

**"Every Protection That
Was Asked for . . ."
The United States
Revenue Cutter Ingham,
Texas Independence,
and New Orleans, 1835**

By WILLIAM R. WELLS II*

A "most Atrocious act of piracy" proclaimed a *Texas Republican* headline announcing the 1835 seizure of the American merchant vessel *Martha*.¹ Although a legitimate action by the Mexican customs service, the seizure contributed significantly to popular unrest in pre-revolutionary Texas, and it also led to the first naval battle between the United States and Mexico over Texas. In addition, the border clash had a direct impact upon New Orleans, which served not only as the regional Coast Guard headquarters, but also as a hotbed of Texas revolutionary support.

Without parsing the many scholarly debates over Andrew Jackson's involvement in Texas, suffice it to say that non-interference was the president's official policy. Old Hickory steadfastly claimed that no American agencies "directly, or indirectly, [helped] in the steps resorted to by the people of Texas to establish for themselves an independent

*The author is a retired master chief petty officer of the United States Coast Guard. His writings have appeared in numerous scholarly publications. He is presently adjunct professor at Central Texas College and a history instructor in the United States Navy's Program Afloat for College Education program.

¹*Texas Republican*, June 20, 1835. Article reprinted from *Louisiana Advertiser*, May 28, 1835.

Government."² Yet, the unintentional naval incident between the United States revenue cutter *Ingham* and Mexican war schooner *Montezuma* furthered Jackson's Texas ambitions, and, although Jackson never mentioned the incident publicly, he evidently approved of it privately.³

The Mexican-American confrontation began at Galveston, Texas, on May 7, 1835, when the *Montezuma* seized the American merchant schooner *Martha* for customs violations. Lieut. Juan Calvi, the *Montezuma's* commander, arrested the American passengers for failure to carry passports. Thomas J. and Francis S. Early, sons of a deceased Georgia governor, were among the passengers.⁴ The Early brothers later recalled that on previous trips to Texas the Mexican government required no passports, and the American travelers consequently thought them unnecessary. The seizure of the *Martha* and its cargo was not unexpected,⁵ but the arrest of American passengers provided a major impetus for the later involvement of the cutter *Ingham*. This seizure, not unlike comparable confiscations by American revenue cutters, was a clear case of customs violations and illegal entry by

²As quoted in, K. Jack Bauer, "The United States Navy and Texas Independence: A Study in Jacksonian Integrity," *Military Affairs*, 34 (1970): 44. Jackson kept the United States Navy's West Indies Squadron out of Texas waters immediately before and during the revolution.

³Harold D. Moser et al., eds., *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, Microfilm Supplement, Scholarly Resources, 1987. Manuscript Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. No record of the incident was located in this source.

⁴*Army and Navy Chronicle* (Washington, D.C.), Vol. 1, August 27, 1835. Hereafter cited as A&NC. The A&NC reprinted an unsigned letter written at Brazos de Santiago in June, 1835, to the *New Orleans Bulletin*. The other passengers were A. G. Tugua of Courtland, Alabama, and Rufus Turnage, of Memphis, Tennessee; Eugene C. Barker, "Difficulties of a Mexican Revenue Officer," *Texas Historical Association Quarterly*, 9 (1901): 193. Barker lists nine other passengers left in the custody at the Galveston customhouse. There were other passengers, mostly current or new colonists.

⁵D. W. Smith, Consul at Matamoros, Mexico, to Secretary of State, Louis McLane, Return of December 31, 1834. (National Archives Microfilm Publication M281, roll 1); Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Matamoros, Mexico, July 24, 1826-December 24, 1839; Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives, Washington, D. C. Hereafter referred to as NA, RG 59, M281.

The 37-ton *Martha*, commanded by J. M. Clensehan, with a crew of 5, was seized on October 8, 1834, for alleged customs violations, but ironically carried Mexican military supplies. Michael Boyle commanded the *Martha* at the time of its 1835 seizure.

undocumented persons. Ten days later, the *Montezuma* impounded the Texan-owned *Columbia* for similar infractions.⁶ The resulting debate over the legality of the seizures and arrests was framed by Anglo-Texan perceptions of Mexican law enforcement. In the eyes of the transplanted Americans, enforcement of Mexican customs laws was nothing more than harassment.⁷

In the wake of the seizures, Mexican customs collectors became targets of local criticism; this criticism undermined civilian respect for the government, causing irate shippers and importers to openly defy Mexican customs laws. The problem was compounded, according to Juan Tenteno, customs collector at Matagorda, by New Orleans merchants who exhibited no inclination to scale back shipments of contraband to Texas.⁸ Smuggling was thus the source of considerable concern to Mexican authorities because customs agents lacked the means of intercepting most illegal shipments. Only the *Montezuma* patrolled Texas's long coastline, and the Mexican customs service's weakness was well known in Texas. Indeed, the crew of the American merchant vessel *Ohio* bragged of their successful smuggling at Matagorda.

Like Tenteno, Capt. Antonio Tenorio, the acting collector at Anahuac, reported that Texas colonists not only grew bolder in their public criticism and smuggling, but that they also considered both customs seizures piracy. Tenorio also advised his superiors of rumors that Texas colonists and American opportunists had requested that a United States warship be dispatched from New Orleans to recover the confiscated vessels.⁹

The rumors Tenorio reported were evidently more than idle threats. Following the *Martha's* seizure, Robert Wilson wrote

⁶John H. Jenkins, ed., *The Papers of the Texas Revolution, 1835-1836*, 10 vols. (Austin, Tex., 1973), 1:101; hereafter cited as PTR.

⁷Antonio Tenorio to Domingo de Ugartechea, May 20, 1835, Bexar Archives (Microfilm Roll 165) University of New Mexico Special Collections Hereafter: UNM. The *Montezuma* left Galveston on May 17 and stopped at Velesco and seized the *Columbia* owned by Texas colonist Thomas F. McKinney. (Tenorio spelled the name "Maquiny.")

⁸Juan Zenteno, Aduana Maritima de Matagorda, to Comandancia Principal de este Estado. May 17, 1835. UNM. No. 0163.

⁹Antonio Tenorio to Domingo de Ugartechea, May 20, 1835, UNM. No. 0233-35.

