Waller for President, we doubt indeed that it would constitute for the future of Madagascar an element of peace and very *bona fide* progress.”\(^94\) Frenchmen throughout the island demanded that the home government take action.

Meanwhile, in the spring and summer of 1894 Waller had launched a multiphased development program designed to convert his concession into a profit-making operation, to provide Afro-Americans with a new
field of investment, and to shield the enterprise from possible interven­
tion by the French authorities. Although the land grant was made to
Waller alone, his silent partner in the “Wallerland” venture, as the black
entrepreneur chose to dub his concession, was E. Underwood Harvey,
editor of the *Madagascar Mail*. Harvey, who was acting partly out of an
urge for personal profit and partly out of a desire to thwart the French,
was to serve Waller as an intermediary with English financial interests, a
minor investor, and a very effective propagandist. The black Kansan and
white Englishman agreed that the first priority, for both economic and
political reasons, should be to interest as many influential Anglo-Amer­
icans as possible in the operation. To this end, on March 17 Harvey
sent a circular entitled “Important Rubber Concession to an American
Citizen”\(^95\) to the editors of over a hundred newspapers in the United
States and Great Britain. The response was gratifying. The *New York
World* published a lengthy article on the grant and expressed a desire to
be kept conversant with political developments on the island. The June
20 edition of the *Baltimore Sun* included a similar piece, under the
caption “American Enterprise Abroad.” Notices of the concession subse­
quently appeared in newspapers and magazines ranging from the *Musca­
tine (Iowa) Journal* to the *British Manufacturer*.\(^96\)

Although the ex-consul envisioned Wallerland as a haven for op­
pressed American Negroes and an investment field for Afro-American
capital, he believed that in view of the diplomatic situation it was
imperative to have settlers, whatever their origin, present and actually
working their leaseholds as quickly as possible. With the venture in prog­
ress, he reasoned, it would be much more difficult for the French to inter­
fere. On May 2, 1894, Waller and Harvey dispatched Paul Bray, Waller’s
stepson, to the nearby British colony of Mauritius.

When Paul Bray chose to accompany his mother and siblings to
Madagascar in the fall of 1891, he was twenty-one years of age. He had
moved to Kansas in 1884 from Ohio. While living with his mother and
stepfather he attended and graduated from the Leavenworth public school
system. Following graduation he worked in succession as a traveling
salesman for the *American Citizen, Leavenworth Advocate*, and *Indian­
apolis Freeman*. Something of a dandy, the handsome young man cut a
wide swath through black society as he moved from town to town in
eastern Kansas.\(^97\) As had been true in Kansas, Bray lived in Madagascar
only intermittently with the Wallers. Like Waller, he managed to in­
gratiate himself with the Hova government. When Waller received his
concession, he offered his stepson a position as traveling agent and junior
partner, and Bray accepted.
Bray, equipped with Wallerland calling cards, began recruiting settlers from the large colony of blacks on Mauritius. Suffering from competition from Asiatic “coolie” labor and from the cyclones that periodically swept the area, ravaging their farms, the Mauritians proved quite receptive to Bray’s sales pitch. The terms for a piece of Wallerland were liberal enough. Leases were to run for twenty years, with options for two renewals. Rent for the initial two years was to be free. Upon expiration of the grace period, the lessee would pay a twenty-five cent increment per acre annually up to the eleventh year, and $1.50 per acre per annum thereafter. Wallerland Enterprises could afford such terms because the contract that the ex-consul had signed with the Hovas required merely that he make a $500 payment after the fifth year and then remit 10 percent of his income annually. With Bray buttonholing Mauritians and Harvey bombarding the Anglo-American press, Waller turned his attention to long-range planning. On March 30, 1894, he wrote to John Mercer Langston, prominent black politician and civil rights leader, informing him of the grant and describing in elaborate and tempting detail the economic opportunities in Madagascar. After Langston expressed interest, Waller wrote again on May 12, describing the progress of his enterprise and asking the former congressman to contact Negroes who might be willing to invest: “I am in correspondence with financial houses both in England and America who are very much interested in my concession,” he reported, “and one Chicago firm has offered to furnish the Saw Milling and other machinery and $10,000 in funds to commence the development of the concession. . . . An English firm offers to furnish whatever I may need in the way of farming utensils and all manner of merchandise.” Asserting that it was his desire “to be able to keep my concession within the control of colored men,” he asked Langston to organize an Afro-American syndicate capable of providing the capital for long-range development. In closing, Waller announced his intention to name Langston and Warner T. McGuinn, then practicing law in Baltimore, as legal representatives for Wallerland.

