

POINT BREEZE (BORDENTOWN) AND THE BONAPARTES

By Jean Walton

Bordentown, a stop on the stage route between Philadelphia and New York, is well-known to philatelists for the very rare stage markings which graced its covers in the early days of stage mail. The town, north of Philadelphia and south of Trenton, marked the point at which travelers from New York exchanged their bumpy ride in Jersey stage coaches for steamers which continued down the Delaware to Philadelphia. But it has another claim to fame: in 1817, it became the home to the former King of Naples and King of Spain, Joseph Bonaparte.

With this fact in mind, I wondered what kind of postal history I might find relating to the residence of Joseph Bonaparte in New Jersey. I searched the archives of our larger universities, and the New Jersey History Museum and State Library, but found nothing until I came to the New Jersey Historical Society. Located in Newark, but short on funds, an appointment was necessary to see their collection of some eight or nine letters written by Joseph Bonaparte.

This story begins with the Battle of Waterloo, and the final defeat in June of 1815 of Napoleon Bonaparte and the fall of the Bonaparte Empire to the British, an odd start for a bit of New Jersey postal history.

This event left all the members of Napoleon's



Fig. 1: Joseph was 47 years of age when he first came to this country, leaving behind him a wife Julie Clary, and two daughters, Zénaïde and Charlotte – then aged 14 and 13.¹

family as exiles, in jeopardy of incarceration or execution, foremost by the British, but also by the reinstated Bourbon monarchy in France. Joseph, older brother to Napoleon, strongly resembled him, and offered to impersonate him, in order to allow his brother to escape on a ship to the U.S. Napoleon chose instead to throw himself on the mercies of the British, so Joseph himself used the escape plan he had prepared for his brother, stealing away incognito, late one night in July, aboard a small American vessel, the *Commerce*. The captain had no idea of the identities of the small party of Frenchmen aboard, nor that the man travelling as M. Surviglieri was actually Joseph Bonaparte, brother to Napoleon, ex-king of Naples and of Spain.

The ship was boarded several times by the British, but the ruse was never discovered. Even while nearing New York City, the pilot was forced to steer the *Commerce* into the shallow waters off Sandy Hook to avoid two more British frigates; the frigates were unable to follow and gave up the chase. A request from the small party to disembark in Brooklyn was discouraged by

the captain, who told them there was nothing but fishing villages there. Arriving in New York in August of 1815, Joseph, his faithful secretary Louis Mailliard, and his cook, took rooms in an unprepossessing hotel, rather than one of the more well-known hotels, as Joseph was unsure just how he would be received and whether he could find safety in exile in the U.S. Joseph had left his family behind him – his wife Julie Clary and two daughters, Zénaïde and Charlotte, aged fourteen and thirteen.

Despite his precautions, and now calling himself “Comte de Survillieurs,” after property he owned, Joseph was recognized almost immediately by Commander Jacob Lewis of Amboy, who happened to be staying at the same hotel visiting his son, and who had met Joseph in Europe. He invited Joseph to visit him in Amboy, and the Count spent several pleasant days at his home.

Returning to New York City, the count was recognized again on the street by a former subject who fell to his knees to kiss the count’s hand. This resulted in a gathering crowd and the news hit the papers the following day. Incognito was clearly not an option.

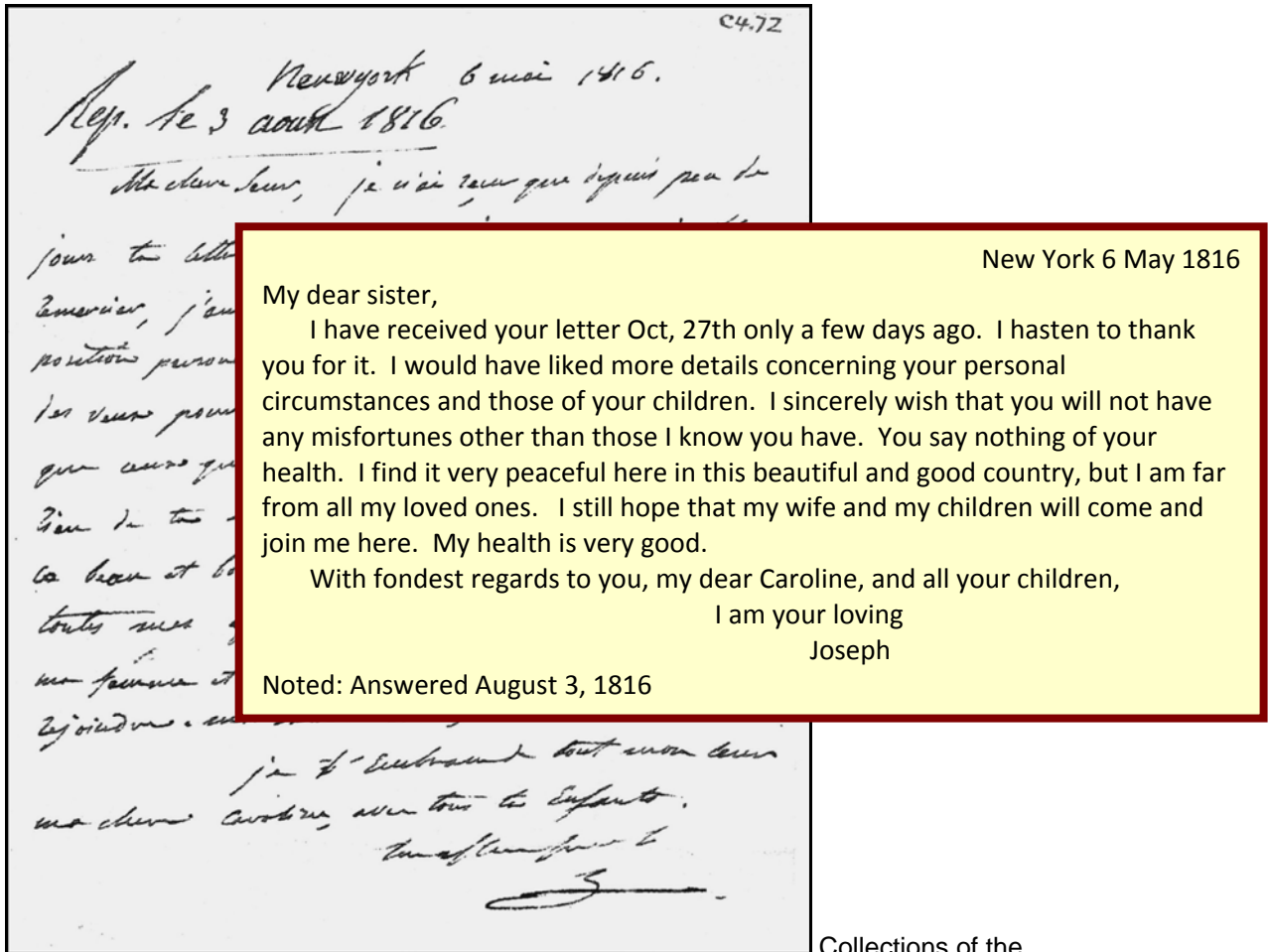


Fig. 2: The Bonaparte Family – at top the parents, from Corsica where they had a small estate with a vineyard and olive trees, and where both Napoleon and Joseph (2nd row, left – Joseph, and right – Napoleon) were born. All of these, with the exception of Charles, head of the family, who had died when Joseph and Napoleon were teen-agers, became exiles with the fall of the Napoleonic Empire in 1815. Joseph’s wife Julie was allowed to remain in Paris, but found it distasteful, and moved her family first to Frankfurt and then to Brussels.