William B. Travis about the seizure of mill equipment that constituted part of the vessel's cargo. Wilson reported "I have proposed and will be one to retaliate on the villains for such outrages. . . . [W]e are determined not to stand it."¹⁰ On June 7, Wilson wrote Travis that "The Cutter [*Ingham*] has been dispatched after the *Montezuma*," apparently to retrieve the mill equipment.¹¹ Travis agreed with Wilson's negative assessment of the Mexican customs authorities, whose "piracies & robberies" would inevitably arouse "the indignation & resentment of the whole people."¹²

Not all Texas colonists shared this sentiment. F. C. Gray, editor of the *Texas Republican*, took a moderate stance.¹³ Although he reprinted inflammatory New Orleans editorials about the seizures, Gray made clear his belief that Mexican customs agents had not operated beyond their legal authority. In a conciliatory preface to the jingoistic writings, Gray upbraided a Crescent City journalist who "could not have well understood the case," or he would not have called the seizure piracy. Gray investigated the credentials of the *Montezuma's* officers and crew and, not surprisingly, reported "we learn she is regularly commissioned by the Government" and authorized to make customs seizures. The American charge of piracy was simply unfounded, Gray consequently defended the seizure: "It would be singular indeed, if the Mexican Government could not make a seizure of a vessel under her own flag, for having violated their own revenue laws."¹⁴ However, Gray doubted the propriety of detaining the passengers, calling this an "exercise of an arbitrary power, which nothing that has come to our knowledge would warrant." Substantiating other current rumors, Gray reported that the New Orleans press had

¹⁰Jenkins, *PTR*, 1:107, number 180.

¹¹Jenkins, *PTR*, 1:144, number 248.

¹²As quoted in Margaret Henson, "Tory Sentiment in Anglo-Texan Public Opinion, 1832-1836," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 90 (1986): 5, 16. Travis to David G. Burnett, May 21, 1835, *PTR*, 1:122. (Note: Jenkins spells Burnett with one "t" throughout his compilation)

¹³Michael Buchholz, "Social Responsibility of the Texas Revolutionary Press," *Journalism Quarterly*, 65 (1988): 185-89. Buchholz reviewed the articles of three newspapers (surviving issues). The articles were 71 percent against armed resistance up to September, 1835, when the Mexican army entered Texas, but only four percent were against resistance by August 1836.

¹⁴*Texas Republican*, June 20, 1835.

appealed to their local customs collector to "despatch immediately the Revenue Cutter [*Ingham*] to protect our flag."¹⁶ President Jackson's official policy prevented United States Navy interference and left the work of protecting the American flag to the Treasury Department's lone revenue cutter in the western Gulf of Mexico.

In early May 1835, the United States revenue cutter *Ingham*, rode at anchor in the Mississippi River about eighty miles south of New Orleans. Its officers and crew carried out routine customs inspections, boarding inbound vessels; a position that gave them the first news from other ports and probably the initial reports of seizures. The seizures gave the New Orleans journalists and merchants an incentive to clamor for protection of American commerce with Texas. Both groups pressed James W. Breedlove, New Orleans collector of customs, to send the revenue cutter *Ingham* to Texas. This was not a new call. In 1832, James Nicholson, captain of the *Ingham*, suggested "that from the disorganized & refractory conduct of the Mexican Government—the time is not very remote when this station will require a Cutter of Greater force [*sic*] for the protection of our commerce & security of our Revenue."¹⁶ Although Nicholson's recommendations applied only to United States commerce, the Treasury Department dismissed his suggestion. Thus, despite pleas from the American press, brokers, and merchants, Breedlove hesitated to commit the cutter in the absence of just cause.

Yet, because of his private and professional interests, Breedlove was not averse to the use of force to protect American commerce with Texas. The customs agent was also a well-known cotton factor with nearly two decades of business experience in Mexico and Texas. It is particularly significant that Breedlove was Jackson's personal cotton agent in New Orleans.¹⁷ Breedlove's intimate knowledge of Mexican business

¹⁶*Texas Republican*, June 20, 1835. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. The article appeared in the *Louisiana Advertiser* on May 28, 1835. The article claimed the Mexican vessel [the *Montezuma*] was commanded by a "notorious pirate[unnamed] who has been tried here on a similar offence."

¹⁶NA, RG 26, E-150, Letter No. 124, from James Nicholson, May 19, 1832. Letters from the Collectors of Customs, 1834-96.

¹⁷Claybrooke and Overton Papers. Box 4. Microfilm No. 812, Roll 2. Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

and political affairs made him a perfect informant for the Jackson administration.

Breedlove struggled to find justification for mobilization of the revenue cutter. He knew the *Ingham* lacked legal jurisdiction over Mexican waters, but Breedlove could not ignore the *Martha's* seizure in the face of pressure from influential business houses, a grumbling political opposition, a critical press, and the unofficial urging of Jackson. The customs agent solved his dilemma by using the most common excuse for stationing any American war vessel along the Texas coast—interdiction of contraband slaves. However, he still needed a defensible reason to justify his actions. By chance, or fabrication, one appeared on May 5, 1835. Breedlove wrote Treasury Secretary Levi Woodbury recounting a local rumor that "a company of monied men have formed themselves into an association, with very large Capital and have actually sent their agents . . . to Havanna [*sic*] for the purpose of purchasing African Negroes and transporting them to Texas."¹⁸ The plot, if it existed, included moving the slaves into "Sabineland" (East Texas) under the pretense of developing farms, but actually for ultimate delivery to Louisiana.¹⁹

Breedlove notified Woodbury that he had ordered the *Ingham* to undertake a twenty-five-day cruise to Matagorda and Galveston bays in order to enforce the 1807 anti-slave importation act. The New Orleans customs collector reportedly ordered the *Ingham's* officers to capture and confiscate any American vessels it found engaged in the slave trade.²⁰ On the same day, Breedlove sent a letter to the West India Squadron commander at Pensacola, Florida, requesting that "small armed vessels under his command to be kept cruising in the vicinity of the Island of Cuba." Breedlove also asked Woodbury to arrange with the Navy Department for two vessels to sail toward Matagorda, Texas. The customs collector thus clearly intended to establish an American naval presence in Texas; his plans were foiled, however, by the Navy Department.

¹⁸NA, RG 56, M174 Roll 9, Letter number 77. NA, RG 56, Entry 90. Letters to Collectors, Vol. Mississippi, New Orleans, January 13, 1834, to December 26, 1836. The original letter shows the date of the letter was changed from May 2 to May 5.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

Assistant Navy Secretary John Boyle sent one vessel to Cuba,²¹ but the Navy refused to assign the requested vessels to the Texas coast. This refusal made *Ingham* the lone United States war vessel on the Texas coast.