French hostility toward the Wallerland scheme, together with a steady deterioration in Franco-Malagasy relations, convinced Waller and Harvey that the United States must be persuaded to fill the power void created by the Salisbury-Waddington Pact. As soon as the French authorities got wind of the concession, they utilized a variety of techniques designed to either reduce its size or subvert the scheme altogether. Sometime early in 1894 an emissary from the resident general approached Waller and tried to persuade him to accept 20 square miles instead of
225. The black Kansan refused. The French next indicated that if Wal­ler would agree to be “guided” by them in developing his concession, the money for cultivation and improvement would be provided. Again he demurred. Upon learning of Bray’s trip to Mauritius, the French authorities in Madagascar sent word to the French consular representa­tive there to obstruct his activities. Le Madagascar subsequently printed articles denouncing Waller and pronouncing his concession invalid, and then distributed copies in Mauritius. Those Mauritian­s who chose to ignore this warning and take up residence in Wallerland were systematically harassed by lieutenants of the resident general. On August 10, in an attempt to compel Washington to take a more visible position in support of Wallerland and the Hovas, Waller instructed Langston and McGuinn to put two questions to the State Department: (1) did the Malagasy government have the right under existing treaty arrangements with the United States to grant concessions to American citizens, and (2) were such grants in violation of the treaty then in existence between France and the United States? In addition, the two black lawyers were instructed to seek the aid of Senator John Sherman “who from his large knowledge of foreign affairs can be of great service to you and who in case the Secretary of State decides adversely [refuses to recognize the validity of the claim] can bring the matter before the committee of Foreign Affairs.”

As Waller sought official sanction for his land grant, he also initiated a publicity campaign to inform American opinion about the “rape of Madagascar.” The effort had actually begun in mid-March with Harvey’s circular to the American press. “Aside from the big concession being of great importance to America,” he wrote, “it should attract the attention of the American Press to the efforts the young, progressive Malagasy nation are making to maintain their independence and resist foreign encroachments.” By the fall of 1894 Langston and McGuinn were spending far more time in bringing the Hova’s plight to the attention of the American people than in clearing legal obstacles from Wallerland’s path. In early October, for example, McGuinn persuaded the New York Sun, whose editor, Charles Dana, was an outspoken expansionist, to publish an article condemning “French transgressions” in Madagascar and asserting that any interference by France with the Waller concession would constitute a violation of the United States–Malagasy Treaty.

By the fall of 1894 the Wallerland scheme had progressed to the point where Waller felt able to make plans for a recruiting and fund-raising trip to the United States. He was prevented from leaving, however, by State Department procrastination in regard to the recognition
of his claim and by the machinations of Edward Telfair Wetter, the white Democrat who had replaced him as United States consul. The delay was to have a decisive impact on Waller's fortunes.

Although determined to protect American trading interests in Madagascar, the State Department hoped to avoid a direct Franco-American confrontation over Wallerland. In spite of the fact that the French resident general in May, 1894, made public the fact that he was under orders to block the Waller concession, American officials refused to publicly recognize the validity of Waller's claim. On October 10, for example, Acting Secretary of State Edwin Uhl told Langston and McGuinn that, in the absence of a specific infringement of Waller's rights by French authorities, the administration was "hesitant to express an opinion."\(^\text{106}\)

Three days later, though, the French forced the Cleveland government to make clear its position. "The government of the Republic does not recognize the existence of concessions accorded by the Malagasy Government to private individuals," read an official proclamation issued by the resident general. "The French Government regards as null and void any concession which has not been approved by the French Resident General at Tannarive [sic]."\(^\text{107}\) The State Department responded by notifying Waller's lawyers that it recognized the right of the Hova government to lease land to American citizens and thus regarded Wallerland as a legitimate enterprise eligible for the same protection from the United States government as any other American overseas concern. In a November 2 letter to Susan Waller, then in Tananarive, Waller expressed satisfaction with Washington's position but at the same time voiced concern over another, more pressing problem. "Oh, Sue," he exclaimed, "if you can only get friends to help me, I will teach Wetter a better lesson, if I can only get out of his hands and get hence .... You don't know how this man has wronged me."\(^\text{108}\)