In his youth, Joseph had taken on the responsibilities as head of the family, but Napoleon had had much larger dreams. His ambitions encompassed his older brother Joseph, who when Napoleon declared himself Emperor, became King of Naples, and later, at his brother’s request, King of Spain. Joseph, never very willing to accept these positions, has, in the retrospect of history, become known as “the reluctant King.”

Joseph thus chose to introduce himself to the mayor of New York and request his assistance. The mayor’s suggestion was that he travel to Washington and appeal to President Madison for asylum. With the help of a friend, Stephen Girard of Philadelphia, and travelling with Commodore Lewis, Joseph began the trip to Washington, but the President, forewarned of the impending visit of a Bonaparte, sent word that he would prefer that the Count not come to Washington – officially sanctioning protection of a Bonaparte would put the President in an awkward position with both the British and the French – but he also said that the Count was as free as any man arriving on our shores, and that he needn’t fear any detention by the U.S. government. Joseph thus returned to Philadelphia and began the search for a residence.

Letters were difficult for Joseph to get to his family, because they could be intercepted and confiscated, as fears remained of an attempt by the Bonapartists to return to power. Joseph's friend Girard's involvement in the shipping business allowed him to arrange for letters to be carried under cover, instead of by the regular mail routes. The many letters that were carried have been collected in the private archives of the Princess Napoleon.² What few letters I was able to find were at the New Jersey Historical Society, and pertained for the most part to finances. It was disappointing that few had any postal markings at all.³ However, this first letter from the NJHS files is from soon after his arrival in the U.S., and is a personal letter to his younger sister Caroline.



My dear sister,

I have received your letter Oct, 27th only a few days ago. I hasten to thank you for it. I would have liked more details concerning your personal circumstances and those of your children. I sincerely wish that you will not have any misfortunes other than those I know you have. You say nothing of your health. I find it very peaceful here in this beautiful and good country, but I am far from all my loved ones. I still hope that my wife and my children will come and join me here. My health is very good.

With fondest regards to you, my dear Caroline, and all your children,

I am your loving

Joseph

Noted: Answered August 3, 1816

New York 6 May 1816

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New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, NJ (MG 62)

Fig. 3: Dated New York, the 6th of May, 1816. Only the letter is present, no address side or postal markings

Joseph owned lands in upstate New York – in the area of Watertown – but Napoleon himself had suggested that the most advantageous spot to settle in the U.S. would be some place between New York and Philadelphia, where news from the Continent would be received most expeditiously. Whether this, or the presence of friends in the Philadelphia area who spoke French, determined Joseph's choice is unknown. His first residence was in Philadelphia – renting rooms in the city with the help of Stephen Girard, and later establishing a residence at Lansdowne. But Joseph was looking for a country estate which he could redecorate to his own tastes, and where he could eventually make a home for his wife and children whom he hoped would follow him to the U.S. He found such a spot at Bordentown, in the former estate of

POINT BREEZE & THE BONAPARTES ~ Jean Walton

Samuel Sayre. As a foreigner, he could not own lands in his own name, and so one of his entourage purchased the estate for him. Shortly after however, Governor Mahlon Dickerson signed a law enabling the right of ownership by the Count himself:

To the Count de Surveilliers

Trenton, New Jersey, 28th Jan. 1817

Sir,

Mr. Ingersoll will present to you a copy of an Act of the Legislature of New Jersey, which authorises foreigners to hold land in this state.

I avail myself eagerly of this opportunity to testify to you the sincere joy I feel for the preference you have been pleased to give to this State in selecting it for your residence.

The members of the legislature of the State participate in my sentiments of good will towards you: the act which they have just passed relative to you will give you the most certain proof of it.

I have the honour to be, Sir, with greatest respect,

Your most obedient humble servant

(Signed) Mahlon Dickerson⁴

New York State passed a similar law in 1825 allowing Joseph to take title to some 80,000 acres of land in Jefferson County, acquired from J. LeRay de Chaumont in trade for silver and furniture before the Count came to the United States, which were held in the name of James Carnet, his aide. Joseph would use this land for his summer hunting and fishing estate, and for revenue as well.

By mid-1817, Joseph was living in his new home at Point Breeze, overlooking Crosswicks Creek and the Delaware near Bordentown. He furnished his home with paintings and sculptures of Europe's great masters, with a particular fondness for those which were of his own family. He continued writing his wife and daughters to join him. He was an open-hearted man, well-liked in his new land, and welcomed visitors. He delighted in showing his paintings and sculptures to anyone interested, and it was said that his library included more books than the Library of Congress. The gardens were landscaped to his tastes, a small lake created (where it is reported, Joseph loved to watch the neighborhood children skate in winter, sliding oranges and apples across the ice for them to chase).

These years were lonely. This may have played a part in the Count's romantic relationship with Anna Savage, a young girl from Philadelphia whom he met in 1818. He established a house for her in Philadelphia, but she was shunned by Philadelphia society, and he chose instead a residence for her in Trenton, and finally in Lumberton. He would father two children by her, and in his travels to the North Country, she travelled with him as his wife. Julie Clary's health continued to prevent her coming to the U.S., and she was never to make the trip.

His daughters were a different matter however, and Joseph entreated both to join him in New Jersey. Charlotte, the younger daughter, came first, followed in a few years by Zénaïde.



Fig 4 This painting shows the first Bonaparte residence on the bluff overlooking Crosswicks Creek and the Delaware: “A View of the Delaware (sic) from Bordentown Hill,” a painting by Charles B. Lawrence, ca. 1819. The paintings and sculptures which graced its halls and gardens were sent by Joseph’s wife Julie from the Count’s collections in Europe. The grounds were landscaped after the style of a French country estate. This residence was destroyed by fire in 1820. The second mansion was built further back from the river, closer to the road.⁵

Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, NJ



Fig. 5: A painting by Jacques-Louis David, 1821, of the Princesses Charlotte (in the blue dress) and Zénaïde, (in black) reading a stampless folded letter which is presumed to have been from their father, as the words “Philadelphie” and “chères petites”⁶ are visible on the page. He wrote, “I am writing from a room which is the most appealing in the house and perhaps of all the left bank of the Delaware. It has seven windows of which five are on the river. Four times a day the steamboats stop below the windows – I hope that someday I will have the pleasure to be here with you. Today I am alone.”⁷

A fire, in January of 1820, destroyed this first home at Bordentown. The burning of the first Bonaparte mansion was saved from being a tragic loss by the help of the townspeople, who rallied round and, when they could not extinguish the fire, helped remove from the home the many treasures and works of art. It showed their respect and kindness towards the Count. Joseph wrote his thanks to one of the local magistrates for the respect and kindness shown by the townsfolk:

POINT BREEZE, January 8th, 1820.

To WILLIAM SNOWDEN, ESQ., BORDENTOWN, N. J.:

"SIR-You have shown so much interest for me since I have been in this country, and especially since the event of the 3d inst., that I cannot doubt it will afford you pleasure to make known to your fellow-citizens how much I feel that they did for me on that occasion. Absent myself from my house, they collected, by a spontaneous movement, on the first appearance of the fire, which they combated with united courage and perseverance; and when they found it was impossible to extinguish it, exerted themselves to save all the flames had not devoured before their arrival and mine.