Despite his declared urgency, Breedlove inexplicably delayed *Ingham's* departure until May 24. He also uncharacteristically ordered Captain Ezekiel Jones to travel to New Orleans from Blind Bay (near South West Pass) to receive written orders. Massachusetts-born Jones disliked New Orleans, and he usually sent a junior officer to the city for dispatches, supplies, or crewmen. Jones returned to the cutter on May 22 with orders to cruise to the "East of Mexico."²² Breedlove's orders were dated April 30, 1835. Neither Jones nor Breedlove ever provided a reason for back-dating these instructions, but the hand-delivery of the instructions was clearly intended to bypass the postal system that would have dated the letter's cover.

Breedlove may have postdated all his of correspondence regarding the Texas incident in order to establish an official chronology of decisions predating the *Martha's* seizure. The dates of the letters are significant. Breedlove subsequently claimed that if he had known of the slave smugglers' plot two weeks earlier he could have detailed the cutter to intercept it. No records remain of any conversations between Jones and Breedlove, but Breedlove provides some hints in his written orders: "I am induced to believe that if any Vessel should have engaged in this business [slavery] they will most likely enter into Matagorda Bay."²³ He apparently was not sure there were any American slavers in Texas, but his business experience made him cognizant that Matagorda Bay was a common point of entry port for slave smugglers.

Perhaps Breedlove also used the meeting to direct Jones without specifically mentioning the *Montezuma*; otherwise, he certainly would have mentioned Sabine and Galveston as he did in his letter to Woodbury. Both ports were much closer to the Louisiana border. Breedlove did not explain his reasoning but intimated something more to Jones, "Trusting you Will execute

²¹NA RG 45 (Microfilm Publication M472). Letters sent by the Secretary of the Navy to the President and Executive Agencies. Roll 1, undated letter (ca. May 25, 1835). The cover of the original carries no date stamp.

²²NA, RG 26, E-159, Abstracts of Cutter *Logs-Ingham*, May 1835.

²³NA, RG 26, E-159, Extract of *Ingham's Log*, May 22, 1835.

this mission With discretion and Fidelity to the government." This is a curious remark considering the era's official American policies toward slavers, smugglers, and pirates.

Three days after Jones sailed, Breedlove received a letter from Woodbury approving his actions. Woodbury also informed Breedlove that Benjamin F. Linton, the United States District Attorney for Western Louisiana, also had encountered reports regarding an alleged slave-smuggling scheme.²⁴ Breedlove acknowledged receipt of Woodbury's letter, noting that "[I am] much gratified, that the Department has sanctioned the course I have taken to suppress the unlawful acts."²⁵ Breedlove presumably meant slavery in his reference to unlawful acts, but, unlike other routine letters of acknowledgment, Breedlove's reply conspicuously failed to mention the seizure of the *Martha*. Unsure his plan would work, Breedlove again asked Woodbury "to make a call on the Secretary of the Navy for the aid of at least two of their Sloops of War to cruise that [the Texas] coast for the next three months."²⁶ His request was again rejected, but the U. S. S. *St. Louis*, under the command of Lieut. Charles S. McCauley, was dispatched to Havana, Cuba, to investigate the alleged slave-smuggling scheme.

At Havana, McCauley interviewed United States Consul Nathan P. First, who recently issued a clearance for the schooner *Pocahontas*, of Newport, Rhode Island, to take Negroes to Brazoria, Texas. First replied that free Negroes going to Texas in American vessels was legal²⁷ and he officially believed "these blacks were really and truly intended for their own service in that Country." First nevertheless unofficially conceded the blacks were destined for the United States²⁸ basing his conclusion on a statement by a *Pocahontas* crewman, who bragged the black passengers' destination was actually Monroe, Louisiana. Perhaps merely a coincidence, this fortuitous statement gave creditability to Breedlove's slave-

²⁴NA, RG 56, M175, Letters Sent to Collectors of Customs, roll 4, Woodbury to Breedlove, May 27, 1835.

²⁵NA, RG 56, M174, roll 9, letter no. 85. Breedlove to Woodbury, June 12, 1835.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Slavery was officially illegal in Mexico by enactment of the April 6, 1830, law, however, many colonists ignored the law.

²⁸NA, RG 56, M174 roll 9, First to McCauley at Havana, July 8, 1835.

smuggling report, but it remains doubtful that the *Ingham* was deployed to Texas to intercept slavers.²⁹

The governmental reaction to supposed rumors of slave smuggling did little to allay the fears of the New Orleans insurance underwriters, who remained frantic at the prospect of continued payments for vessels, cargoes, and specie lost to Mexican customs agents.³⁰ In 1834, faced with mounting losses during the previous year, they had asked Levi Woodbury, then navy secretary, to protect American shipping by stationing a warship between Vera Cruz and New Orleans.³¹ Woodbury promised to send "every protection that was asked for" but in the end the only public vessel available was the aging revenue cutter *Ingham*.³²

Ingham was an appropriate choice. The six-gun, seventy-three-foot topsail schooner was far less threatening to the Mexican government than United States naval warships. The cutter was also a familiar sight in the waters between New Orleans and Vera Cruz. More importantly from a political perspective, all the cutter's officers were Jackson supporters who believed that Texas would ultimately become part of the United States.³³

²⁹Breedlove had staunch beliefs against African slave trading. Breedlove wrote to Woodbury on June 12, 1835, "Nothing but an example being made of one or two of these gentry will put a stop to their nefarious trade."

³⁰The signers of the open letter included Thomas Urquhart, John K. West, Peter Laidlaw, Charles Harrod, M. Morgan, John Andrews, and Thomas Barrett.

³¹*Republican*, Brazoria, Texas, June 1, 20, 1835. The letter was addressed to Washington on May 2, 1834. The brokers were mistaken when writing to Woodbury. Woodbury became Treasury Secretary in July 1, 1834, and replaced by Mahlon Dickerson as Navy Secretary. Ironically, in 1836, these same groups asked for protection from the Texas Navy. Again in October 1837, Alcee LaBranche, United States chargé d'affaires at Houston, asked the Treasury Department to place the Revenue Cutter *Woodbury* between the Mississippi River and Galveston to protect Texas shipping from the Mexican Navy.

³²The *Ingham* was built in 1830 by Webb and Allen at New York. The usual life span of a northern built vessel was about five years in the Gulf of Mexico.

³³Jackson's sentiments were well known. All Revenue Cutter Service officers owed their commissions, and continued employment, to the sitting president. Many of these officers, especially southern, shared Jackson's views. In July 1836, Lt. Levy C. Harby was re-instated to the revenue service after having been cashiered for "going to Texas" in December 1835; Jackson considered him being on leave. However, the Treasury Department was not as conciliatory and Harby lost five years of seniority on the promotion list.