From the moment in January, 1894, that Wetter assumed his duties as United States consul at Tamatave until Waller's departure from Madagascar in the spring of 1895, the white Georgian went out of his way to make trouble for his black predecessor. Evidently, Wetter's natural racism was exacerbated by the fact that his father, a prominent slaveholder, had been ruined by the Civil War and Reconstruction. In his very first dispatch to the State Department, Wetter accused Waller of mishandling the estate of one W. F. Crockett, an American businessman who had died in Madagascar in June, 1892, and announced his intention to prevent Waller from leaving the island.\(^\text{109}\) Unable to gather any convincing evidence of Waller's guilt, the new consul put off bringing his predecessor to trial until October 1, 1894, the very eve of Waller's
departure. In consular court—Wetter was judge and jury—Waller was found guilty, given forty-five days to come up with $1,964 (the sum allegedly owed the Crockett estate), and confined to the island. The question of the Kansan's guilt in this matter is obscured by Wetter's prejudice and impatience. It is clear only that Waller had permission from Mrs. Crockett to invest the estate and pay 5 percent interest to the family. At the time of the trial Waller had loaned all cash from the estate to private individuals. The promissory notes were then in his possession but were later seized by the French. In his report to the department, Wetter indicated that he had decided not to transmit the evidence in the case as "the postage would be quite heavy." The importance of the incident lay in the fact that it delayed Waller's departure from the island. As a result, instead of being safely abroad, peddling shares on his concession, he was caught squarely in the middle of the Franco-Hova dispute.

On October 8, 1894, the French resident general, Le Myer de Vilers, delivered an ultimatum to the Hova government demanding unqualified recognition of French control over both foreign relations and internal affairs. At the same time, French colonists began spreading rumors throughout the island of a Hova uprising that would engulf all foreigners in a blood bath. On October 24, the queen presented the resident general with the draft of a new treaty that would give France partial control over Malagasy foreign affairs but would leave the queen unquestioned sovereign over internal matters. Terming it "un ridicule contre-projet," de Vilers rejected the proposal out of hand and ordered the immediate evacuation of all French civilians. On November 27 the Chamber of Deputies voted a credit of sixty-five million francs to finance annexation of the island. The French navy quickly invested Tamatave, and in December, 1894, a French army of 15,000 men landed on the east coast. In January, 1895, the French began their assault on Tananarive. In the army's ascent from the swampy coasts of eastern Madagascar to the central plateau where the capital was located, well over a third of the expeditionary force would succumb either to Hova spears or to yellow fever.

Meanwhile, in Tamatave, which had been placed under martial law in December, occupation troops were venting their wrath against Americans living there. Waller became a special target. Wetter, like Waller, had not applied to the French resident general for his exequatur. Ironically, French authorities blamed the black Kansan for his successor's actions; indeed, they continued to blame him for the entire "obstructionist" attitude of the United States. Consequently, Waller found himself the object of a carefully orchestrated campaign of harassment, which had
begun even before formal occupation of Tamatave. On the night of
November 16, for example, a group of French sailors broke into the
residence of John Dublin, a black American citizen with whom Waller
was staying, and attacked the ex-consul with fists and pikes. Wielding a
chair, Waller managed to drive the invaders out and bolt the door,
avoiding serious injury. By January, 1895, Waller could not venture onto
the streets without being assaulted verbally or physically. Then, just
before dawn on March 5, 1895, Waller was arrested at Dublin's house by
French military police and charged with being a Hova spy.\(^{114}\)

According to a number of observers, the resident general and the
Hanotaux government believed that in arresting Waller they had at last
removed the chief symbol of resistance to French domination on the
island. Even Wetter, who was wont to underestimate Waller, was of this
opinion. On April 20, 1895, he wrote Assistant Secretary Uhl: "Waller
has a concession-grant which created more bitter feelings, more animos­
ities in France than anything that has happened here in five years so I
understand .... Waller in prison is harmless, Waller abroad may found
an American Negro colony in Madagascar and ultimately overthrow
French supremacy."\(^{115}\)