All the furniture, statues, pictures, money, plate, gold, jewels, linen, books, and in short, everything that was not consumed, has been most scrupulously delivered into the hands of the people of my house. In the night of the fire, and during the next day, there were brought to me, by laboring men, drawers, in which I have found the proper quantity of pieces of money, and medals of gold, and valuable jewels, which might have been taken with impunity. This event has proved to me how much the inhabitants of Bordentown appreciate the interest I have always felt for them; and shows that men in general are good, when they have not been perverted in their youth by a bad education; when they maintain their dignity as men, and feel that true greatness is in the soul, and depends upon ourselves.

I cannot omit, on this occasion, what I have said so often, that the Americans are, without contradiction, the most happy people I have known; still more happy if they understand well their own happiness.

I pray you not to doubt of my sincere regard.

JOSEPH, Count de Survilliers."⁸

Joseph set to work immediately building a new home on this property, which had become known as Bonaparte's Park. Instead of rebuilding on the same site, he chose to convert the brick stables, further back from the cliff and nearer the road, into his new mansion. The remains of the first home were cleared away, and that site became a belvedere – or overlook. The new home was not as elegant as the first, but had the advantage of being less exposed (and thus warmer) in winter. It had many of the trappings of the first, well described here:

It was plain, long and rather low, and of brick covered with white plaster. It had its grand hall and staircase; its great dining-rooms, art gallery and library; its pillars and marble mantels, covered with sculpture of marvelous workmanship; its statues, busts and paintings of rare merit; its heavy chandeliers, and its hangings and tapestry, fringed with gold and silver. With the large and finely carved folding-doors of the entrance, and the liveried servants and attendants, it had the air of the residence of a distinguished foreigner, unused to the simplicity of our countrymen. A fine lawn stretched on the front, and a large garden of rare flowers and plants, interspersed with fountains and chiseled animals, in the rear. The park, which was laid out in the style of the Escorial grounds, was traversed by nearly twelve miles of drives and bridle paths, winding through clustering pines and oaks, and planted on every knoll with statuary. Rustic cots or rain shelters, bowers and seats, sheltered springs and solitary retreats were interspersed. Over several of the small streams and gullies that wound through and diversified the grounds, were thrown rustic bridges.⁹



Fig. 6: The second home of the Count de Survilliers at Point Breeze, shown in a painting by Karl Bodner, 1832, now in the Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska.

By mid-June, Joseph was in his new home, again enjoying visits from local people, his friends in Philadelphia, and visitors from afar. His home became a refuge for other French exiles, particularly those who had been in service to his brother Napoleon. He spoke English very poorly, surrounded as he was by a household of French speakers and friends who spoke French. While we show his letters transcribed into English, most if not all [with the exception below], if written by Joseph himself, were written in French. This short invitation is a rare exception:

Point-Breeze, 17th January 1818

Count de Survilliers request the pleasure of Mr and Mistress (sic) Hopkinson's family and miss Enery's company to morrow friday, when he hopes they will spend the whole day with him.¹⁰

Often mentioned in the description of his estate were the presence of tunnels, leading from one building on the property to another, and one tunnel which opened above Crosswicks Creek. Speculation has been that these were built for easy escape, but the likely purpose was as convenient passageways in inclement weather.

Joseph was visiting Saratoga Springs, not far from his northern estates, when he was brought the news of Napoleon's death on St. Helena on May 5, 1821. The authoritarian Napoleon and the republican Joseph had not agreed on much, but Joseph had nonetheless been very close to his brother, and his death affected him deeply. His state of depression was lightened to some degree by the arrival of his younger daughter Charlotte, aged 19, at Point Breeze in December of 1821. Her young and adventurous spirit brought a great lift to his state of mind.

POINT BREEZE & THE BONAPARTES ~ Jean Walton

In his efforts to entertain his daughter, the Count with his entourage made many trips, to the lands in northern New York State, including to Niagara Falls, – this time without Anna Savage – and to the famous springs and Belmont Hall on Schooley’s Mountain, not far from Hackettstown, New Jersey. Charlotte had studied art under David (see *Figure 5*), and continued her sketching and painting in this country. An exhibit of her works was shown at the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts, and a group of her watercolors, turned into lithographs, was compiled in a book entitled “Vues Pittoresques de l’Amerique,” 14 landscape drawings lithographed by Michael Stapleaux, published in France in 1824. At least five of these are New Jersey scenes, including the “Vue de Lebanon” (Hunterdon County) below– which she would have travelled through on her way to Schooley’s Mountain (See Fig. 7).¹¹

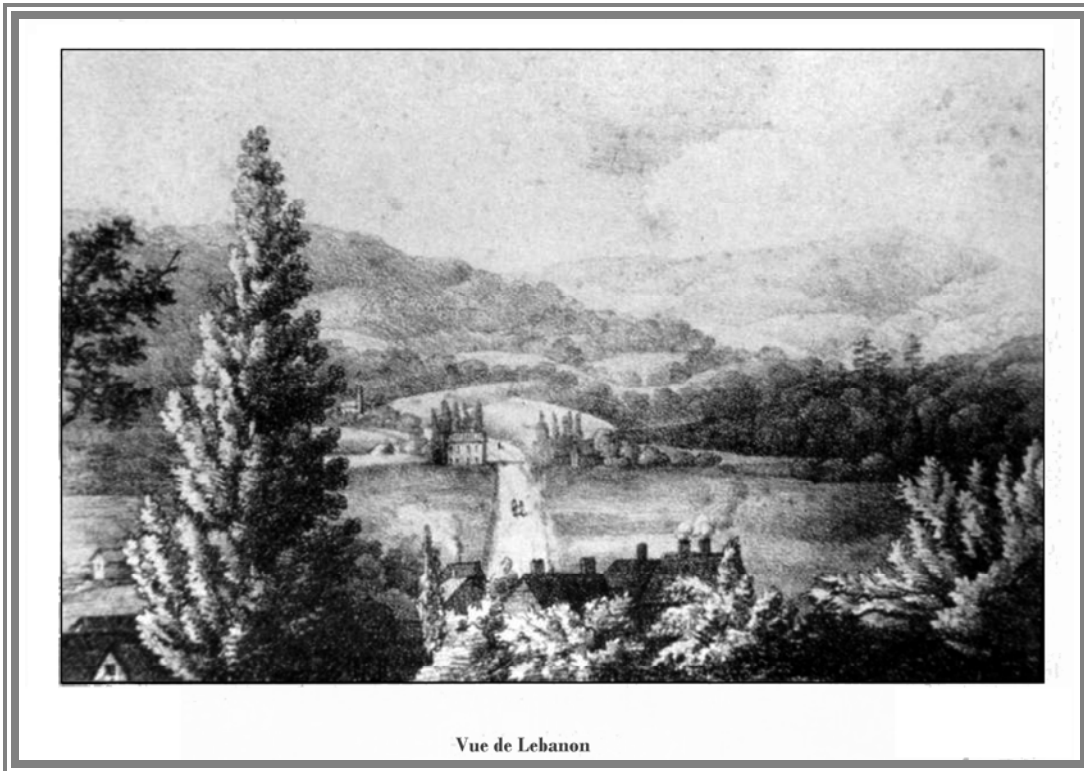


Fig. 7: “Vue de Lebanon” by Charlotte Bonaparte, Comtesse de Surveilleurs painted during her sojourn in the U.S., and then lithographed.