The *Ingham's* captain, Ezekiel Jones, was a competent, loyal, and a determined leader. Jones's notorious, volatile temper invariably alienated his officers and crew,³⁴ but the captain nevertheless had a reputation for sound judgment, excellent seamanship, and superior dedication to duty. Jones's first lieutenant, South Carolinian Levy C. Harby, matched his captain's attributes, including his temper, but Harby had more experience than Jones in the Gulf of Mexico, having served there on revenue and naval vessels since 1817.³⁵

Two days after leaving the Mississippi River, the *Ingham* cast anchor off the Sabine River. Hoping to deceive any slavers in the area, Jones "sent down the Main Top gallant Mast &c disguised the vessel to make her look like a Merchantman."³⁶ He used the disguise twice more over the next two weeks. After encountering only normal shipping, Jones decided to patrol the Texas coast. Sailing past Galveston,³⁷ the *Ingham* traveled as far south as Pass Cavallo. Heavy seas prevented entry into Matagorda Bay; hence the ship sailed north to the Brazos River anchorage.

On June 3, the *Ingham* anchored off the entrance to the Brazos River, where the local pilot, J. Brown, informed Jones of "several Acts of Piracy" committed by the *Montezuma* and that there were no slave ships in the area.³⁸ Jones ordered Harby to go ashore with a few men and to "ask the Truth of these

³⁴National Archives, Record Group 26, Entry 151, Vol. 1834-35, letter 157. First Lieutenant Harby wrote the Treasury Department on March 27, 1835, requesting a transfer. He wrote, "Since Capt. E. Jones has assumed command of this Cutter the General Tenor of his Conduct towards me as first Lieut had been unusually *Harsh & Severe* and in many instances he has made use of Language to me on the Quarter Deck highly derogatory to the Character of a *Gentleman & an Officer*. . . ." The department ignored his request.

³⁵Harby had wide experience in the Gulf of Mexico. As a midshipman in the U.S. Navy he served with David Porter in the Anti-Piratical Squadron and ship wrecked in Mexico in the U.S. schooner *Revenge* (Gun Boat 158) commanded by, his cousin, Uriah Phillips Levy. Harby also served as *Ingham's* acting captain until Jones's assignment in 1834. Harby would later shipwreck again at Vera Cruz in 1836 on board the cutter *Dallas* and serve as captain of the cutter *Henry Dodge* at Galveston.

³⁶NA, RG 26, E-159, Extract of log. May 26, 1835.

³⁷Jones sailed two and a half miles off the beach in three and a quarter fathoms of water. He took time to compare his finding with a nautical source and found "Blunt's description of the island [St. Louis] perfectly correct."

³⁸NA, RG 26, E-159, Extract of log.

reports, & offer protection to any Amer. Citizen's who might require it." He reminded Harby of their official reason for being in Texas and ordered the boarding of all American vessels in Port. The next day, Harby and his detail (two of whom were drunk), returned to the cutter after boarding the schooners *San Felipe* and *Julius Ceasar* and the brig *Durango*, all of which were laden with cotton, not slaves.

On June 5, Brown took the *Ingham* across the bar and into Matagorda Bay.³⁹ Jones sent out a boarding party to examine two merchantmen—the *Corvine* and the *Robert & James*. While the boarding party inspected the latter vessel, one Flurry informed Third Lieut. John B. Meigs of rumors regarding the imminent arrival of an American vessel transporting 100 slaves, but Meigs was skeptical. Jones continued the investigation the next day. Hoping to find the Mexican warship elsewhere in the bay, the American captain ordered his crew to alter the *Ingham's* appearance by sending down the "Main Topmast & fore Topsail yard."⁴⁰ As before, the plan was prudent but the preparations were in vain. Emotionally torn between relief and irritation, Jones continued preparations by making needed repairs.⁴¹ He grew weary of the local rumor mill, and he began gathering data about the Mexican cutter while preparing his twenty-man crew for a possible encounter with the *Montezuma* by additional "exercise" with the great guns and small arms.⁴²

Armed drills continued into Sunday, when Jones dutifully, in his proper sequence, "Read [the revenue cutter Service] Regulations" and held divine services. At 10:30 a.m., Jones sent Second Lieut. William M. A. Moore and Meigs ashore to

³⁹In 1832, Nicholson warned the *Ingham's* six foot draft was too deep for the Texas coast.

⁴⁰NA, RG26, E-159, Extract of Log, USRC *Ingham*, June 6, 1835. American revenue cutters often altered the appearance to move among the smugglers.

⁴¹The cutter needed repairs as recommended by a November, 1834 survey. However, no collector of customs after 1834 authorized repairs to a cutter seen to have outlived its usefulness. The state of ill repair would be the reason six months later to sell the cutter to the Texas Navy and renamed *Independence*.

⁴²National Archives, Record Group 26, Entry 151 Vol. 1833-34. No exact crew list has been uncovered for 1835, but an 1833 list shows three petty officers; eight seamen, six boys, a cook and a cabin steward. There were four officers. For this occasion, Jones had only nineteen able-bodied men. One seaman was sick with fever.

determine the veracity of the "numerous Verbal & vaguely Written reports" of the Americans captured from *Martha*.⁴³ Jones was suspicious of the newspaper and personal accounts. He had no reason to doubt that the seizures took place, but he also knew of the colonists's bias against the Mexican government. Therefore, to appeal to the Anglo-Texans's sense of reason and honor, he ordered Moore to have the witnesses make a "Written report of the Transaction under oath."⁴⁴ Jones attempted to inject an air of legitimacy into the inquiry by ordering Moore to "obtain information respecting the importation of slaves into Texas," but the Americans had no legal authority to conduct an inquiry on Mexican soil. This technicality, however, did not stand in the way of the *Ingham's* commander.⁴⁵

With two of his junior officers ashore, Jones boarded the American schooner *Mary of Sudbury* of New Orleans, which carried sixteen free black passengers. Jones viewed the Africans' presence as suspicious, but the commander knew that he had no authority to seize a vessel carrying free persons of color.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, Moore's informants recounted consistent tales of the seizures, and they reported that the *Montezuma* had probably moved the *Martha* to Vera Cruz for adjudication. Moore also noted that the Matagorda Bay area settlers called the seizures the latest "outrage against the American flag."⁴⁷

On June 12, with repairs, additional gun training, and investigations complete, Jones got underway for Matamoros "with the avowed intention of seeking the *Montezuma*."⁴⁸ Jones abandoned all pretense of searching for slavers, recording in

⁴³NA, RG 26, Extract of Log, USRC *Ingham*, Orders to Lieut. W. M. A. Moore, June 7, 1835. This was the first mention of the *Martha's* capture by Jones. The *Columbia* not being an American flag vessel, was of no interest to him.