The basis for the arrest and charges were letters Waller had written
to his wife, to George Tessier, and to the son of a Hova official who was
in the employ of Wallerland Enterprises. All three were then residing
in Tananarive, Susan Waller being a houseguest of the Tessiers. The
 correspondence, mailed collectively on January 20, 1895, in violation of
French postal regulations, described the French bombardment of Tamat­
tave that had taken place in October, 1894, and the atrocities subse­
quently committed against the natives by occupation troops. Waller
dwelt especially on a number of brutal rapes he had witnessed. One
passage contained a promise to Waller's Hova employee that while abroad
he would purchase Colt revolvers for him and his family. Finally, the
ex-consul had warned his wife to beware of two individuals referred to
simply as D. and P., who, he claimed, had been hired by the French to
spy on the Waller family. Unbeknownst to the black Kansan, the French
had two days previously imposed absolute censorship of the mails, pro­
hibiting letters to Tananarive that were not first cleared through the
censor. As a result, Waller's mail was impounded and read. The military
authorities in Tamatave charged that these letters proved that Waller
was inciting the Hovas to all sorts of "horrible crimes against the French,"
that he had given the government important information about the con­
dition and movement of the French garrison at Tananarive, that he was
running guns to France's enemies, and that he was deliberately endanger-
ing the lives of John Poupard and Robert Duder, two Americans living in Madagascar with whom Waller had quarreled.\textsuperscript{116} Charged under military law, Waller was interrogated, imprisoned, and held without counsel until his preliminary hearing on March 14, 1895. The arraignment proceedings were held \textit{in camera}. The court ruled that there was sufficient evidence for an indictment and scheduled trial for March 20. French authorities finally assigned Waller a lawyer but permitted the prisoner to consult with him for the first time only two days before the trial. During the course of the proceedings, the five-man military court appeared far more concerned with speed than justice. The officers in charge limited the defense to one witness, refused to have all of the evidence read in court, and closed the proceedings after two and a half hours. Except for Waller and Bray's testimony, the trial was conducted entirely in French, a language which neither of the Americans had mastered. The court found the accused guilty as charged and sentenced him to twenty years at hard labor.\textsuperscript{117}

Waller had appealed to Wetter for aid throughout the pretrial period, but to no avail.\textsuperscript{118} Wetter claimed in a March 11 dispatch to the State Department to have protested vigorously to the resident general and to have engaged legal counsel for the accused. He explained that his efforts had come to naught, however, because of the intense feeling against Waller: "The French have been anxious to get at Waller for a long time, and are, I feel sure, desirous of making the most of this opportunity, whether they have a case made or not."\textsuperscript{119} Other evidence indicates that the factor most responsible for Wetter's inability to help the imprisoned Kansan was not France, but his animosity toward Waller. Wetter had indeed found a lawyer for Waller, but he had then refused to use consular funds to pay him. On March 20 he had written Waller in jail that "in view of consular regulations prohibiting interference in behalf of any who had been guilty of infraction of local laws," there was nothing he could do.\textsuperscript{120} Significantly, in the same letter in which he pronounced Waller guilty, the consul denounced the Kansan for unkind remarks he had made about Wetter in the correspondence (copies of which had been given to Wetter) that had been seized by the French. Indeed, despite his later protestations to the contrary, Wetter apparently did not even mention the Waller case to the French authorities until March 22. In his reply to Wetter's note of that date, the French commandant expressed surprise that the chief United States official in Madagascar would take so long to involve himself in the case. "I am led to conclude," he wrote to Wetter, "that it was intentionally that you kept aloof of the suit."\textsuperscript{121}
On March 23 the French authorities denied Waller's frantic appeal, based on his contention that the French had no jurisdiction in Madagascar, and ordered implementation of the sentence. That same day, the military commandant ordered Paul Bray permanently expelled from the island. Unlike Waller, there was little doubt about Bray's complicity in the rebellion; he had already been arrested once as a Hova spy, and at the time of his banishment he was negotiating with Tananarive for a commission in the Hova army. On the twenty-third Waller was placed aboard the French steamer Dejeune and chained to the deck in the hold of the ship. After enduring the taunts and spittle of "the rabble of Tamatave," he set sail late that afternoon for France and twenty years at hard labor.
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