Charlotte returned to France in 1824 to care for her ailing mother, and would marry her cousin, Prince Napoleon-Louis Bonaparte in 1826. On her voyage back to France, she wrote to her cousin Jerome (then a student in Cambridge, Massachusetts), the following:

Aboard the *Crisis*, Augt 20, 1824

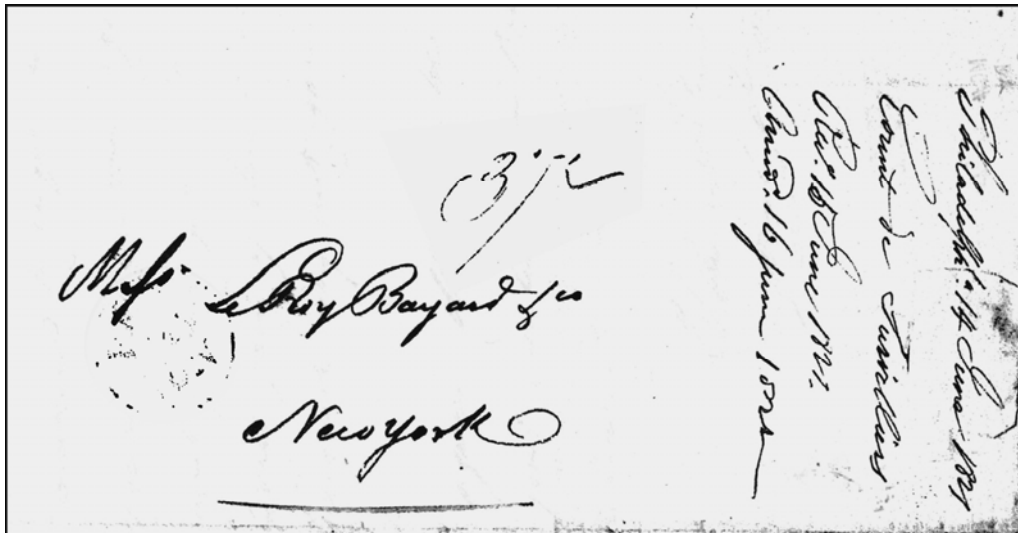
... Please send me your [address]. Send your letters to me to MM. Leroy, Bayard, in New-York, or at Anvers in an envelope to Msrs. Agié & Insinger. You are probably at Pointe-Breeze now; it was painful for me to leave, but the certitude of seeing my mother again makes me very happy. ...¹²

The presence of Zénaïde, newly married to Charles-Lucien Bonaparte, eased this loss to Joseph. She had arrived in September of 1823, so for a short time, Joseph had both his daughters living at Point Breeze. The young couple was then expecting their first child, and Zénaïde was 22 years old. The Count's first grandchild, Joseph-Lucien-Charles Bonaparte was born in February of 1824 in Philadelphia, where the family had moved for the colder months. (When at Point Breeze, the tunnels were a convenient connection to the larger mansion for Zénaïde and Charles, who lived in the "Lake House.")

The household was also expanded by the addition of Felix and Emilie Lacoste. Felix, a Frenchman, had established himself in business in Sainte Dominique (Haiti). Emilie first joined the Bonaparte household in her husband's necessary business absences to Haiti, as a companion for Charlotte. She had so charmed the household and its guests, that it was she, more than Zénaïde, who became the hostess at Point Breeze. Felix became a trusted associate, and Emilie soon replaced Anna Savage in Joseph's life, without her husband's knowledge.¹³

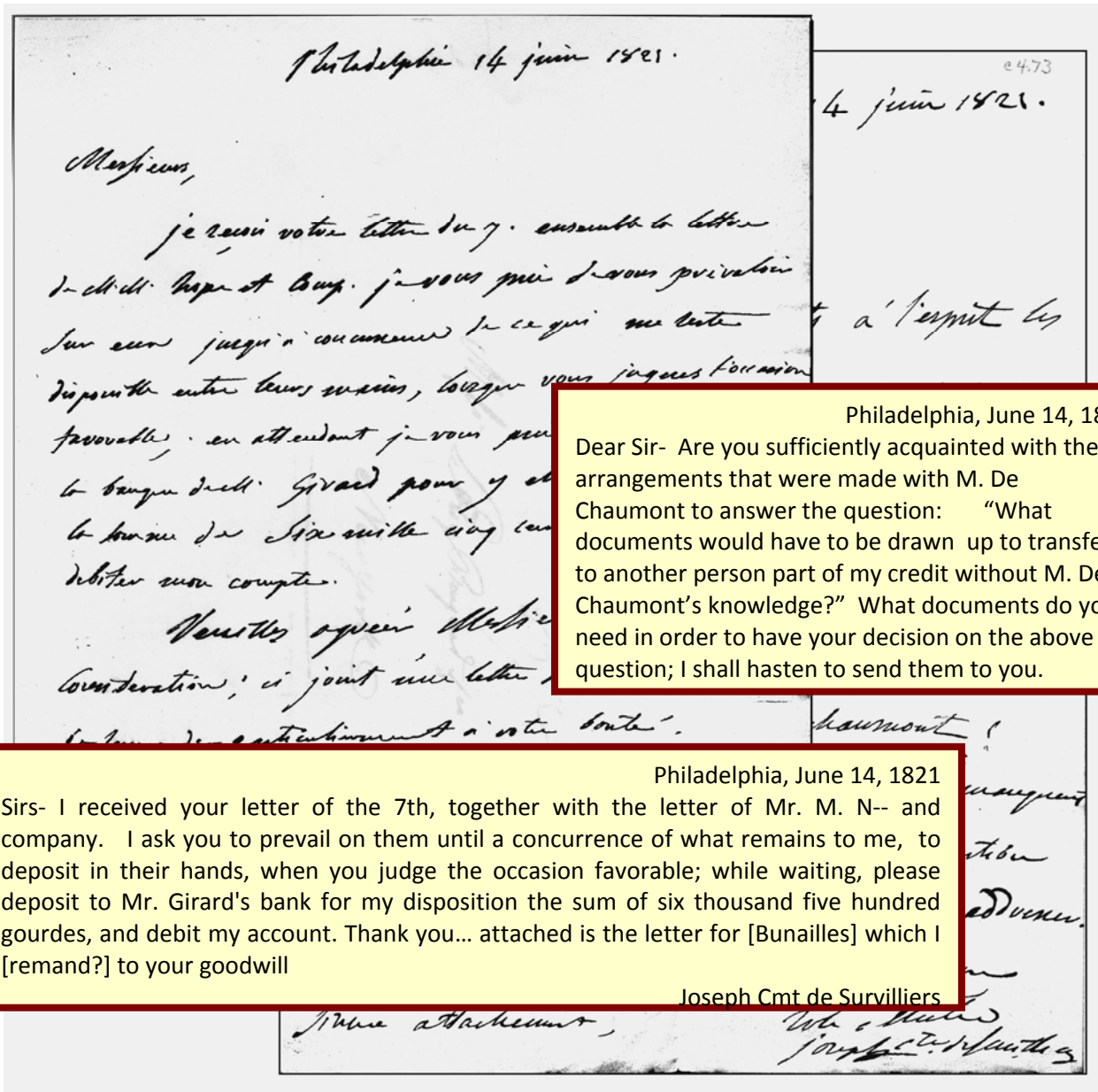
The Count of Survilliers was no typical refugee – he had sources of funds, and people to help manage them. The sale of jewels he had brought with him, and others retrieved from Switzerland by his secretary Louis Mailliard in 1817, provided funds to begin his redecoration of the Sayre estate. His lands in New York were another asset, and the lease and sales of some of these were again a source of income, as were his collections of paintings and sculpture. While used to turn his home into a magnificent art gallery, they were occasionally used for funds when needed. His good friends in Philadelphia and his financial advisers in New York contributed to the management of his funds.