A&NC, August 27, 1835. Jones obtained a deposition from John S. Bartlett, one of the *Martha's* passengers. Bartlett complained about the United States Consul's, at Galveston, ineffectiveness to help the Americans detained on the *Montezuma*. *New Orleans Bee*, July 13, 1835.

⁴⁴NA, RG 26, Extract of log. USRC *Ingham*, June 7, 1835.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶NA, RG 26, Extract of Log, June 9, 1835.

⁴⁷Hill, 23.

⁴⁸A&NC, August 27, 1835.

his log that: "We are now in pursuit of her [the *Montezuma*] & determined at all hazards to liberate all American citizens that may be found forcibly detained on board of her."⁴⁹ Pursuit was not authorized in Jones's written orders. Nonetheless, the crafty Jones may have left these, or similar words, in Matagorda with the full knowledge they would precede him down the coast.

The next day the *Ingham* crossed the "Bar of Passo Cabello [sic]" and "struck heavily several times," despite hiring a pilot. The pilot, Capt. William Chase, remained on board to pilot the *Ingham* to "Brassos [sic] de Santiago."⁵⁰ Jones made the cruise south a slow, deliberate search. He arrived two days later about six miles from Brazos de Santiago. He continued preparations for action by having "all hands preparing grape shot & getting the Battery in fighting order & exercising the great guns & small arms."

The crew's anxiety mounted as the search continued deeper into Mexican territory. Jones did not want to miss the *Montezuma* or to be surprised by the Mexican ship.⁵¹ Hence he proceeded with caution. At 5:00 a.m. on June 14, Jones tacked toward shore and a lookout reported a vessel lying at anchor off Brazos de Santiago. An hour later, the lookouts clearly made out a "clipper built Schooner;" at 6:30 the unknown schooner got underway and bore down on the *Ingham*; ten minutes later, the unidentified schooner fired on the American cutter. It was not until about 7:30 that the schooner broke colors identifying itself as a Mexican war vessel.

According to Jones, he cleared his vessel for action and returned fire only after receiving fire.⁵² Which vessel fired first remains the subject of debate. The former master of *Columbia*, detained aboard the *Montezuma* for the entire incident,⁵³

⁴⁹NA, RG 26, E-159, Extract of Log, June 12, 1835.

⁵⁰Chase was paid forty dollars for his services as pilot. He also stood in the place of the missing Meigs. Meigs, as Jones commented, was ashore in a "beastly" state of intoxication and did not return to the cutter until July 24. Meigs would be suspended three times from the revenue cutter service for intoxication and ultimately cashiered.

⁵¹NA, RG26, Extract of Log, June 14, 1835.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³The *Columbia*'s master was not named, however, on July 1, 1834, D.W. Smith the consul at Matamoros listed a John Johnson as the master, but other

reported *Ingham* fired "a lee gun as a signal to speak [to] her [the *Montezuma*]."

Lieutenant Calvi stood his schooner toward *Ingham* possibly thinking *Ingham* was another "merchantman and an easy prize"⁶⁴ and fired his "signal," a canister shot, at the cutter.⁶⁵ Calvi had previously seized anchored and unarmed vessels, and he had demonstrated no inclination to seize any vessel that could put up any resistance. Quickly realizing his error, Calvi, "hauled his wind & made all sail from us."⁶⁶ The schooners moved farther offshore, but Jones, wary of the Mexican's shoot and run tactics, decided to lie back and watch. The American commander ordered one of his nine-pounder "chase guns" fired to prevent a sudden turn of the Mexican schooner. Meanwhile, the *Ingham* continued to close upon its adversary. Calvi again feigned battle by firing at the Americans. These shots caused Jones to assume the battle had begun in earnest, and he ordered his crew to haul up the foresail and "laid the topsail to mast" slowing the cutter.

Ingham slowed and prepared for an attack, but Calvi saw in Jones's actions an opportunity to disengage himself from his American pursuer. Jones, perplexed, watched his opponent bear away. The American commander noted in his log that he believed the Mexican's gunfire signaled battle, "but instead of carrying his menace into effect, he no sooner saw our position than he hauled his wind & stood from us."⁶⁷

Calvi gave the appearance of retreating to the safe anchorage behind Brazos de Santiago.⁶⁸ Jones, thinking only of battle, failed to recognize the Mexican's earlier attempt at flight. During the chase, the *Montezuma's* crew steadily jettisoned material, lightening the schooner both to increase the vessel's speed and to decrease its draft enough to cross the bars at the

sources claimed Thomas Silk was the master. The vessel rated about 77 tons and had crew of four.

⁶⁴*New Orleans Bee*, August 21, 1835. Letter to editor from L. C. Harby.

⁶⁵NA, RG 59, M281, roll 1. D. W. Smith, Consul at Matamoros, to John Forsyth, July 1, 1835.

⁶⁶NA, RG26, Extract of log, June 14, 1835.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁸Matamoros Consul D. W. Smith later explained that Calvi feared being captured, transported to New Orleans and tried for piracy. Calvi may have been correct in his assumption.

river's mouth. Nearing the river mouth, perhaps fearing an eventual boarding, Calvi signaled for reinforcements from shore.⁵⁹ It is not known why Calvi did not take his vessel directly into the harbor. Perhaps he found the tide too low or surf conditions too high, or perhaps his resolve was bolstered by the reinforcements.

Soon after the reinforcements' arrival, Calvi resumed cannon fire at the American cutter. Again Jones misinterpreted the point of the Mexican cannon fire, "We took it for granted as much as he [Calvi] commenced firing on us that she [the *Montezuma*] should run down & . . . give us battle."⁶⁰ Calvi's continued flight disappointed Jones, who had to content himself with a long-distance artillery duel. The *Montezuma* kept to the shallow shore line as Jones "used every effort to cut him off by getting between him & the [harbor's] Entrance . . . but [the Mexicans] were too far to leeward to effect our purpose."⁶¹

By noon the *Montezuma* could neither outdistance nor outmaneuver *Ingham*. Hesitant to fight, Calvi had one remaining option. Jones watched as the Mexican captain ran the *Montezuma* "into the Breakers & on the Bar." Grounding and seriously damaging his vessel, Calvi failed to gain the safety of the anchorage, but the schooner's disability insured the Mexican crew's. Seeing *Montezuma's* plight, Jones initially considered firing on the grounded Mexican vessel, but decided against it, possibly out of a sense of honor or perhaps doubts about the effectiveness of his cannon fire in the rising swell. Jones tacked his cutter offshore and waited.

The bloodless duel ended, and Jones logged the action "fired of altogether thirteen guns."⁶² Jones did not record the number of shots fired by his opponent. In later months, an anonymous source charged that the *Ingham* purposely remained beyond range throughout the engagement. The charge infuriated

⁵⁹Jones described the pilot boat as a schooner. The A&NC, August 27, 1835, estimated the *Montezuma* had 50 men in total and "a far superior battery" to the *Ingham's*.

Jim Dan Hill, *The Texas Navy* (1937; reprint ed., New York, 1962), 23. Hill noted the captain of the port sent thirty men to the *Montezuma* as reinforcements. Hill also asserts Calvi deliberately grounded his vessel to avoid further conflict.

⁶⁰NA, RG26, Extract of Log, June 14, 1835.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²NA, RG26, Extract of Log, June 14, 1835.

Harby who commanded the cutter's artillery. He retorted that the *Montezuma* was in easy reach of his last six shots. Harby defending his abilities, maintained it was Jones's order that the *Montezuma* "should not be struck, but if possible, intimidated."⁶³ Jones may have feared injuring the captives or following Breedlove's unwritten orders.

Although Jones did not press the attack, his thirteen shots became the preliminary naval shots of the Texas Revolution. The duel constituted the first Mexican-American naval confrontation over Mexican control of American trade along the Texas coast. In addition, the *Ingham's* sea chase and engagement with the *Montezuma* established a precedent followed by the Texas armed merchantman *San Felipe* in confronting the Mexican war schooner *Correo de Mejico* two months later.⁶⁴ In all likelihood, had the Texans not taken the *Correo de Mejico*, the *Ingham* would have. As the *San Felipe* sailed against the *Correo de Mejico*, Jones prepared for another expedition to Texas, this time with the express purpose of arresting *Correo de Mejico's* captain, Thomas M. Thompson, who was "impressing and exacting from each American \$300 for their release."⁶⁵ There were no longer any pretenses.

Jones's actions seriously compromised the image of Mexican naval superiority along the Texas coast. However, few of the observers ashore knew that the *Ingham's* experienced crew and skilled officers had outmatched their counterparts aboard the *Montezuma*. This lopsided affair was a success and proved a powerful stimulant to the Texas revolutionary movement. Two weeks after the incident, William B. Travis capitalized upon the backlash generated by the seizures, tariffs, and growing

⁶³Bee, Letter to the Editor, August 21, 1835. Harby's letter was written on August 19 in answer to an anonymous letter, signed by "an Impartial Eyewitness" sent to a rival newspaper.

⁶⁴Paul Hogan, *The Rio Grande in North American History*, Volume 2, *Mexico and the United States* (New York, 1954), 518.

NA, RG 26, E-159 Weekly Report of USRC *Ingham* ending September 14, 1835.

Texas Republican, October 17, 1835. Capt. W. A. Hurd, *San Felipe*, reported on September 25, 1835, of aiding the American brig *Tremont* that was being attacked by the *Correo de Mejico* and an armed sloop.

⁶⁵A&NC, September 9, 1835, p. 287.

popular discontent to lead an ill-advised and unpopular raid on the Mexican fort at Anahuac.⁶⁶

On June 15, Captain Van Stavoren, of the Mexican merchant brig *General Santa Anna*, visited Jones and confirmed the Mexican schooner's identity as the *Montezuma*.⁶⁷ He also reported that the day before, Gen. Martin Perfecto de Cos, commandant general of the eastern interior provinces, ordered the captured Americans released and sent to Matamoros.⁶⁸

The release of the captives settled one issue, but the matter of the perceived insult to the American flag remained. Jones had to have tangible proof of the Mexican's transgression to take home, but a rising storm at sea frustrated his attempt to extract an apology from Calvi. Several hours passed before a wind from the north, northeast calmed the seas. At 1:30 p.m., Jones anchored within a mile and a half of the grounded *Montezuma*—outside effective cannon range. Jones watched the Mexican crew attempt to kedge the schooner over the bar.⁶⁹ Jones took this opportunity to send the apology demand. Although Jones knew the captives were freed, he used the same demand written on the previous day to make Calvi acknowledge his "piracy," or to offer a suitable explanation for his actions.

⁶⁶*Texas Republican*, July 18, 1835. Travis received public censure for the attack.

⁶⁷NA, RG26, E-159, Extract of Log, June 15, 1835. Capt. George Van Stavoren was an American expatriate. Jones misspelled Van Stavoren's name in the *Ingham's* log. Van Stavoren was an old hand in Mexican waters, he served there as a second lieutenant with David Porter in the Mexican Navy. Although unsubstantiated, some records indicate Harby was also in the Mexican Navy with Porter.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

A&NC, August 27, 1835. The *Ingham's* investigation at Matagorda was known to Martin Cos. Some at Point Isabel speculated this was the cause of the Americans release.

⁶⁹Kedging is a process of moving a vessel. A small boat takes a kedge anchor to a desired location and lowers it. The crew on board the vessel then hauls or warps on the kedge rope pulling the vessel. The small boat then moves the anchor again and the process is repeated until the vessel is moved to the desired location.

U. States Schooner Ingham off
the Basso de Santiago June

14th 1835

The Commander

Of the above named U.States schooner Ingham is creditably informed that several American citizens pursuing their lawful callings have been & Still are forcibly detained on board the Mexican Schooner Montezuma & he[Captain Jones] is under the necessity of [the word "requesting" was struck out and demanding inserted] demanding their *immediate release*, unless the Commander of Said Mexican armed Schooner can show good & sufficient cause according to the Existing treaty between the U States of America & the Republic of Mexico for their detention.