The following letter does have a faint postmark, from Philadelphia, and is rated at 37½ cents, as it enclosed another letter and thus was apparently triple rated. It is addressed to LeRoy, Bayard – the foremost banking brokers in New York at the time, with whom Joseph had been in contact since his arrival in the United States.



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Fig. 8: Cover addressed from Philadelphia to New York in June 1821, with a faint Philadelphia cancel.



Philadelphia, June 14, 1821
 Dear Sir- Are you sufficiently acquainted with the arrangements that were made with M. De Chaumont to answer the question: "What documents would have to be drawn up to transfer to another person part of my credit without M. De Chaumont's knowledge?" What documents do you need in order to have your decision on the above question; I shall hasten to send them to you.

Philadelphia, June 14, 1821
 Sirs- I received your letter of the 7th, together with the letter of Mr. M. N-- and company. I ask you to prevail on them until a concurrence of what remains to me, to deposit in their hands, when you judge the occasion favorable; while waiting, please deposit to Mr. Girard's bank for my disposition the sum of six thousand five hundred gourdes, and debit my account. Thank you... attached is the letter for [Bunailles] which I [remand?] to your goodwill

Joseph Cmt de Surveilliers

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Fig. 9: Letters included in this sending, one enclosed for delivery at a later time.

The mention of "gourdes" – a currency specific to Haiti – indicates that the Count had funds available to him from there as well, which he managed through this well-known banking firm.

Another letter concerning M. du Chaumont and the northern properties, addressed to Monsieur du Ponceau, Joseph's financial confidante, is shown below. Joseph had hoped these lands, as they developed, would yield continuing income; the completion of the Erie Canal and the enthusiasm for westward movement, however, depreciated the value of these mountainous lands for further development.

C47.

Philadelphia 2 mars 1823.

Monsieur,

Je recois l'état des ventes faites par M. de Chaumont (du 1^{er} juin) au
 31 oct.

1. Les actes sont-ils rédigés de manière à ce que le capital reste intact
 entre les mains des acquéreurs, et ne soit payable qu'à vous? comment
 s'en assurer.

2. Le prix des ventes qui parait si élevé peut-il servir de règle lors du
 remboursement, si l'on est obligé de le payer en termes?

Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, mes bien sincères attachements

Vostre affectueux
 Joseph Cte de Surveilliers

Philadelphia, March 2, 1823

Dear Sir,

I have received the statement of the sales made by Mr. de Chaumont from June 1st to Oct. 31st.

1. Are the documents drawn up so that the capital remains intact in the hand of the purchasers, and is payable only to you? How can one be sure of that?
2. Could the price of the sales, which became so high, serve as a guide when repayment is made, if one is obliged to pay it in installments?

Sincerely yours

Joseph Cte de Surveilliers

M. du Ponceau

Monsieur du Ponceau

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Fig. 10: No cover or address side is present on this letter to Du Ponceau from Joseph in Philadelphia, but Du Ponceau appears to have resided in Philadelphia, so the letter may have been carried by messenger within the city.

POINT BREEZE & THE BONAPARTES ~ Jean Walton

The count's continuing relationship with the LeRoy Bayard banking house is indicated in the following letter to William Bayard, head of that institution, in 1827.

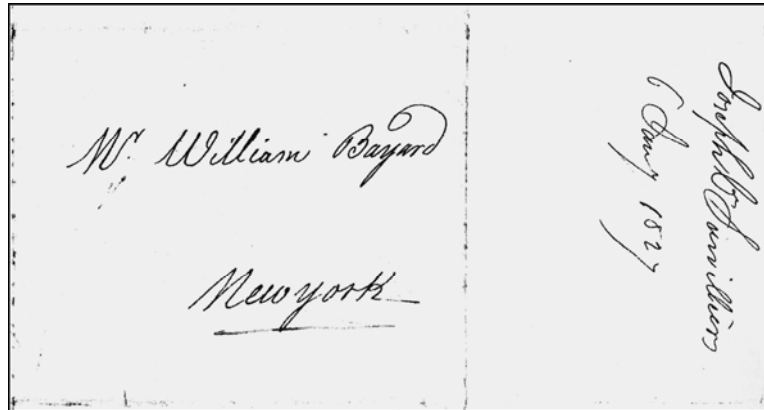
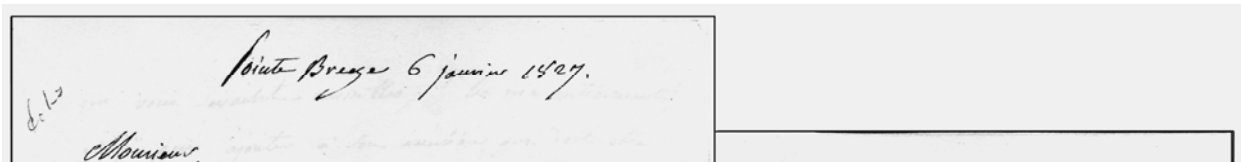


Fig. 11: Finally, a letter datelined Point Breeze, but again with no postal markings, to William Bayard in New York – docketed 6 Jan 1827.



Point Breeze, January 6, 1827

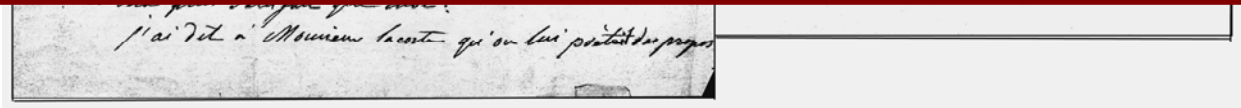
Dear Sir,

Only today did I receive your letter. Mr. Graham also writes to me about the same subject; you know well that I have but too much time in the state of New York, and that I do not have space to fill with new acquisitions, I am therefore forced to renounce the plan that I would have had to enter into your arrangements; Mr. Graham has repeated to me that you are disposed to carry the balance of my account among the debts which you want to honor first, you have always assured me of that yourself, I believe that you follow in that justice as well as the sentiments which you have for me. I accept the augur which you are giving me of cessation of the difficulties in which you are involved, nobody could be more satisfied with that than I.

I have told Mr. Lacoste that one has told him gossip which would be damaging to you. He denied it completely, and I may add to his assertion, which must be believed, mine and that of Mr. Graham. Mr. Lacoste has always spoken of you and your family with complete interest and attachment. Distrust therefore any false reports. It is only too easy to take change in adversity for friends or enemies. Mr. Lacoste has always spoken to me as one of your friends, and the gossip that one has told him is without doubt false because I myself am a judge of that.

Please be assured of my sincere feelings, etc.

M. William Bayard, New York Joseph Count de Surveilliers



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Fig. 12: LeRoy, Bayard & Co. had been involved in a scandal regarding Greek ships, their costs and commissions. There were rumors afloat that they were verging on insolvency.¹⁴

The Camden and Amboy Railroad, chartered in 1830, began the task of completing the first railroad in New Jersey, creating a link between New York and Philadelphia. Track was in the process of being laid, when Joseph discovered that the track would cross his property, running between the Creek and the mansion, cutting off access to the river. Work was about to intrude on his property, without his prior approval or any recompense, and it must have reminded him of the confiscation of his French properties in 1816. He objected strongly to this intrusion on his estate, even directing a petition to the Federal Circuit Court for the District of New Jersey, in order to stop the work already begun on the construction of the railroad.¹⁵

He won his case, and in addition, it appears he managed to prevail on the Camden & Amboy Railroad Company, and was accorded some modifications of its route. Instead of passing through his property, it would pass by the mansion, on the other side of the turnpike. Joseph wrote to his friend, Charles Ingersoll the following letter:

Point-Breeze, December 19, 1830

Sir,

I received your letter of the 15th, I had previously had your news from the newspapers.