I have the Honour to be
Most Respectfully your
obt Svt.
Ezekiel Jones⁷⁰

Jones sent Lieutenants Harby and Moore to deliver the apology demand. When their whaleboat pulled within a quarter mile, the *Montezuma* freed itself from the bar, and the vessel's gun crew pointed their amidships long gun at the seven Americans.⁷¹ Harby ordered the twenty-six foot whale boat away, but although the weather continued to calm, the high breakers at the bar prevented the Americans from pursuing the *Montezuma* into the harbor without a pilot. Harby solved the problem by cavalierly commandeering a pilot from a passing schooner. Inside the harbor Harby avoided the *Montezuma* and, pursuant to his orders, he sought out the United States consul or any other trustworthy person such as former United States Army Gen. John Mason.⁷² Upon landing, Harby located the port captain, who accepted Jones's letter for

⁷⁰NA, RG26, Extract of Log, June 15, 1835. Appendix No. 1. Jones wrote this letter on June 14 prior to his conversation with Captain Van Stavoren.

⁷¹Ibid., Appendix No. 4, Lieutenant Harby's report.

⁷²Jones did not explain how he knew Mason was in the area except possibly through Captain Van Stavoren. Mason was the chief land agent for the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company with extensive ties to New York business men including the New York Collector of Customs Samuel Swartwout.

William R. Hogan, *The Texas Republic: A Social and Economic History* (Norman, Okla., 1946), 83, 85-86.

Calvi. Harby allotted one hour for a response, and Captain of the Port Wise calmly agreed to order Calvi to make the apology.⁷³ Within the hour Calvi's reply arrived written in Spanish, however, neither Harby nor Moore read Spanish. John Mason volunteered to have the letter translated.⁷⁴

While the officers awaited the translation, Mason and Capt. J. D. Boylan,⁷⁵ returned to the port captain's office and told Harby that Calvi ordered a guard of soldiers, accompanied by a "municipal force of ten men" to seize the *Ingham's* whaleboat and arrest its crew. Lieutenant Moore was the first to arrive at the scene, and he ordered the five seamen to arm themselves. He subsequently wrote that he and his men were "determined to defend ourselves if they fired upon us."⁷⁶ Moore reportedly drew his sword and stood between the Mexican force and his own men.⁷⁷ Harby, who arrived moments later, contradicted Moore's later report by claiming the boat crew was unarmed and one seaman, William Peterson, "leaped on shore and exclaiming [*sic*], 'I have not arms and claim this for my protection,' [and] displayed the flag."⁷⁸ Peterson's alleged

⁷³Although Wise's first name was not recorded, he was probably William Wise a former First Lieutenant with David Porter in the Anti-Piratical Squadron and later in the Mexican Navy. Harby and Wise most likely knew each other from these assignments.

⁷⁴The letter, nor its translation, has not been uncovered in the Revenue Cutter Service files.

⁷⁵Harby misspelled Boylan's name in his report. Boylan would ultimately command the Texas Navy fleet at Yucatan.

⁷⁶NA, RG26, Extract of Log, USRC *Ingham*, Appendix No. 5, Lt. Moore's report was more concise and less inflammatory than Harby's.

A&NC, August 27, 1835. This account claims Harby and Moore arrived at the beach at the same time with swords drawn.

⁷⁷NA, RG26, Extract of Log, June 15, 1835, Appendix No. 5. Moore reported that Lieutenant Calvi ordered him, through a translator, to sheath his sword but Moore refused. Moore made no public comments of the incident nor did he overstate his own role in his report. Unfortunately, Moore died of fever at New Orleans in the following October.

⁷⁸*Bee*, August 21, 1835. The words of Peterson were probably manufactured by Harby or the *Bee*. The term "protection" applied to any written form that authenticated nationality and was considered a passport. Numerous nineteenth-century seaman shipping lists included "N.P." (No protection) or "P" (protection) next to their names.

The authenticity of the statement is questionable because a nearly identical statement is accredited to Capt. Thomas Tingey, USN, in 1799. The H.M.S. *Surprise* stopped the U.S.S. *Ganges* with the intent to examine the "protections" of the American seamen. Tingey refused and supposedly said, "A public ship

statement implied no American needed a passport; being an American was enough. Perhaps the statement is inaccurate, but as an ardent Texas supporter, Harby's testimony enhanced his own position in the incident and inflamed the anti-Mexican sentiment in New Orleans. He painted a scene familiar to the impressed American seaman before the War of 1812.⁷⁹

The standoff continued until Wise interceded and ordered Calvi, the soldiers, and the municipal force to disperse.⁸⁰ With tensions still high, Harby, who was unable to obtain or commandeer a pilot to cross the bar, accepted the offer of the captain of the American merchant brig *Pharos*, where he and his men "remained all night with a regular watch."⁸¹

At 6:00 a.m. on June 16, Harby and his crew rejoined the *Ingham*. Jones, dissatisfied with the results of the previous

carries no protection but her flag, I do not expect to succeed in a contest with you; but I will die at my quarters before a man shall be taken from the ship."

Jones made no public statements about the incident but it is unlikely that he sent his men into a potentially hostile environment unarmed. Jones's personal philosophy about arms was that he considered a man in naval service properly armed when he had two pistols in his belt and a musket by his side. A December 1835 inventory shows the cutter's small arms consisted of fifteen muskets, fifteen pistols, eight cutlasses, and three sabers.

⁷⁹Harby had no desire to be taken prisoner. He had been a prisoner for over two years in England's Dartmoor prison during the War of 1812.

⁸⁰Wise ordered Calvi to apologize for his actions on the beach. NA, RG 59, M281, Smith to Forsyth, July 1, 1835.

Smith received an official complaint from General Cos about the incident. Smith replied giving the facts as he knew them and hoped that an investigation by Cos "will result in the conviction and disgrace of this officer[Calvi]." Smith reported the American citizens left Matamoros on June 30, 1835, for New Orleans. He appealed "As they have been detained near two months and shamefully confined in the hold of the Montezuma a great part of the time, without any reasonable cause, it is confidently expected that our government will take proper steps to demand ample satisfaction for the outrage." No records have been uncovered that show Calvi's punishment, if any.

A&NC, September 3, 1835. Captain Hathaway, ship *Saratoga*, from New Orleans reported to the *New York Daily Advertiser*, "The late Lieutenant Commandant of the Mexican schooner Montezuma . . . has been sent to Vera Cruz for trial," for losing his fight with the *Ingham*.

NA RG 59, M183, roll 2. Vera Cruz Consulate M. Burroughs to John Forsyth December 31, 1835.

Burroughs notified the State Department the *Martha* and cargo had been condemned by a "Marine Tribunal" on July 22, 1835, for a "break in the revenue laws." Whether the Texans regained their cargo through a Vera Cruz source is not known.

⁸¹NA, RG26, Extract of Log, June 15, 1835, Appendix No. 4. Lieutenant Harby's report.

day, decided it was his "duty to enter the harbor and . . . demand an explanation from the Lieut[enant] Commanding the *Montezuma* for his cowardly attack on our Boat."⁸² Jones sent another boat into the harbor seeking a pilot, but found none trustworthy. The inability to find a pilot perhaps gave him an official excuse to bring closure to the incident. Jones had already thought the situation had gone far enough, but he had no other options left except to attack *Montezuma* in the harbor⁸³ where the outcome would have been uncertain. He recorded in his log that "on further reflection I considered the apology offered by the Capt[ain] of the Port together with his Censure of the Lieut[enant] in Command of the *Montezuma* quite satisfactory."⁸⁴ He prudently dropped the matter of the attempted assault on the whaleboat. Jones's objective had been the liberation of American citizens; the American commander reported "finding this already accomplished, I got under Way at 10:00 a.m. & stood to the Eastward," leaving behind the *Montezuma* whose prestige and hull were damaged.

The impact of the incident lingered. From the perspective of Texans and Americans alike, the *Ingham* effectively projected American military force and maintained the honor of the United States flag in the manner of the gunboat diplomacy used later in the nineteenth century. The people of New Orleans agreed as illustrated by the January 1836 announcement of Jones's transfer in the *New Orleans Bee*. The *Bee* expressed its admiration for

Zeal, industry, and discretion . . . His prompt and efficient action in the affair of the *Montezuma*, has taught a neighboring state a valuable lesson of respect for our flag, and raised the confidence of our citizens abroad in the protection of the government to their lawful enterprise . . . the vessel [*Ingham*] is

⁸²NA, RG26, Extract of Log, USRC *Ingham*, June 16, 1835.

⁸³NA, RG 26, E-151, letter no. 209. In a July 14, 1835, letter to Capt. William Gatewood, USRCS, requesting an exchange of stations, Jones claimed "I have not seen a well day for the last seven weeks." His illness and the potential of escalated violence may have influenced his decision. Jones was also spoken to by men in Point Isabel and told him the "rabble" were so excited against him because of his driving the *Montezuma* into the port that he may have had to fight the whole town.

⁸⁴NA, RG 26, Extract of log, June 16, 1835.

entitled to bear the best motto for a military public servant—**SEMPER PARATUS.**⁸⁵

As Captain Nicholson stated, Jones had achieved a moral victory over the Mexican customs service in his controversial attempt to protect "our commerce & [the] security of our Revenue' that included Texas."⁸⁶ An observer of the action at Brazos de Santiago agreed and reported

The visit of this saucy little vessel here has brightened up every countenance, and has given them [Americans] confidence in themselves and their government; *more*, it has convinced this government [Mexican] that the rights and liberties of American citizens are not to be trifled with.⁸⁷

The "victory" also induced New Orleans merchants and brokers to continue their support of Anglo-Texans. Nearly a year later the *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin* echoed the city's sympathies with such emotionally charged statements as "In the sacred name of right, justice and humanity, it is now time to calculate cold policy and expediency—let us then do something for Texas."⁸⁸

James Breedlove agreed. In April 1836, he wrote Levi Woodbury with a plea on behalf of the beleaguered Texans. Woodbury responded "I deeply sympathize with the Texian sufferers you mentioned . . . but as the duty of the [Treasury] Dep[arment], and of yours in respect to the laws is in general merely executive." Woodbury directed Breedlove to avoid involvement with any revolution, but he also advised that "I do not perceive any safe principle of action, except to administer

⁸⁵A&NC, April 14, 1836, Vol. 2:239. The Revenue Cutter Service adopted "SEMPER PARATUS" as a service motto about 1896.

⁸⁶The actions of John Austin in 1832, as well as those of William B. Travis and W. A. Hurd in 1835 did not challenge Mexican control of the seaways but only for the ports. Each instance, except Travis, was caused by the perceived unjustified seizures of vessels and goods, and the detention of American citizens. Texas would not fully challenge the Mexican Navy for another six months. This challenge was supported and made possible by American support in cash, men, and material. See Tom H. Wells, *Commodore Moore and the Texas Navy* (Austin, Texas, 1960).

⁸⁷A&NC, August 27, 1835, p. 274. Reprint of letter of editor, *New Orleans Bulletin*, June, 1835.

⁸⁸As quoted in, James E. Winston, "New Orleans Newspapers and The Texas Question, 1835-1837," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 36 (1932): 109-10.

them [the laws] as they exist, until modified by Congress . . . accordingly, no authority can be given by me to permit any departure from that principle . . . [if] any departure is made, it must be on your own responsibility."⁸⁹

Woodbury gave Breedlove the option of acting within the law, but he did not prescribe any penalties if he did not. Breedlove followed the law and his heart by not enforcing the official embargo on arms and men bound for Texas, but he made Texas-bound ships certify that they carried only colonists. It was public knowledge that large numbers of armed colonists left New Orleans aboard such vessels as the *Columbia*, vessels whose thinly veiled smuggling activities were rendered easier by the *Ingham's* incursion into Texas waters.

Despite common knowledge of the recent incident along the Texas coast, *Ingham* arrived at New Orleans on July 13, 1835, with no more than a routine press notice. The marine news noted only that the *Ingham's* eight-week cruise had been undertaken "for the suppression of the slave trade."⁹⁰ Only the *Bee's* editorial staff questioned Breedlove's slavery cruise claim, but these journalists were never able to uncover "what the *Ingham* performed to effect the ostensible object for which she was specially despatched by the collector of the port."⁹¹ In other words, the *Bee's* editors believed, probably correctly, that Breedlove sent *Ingham* specifically to locate and confront the *Montezuma*. The *Bee's* staff, however, was unable to pursue the story because Breedlove never publicly commented about the incident after the cutter's return.

The incident was thus quickly forgotten, but the *Ingham* incident had sent a powerful message to the more radical Anglo-Texan revolutionaries, who interpreted the cutter's mission as a highly visible demonstration of American support for their cause. It is hardly surprising that the cutter's incursion was followed by a rapid escalation in rebel insurgency.

⁸⁹NA RG 56, Entry 82. Levi Woodbury to James Breedlove, May 13, 1836. Breedlove's letter of April 28, 1836, is missing as are the majority of his correspondence between 1835 to 1837.

⁹⁰*Bee*, July 13, 1835 (Marine Journal). In the same column Captain Van Stavoren, Brig *General Santa Anna*, from Matamoros, reported that the *Ingham* fired a few shots at *Montezuma* "but were at too great a distance to take effect."

⁹¹*Bee*, July 13, 1835.