Mr Wall has made an arrangement with the administrators of the Rail-Road. It will not pass between the Creek and the house, but on the other side of the road, as I wished. The judgment was not pronounced, my adversaries were afraid it would not go entirely in our favor.

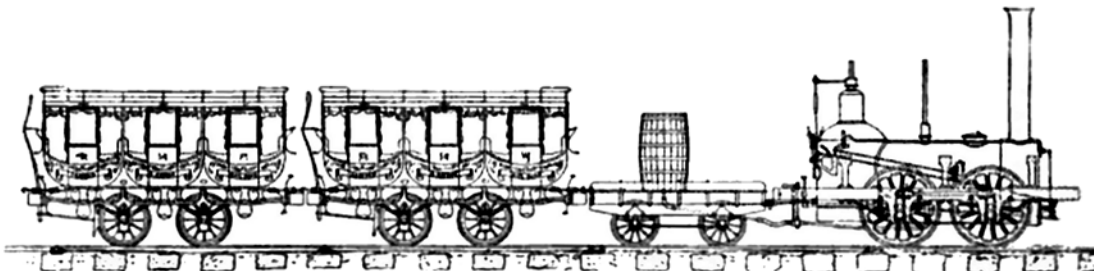
We have not had news from Europe for two months. I hope that you will visit Point Breeze when you are in Philadelphia,

Yours affectionately,
Joseph. Comte de Survillieurs.¹⁶

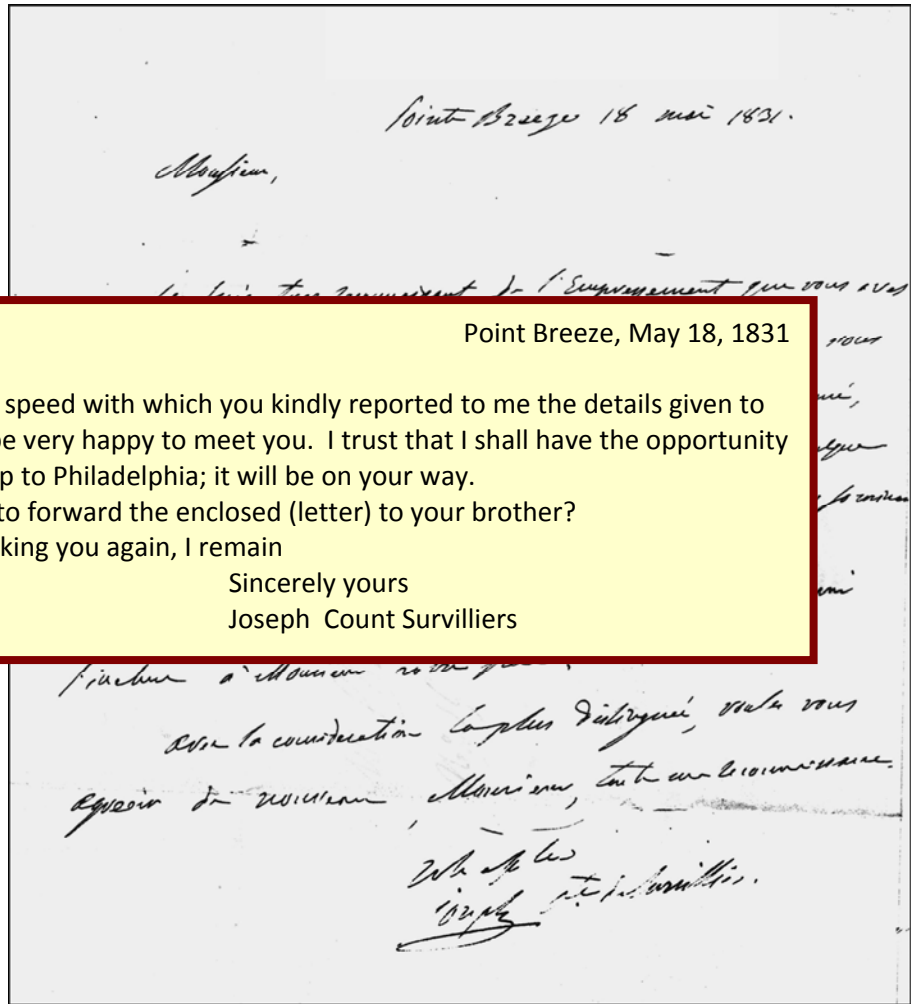
On January 2, 1831 he wrote again to Mr. Ingersoll –

The work of the Rail-Road is in full swing in front of my house, on the other side of the Turnpike. It seems that the change of direction will cost the company another five thousand dollars....¹⁷

Apparently the matter was settled amicably enough, for New Jersey's first locomotive, the *John Bull*, on its first trial run in November of 1831, carried members of the New Jersey legislature and Joseph Bonaparte and members of his family.¹⁸ The train was not in full operation until 1833.



THE "JOHN BULL" AND ITS FIRST TRAIN.



Point Breeze, May 18, 1831

Dear Sir,

I am very grateful for the speed with which you kindly reported to me the details given to you by your brother. I shall be very happy to meet you. I trust that I shall have the opportunity to do so when you make a trip to Philadelphia; it will be on your way.

Will you be kind enough to forward the enclosed (letter) to your brother?

Thanking you again, I remain

Sincerely yours
Joseph Count Survilliers

Fig. 13 Letter addressed to Charles Carter Lee in New York, dated May 18, 1831.

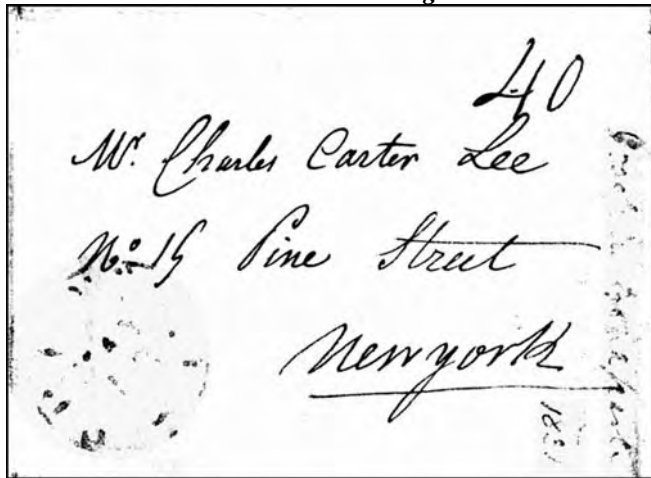
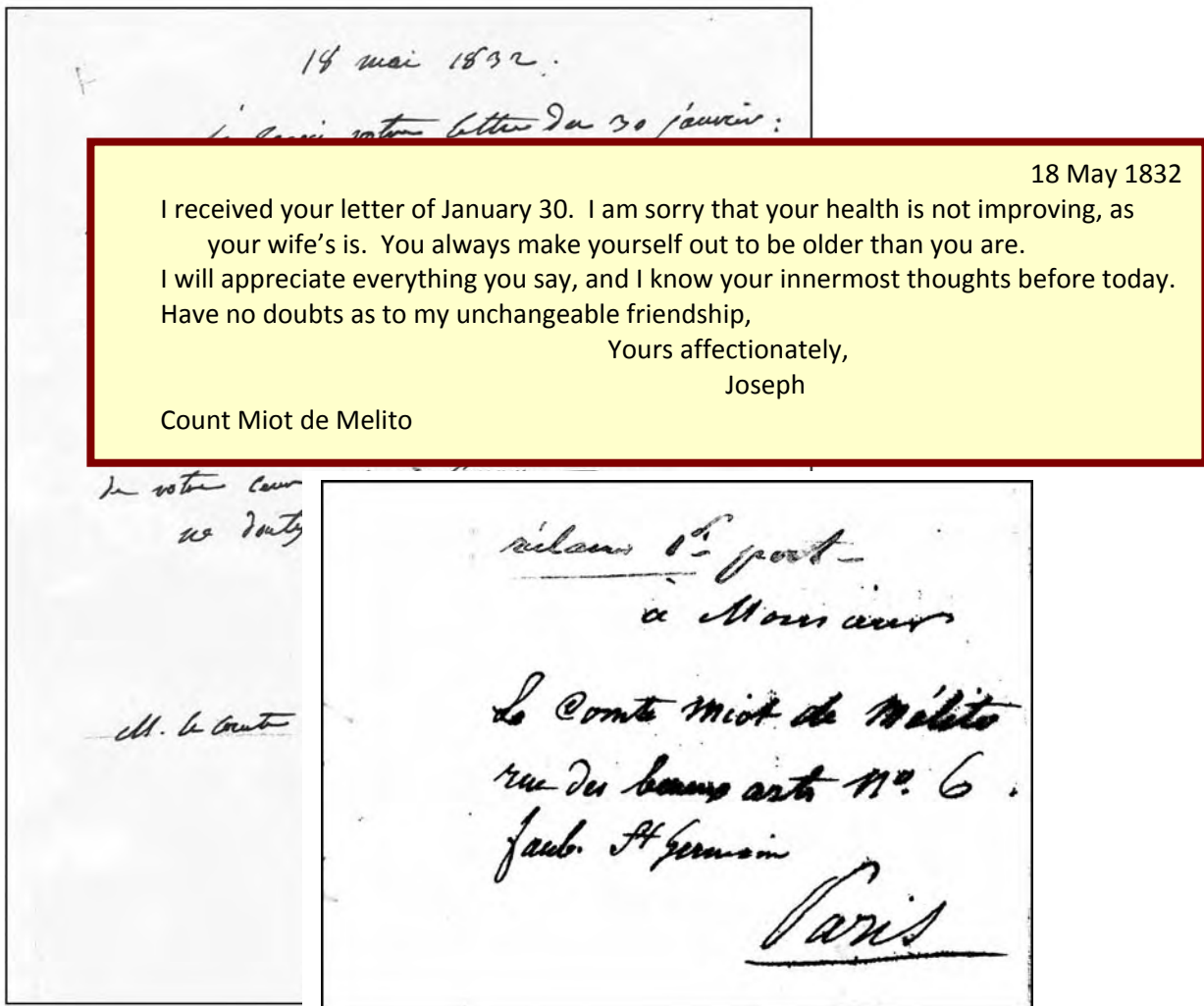


Fig. 14: To Charles Carter Lee, No. 19 Pine Street, New York, rated 40 cents.

Another letter from Point Breeze, dated May 18, 1831, but again no New Jersey cancel, with an indistinct Philadelphia postmark. At right, someone has noted Joseph Bonaparte, 1831. This letter enclosed another letter, but I am at a loss to explain the 40 rate (80-150 miles x 12½ cents) – anyone have any ideas?

Collections of the NJ Historical Society, Newark, NJ (MG 62)

In the 1830s, Joseph had a greater sense of being the head of the Bonaparte family. He had no intentions of returning to take the throne of France himself, but the Revolution of 1830, overthrowing the Bourbon King Charles X, replacing him with Louis-Phillipe of the House of Orleans as a constitutional monarch and a popular sovereignty, gave him some reason to believe that the Bonapartists might yet have an opportunity, and he felt it his responsibility to direct the succession if it were possible. It is an easy thing to relegate the Napoleonic Empire to that of dictatorships better rid of, but in fact, the era of Napoleon began with the democratic ideals of the French Revolution of 1789, much the same as our own Revolution. Napoleon was originally the choice of the people, although history would see him usurp these ideals in declaring himself Emperor. It is certainly a fact that the Napoleonic Code is still the basis of law in many lands, and champions the rights of Man. It explains the republican nature of Joseph, contrasted with the megalomania of his brother. Joseph began thinking more of those who might be in succession within his family, and of funds that would be necessary to restore them to power. His thoughts and heart turned again to Europe.¹⁹



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Fig. 15: This letter is written to his old friend the Count Miot de Melito, in 1832, shortly before Joseph's own return to Europe, in hopes of installing Napoleon's son on the throne of France.

POINT BREEZE & THE BONAPARTES ~ Jean Walton

In June 1832, Joseph returned to Europe, hoping to seize the opportunity that existed to place Napoleon's son on the throne of France. Unfortunately Napoleon II, the Duke of Reichstadt, was not strong, and died even before the Count arrived in Europe, in July of that year. The Count remained in Europe, returning to the United States in 1835. A note to a friend upon his return:

Monsieur
Monsieur N. Giraud
Bordentown

Monsieur,
Mon Médecin arrivant par le Steamboat à

To Monsieur N. Giraud -
Bordentown
My physician, arriving at 2:30 by steamboat, and leaving me at 3PM, prevented me from receiving you. I sent my carriage to your house immediately after he left, but you were no longer at home. I shall be at your disposal, no matter what hour, any time today, or tomorrow.
Sincerely yours,
Joseph
Point Breeze, June 23, 1836 at 4PM
To Mr. Giraud

Point Breeze 23 juin 1836 à 4 heures.
à Monsieur Giraud.

Collections of the
New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, NJ (MG 62)

Fig. 16: A note to a friend in Bordentown, with no postal markings – likely carried by a messenger.

Joseph again returned to Europe in August of 1836. His age and his health may have affected this decision, and winters in Bordentown were cold. He thought to move into Philadelphia, but the pull of his relations in Europe drew him back to England, so in August he again returned to Europe. This time it appeared he did not expect to return. He sold the carriages and horses, gave away his large cellars of wines, and gave his friends many of his paintings and sculptures, as thanks for their help and kindness during his years in America.

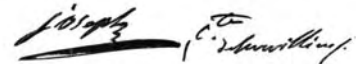
In 1838 he returned briefly to the U.S. Shortly after his return to England, his life was full of disappointments. His nephew Louis-Napoleon, against the wishes of the count, had made two ill-conceived attempts to overthrow the current monarch, both unsuccessful. Anna Savage threatened to publish her memoirs if Joseph did not supply her with more money. In 1840, still living in England, he suffered a stroke, and was paralyzed on one side of his body. He then was finally granted permission to travel to Italy where for the first time in twenty-five years, he was reunited with his wife. It was not altogether a happy reunion, as Julie had been made aware of Joseph's infidelities with Anna Savage and Emillie Lacoste. His health continued to decline, and he died three years later.

Bonaparte Park was sold in 1847 to an Englishman with a great dislike for anything French, so he made a point of demolishing the mansion, and building a new one, and removing anything that smacked of being French. The only building that remains standing today is the Lake House. In 1941, 200 acres of the estate, where the mansion stood, was sold to the Divine Word, a religious organization which owns it today. Recently an archeological dig was conducted on what had been the Park at Point Breeze, led by Richard Veit of Monmouth University.²⁰ He had been lecturing about an excavation of a nearby tavern, when the historian at Divine Word advised him of this more interesting site – which he had not known about. 200 years separated this castle on the Delaware, with its charming life and frequent visitors, from its fate as a New Jersey archeological site.

There is no shortage of letters to draw on in the life of this rather extraordinary New Jersey resident; his life was followed closely almost from beginning to end, and nothing was discarded. There are few of these however extant in New Jersey collections. It is very possible that some exist in New York State archives, and even more likely in Pennsylvania archives. The library at Girard College has extensive correspondence of Stephen Girard, Joseph's good friend and confidante, and which likely include much correspondence from Joseph Bonaparte – perhaps other members close to these sources can expand on the limited resources I have been able to uncover. For me, the lack of New Jersey markings was only eased by being able to handle letters that had once been in the hands of Joseph Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon and one time King of Spain, and New Jersey's Count of Survillieurs.



STAINED BY ROSALINE PIERRE AFTER THE PAINTING BY J. GUICHARD. IN POSSESSION OF MRS. F. H. WALLACE.



JOSEPH BONAPARTE, COMTE DE SURVILLIERS.

VOL. XLVI.—12.

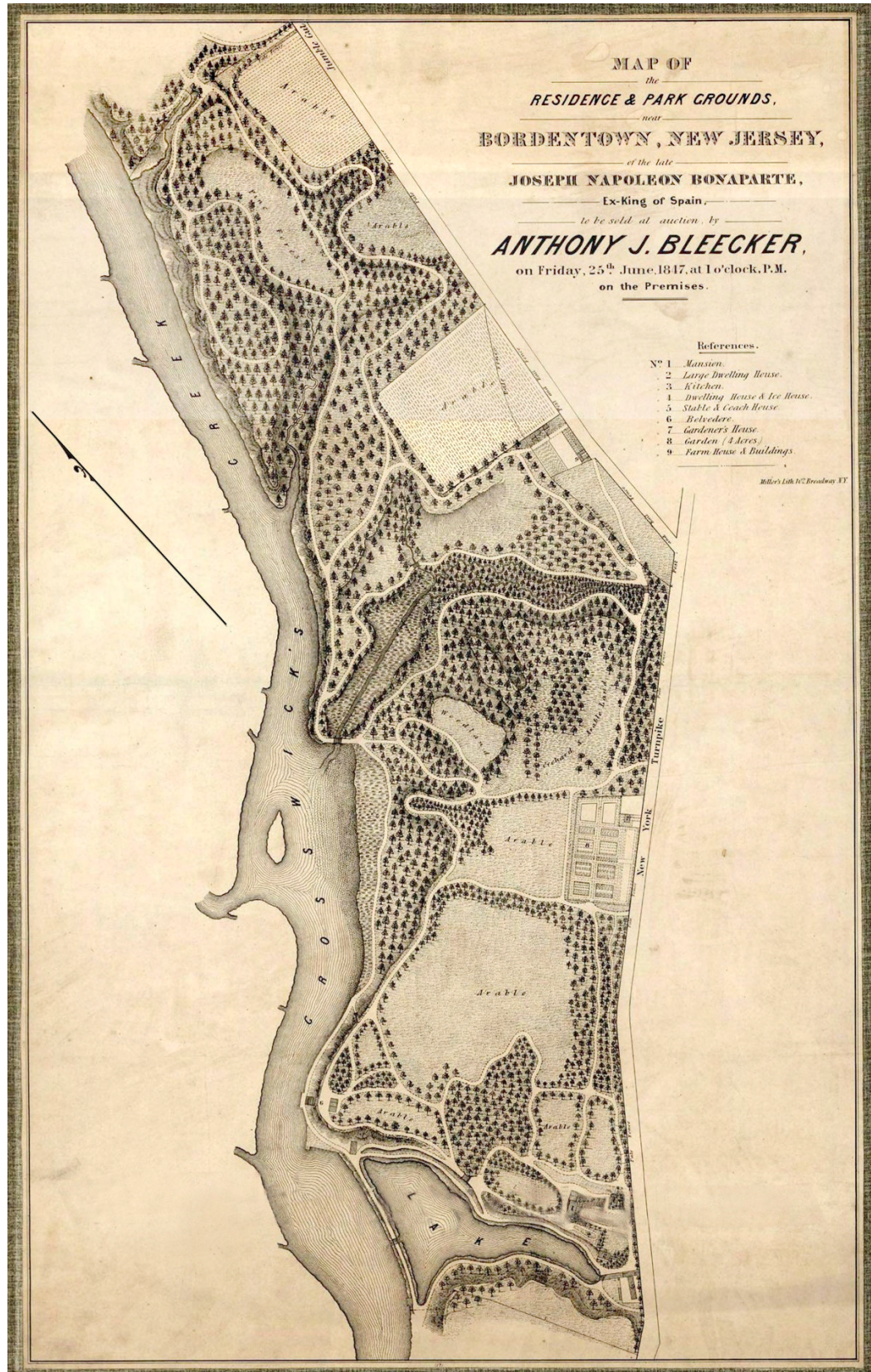
Fig. 17. Joseph Bonaparte, including his signature as Cte de Survillieurs, from Century Magazine in 1893.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Stroud, Patricia Tyson, *The Man Who Had Been King*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2005. Portrait of Joseph by Charles Willson Peale, 1824, (Historical Society of Pennsylvania), and Julie Bonaparte. Queen of Spain, and her Daughters, by François Gérard, 1808-9, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.
- ² *Ibid.*
- ³ These I was able to examine and read, but not scan – I had to rely for copies on the document photocopier at the Historical Society. Hence I cannot give you the feeling I had, of handling letters once in the hands of Joseph Bonaparte – they lose this feel in the photocopying. Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, NJ (MG 62).
- ⁴ R. Walsh, L. Belmontet, *Biographical Sketch of Joseph Napoleon Bonaparte, Count de Survilliers*, published by J. Ridgway & Sons, London, 1834. <http://www.archive.org/stream/biographicalske00belmgoog#page/n119/mode/2up>
- ⁵ Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society, online at http://www.jerseyhistory.org/collection_details.php?recid=9, visited 10/2/2009
- ⁶ Stroud, *op cit.*
- ⁷ Stroud, *Ibid.*
- ⁸ Republished from *Bonaparte's Park and the Murats*, Woodward, E.M., Trenton, 1879, at www.googlebooks.com.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ Bertin, Georges, *Joseph Bonaparte en Amerique*, 1815-1832, Paris, Librairie de la Nouvelle Revue, 1893. Available at www.googlebooks.com.
- ¹¹ Lomerson, Ralph, in the Lebanon Twp. News, Spring 2007. In an article entitled Antiquer's Attic, Margaret White reprints an item from the Proceedings of the NJ Historical Society, #81, 1963, by Mary Chowdrey, and showing a copy of this lithograph, challenging members to identify the location. My own choice would be looking south in the town of Lebanon, perhaps up Cherry Street, towards Cushetunk Mountain and Round Valley. <http://www.lebanontownship.net/news/newsletters/Spring07Newsletter.pdf>, January 2011.
- ¹² ___, *Cour impériale de Paris: Appel du jugement de la première Chambre du Tribunal de première instance de la Seine, du 15 fevrier 1861* at <http://books.google.com/books>.
- ¹³ Joseph's interest in Anna Savage had waned, and Emilie soon replaced her in this respect, apparently without the knowledge of her often absent husband. He would father two children by her as well. See Stroud, *op cit.*
- ¹⁴ Scoville, Joseph Alfred, *The Old Merchants of New York City*, Published by Carleton, NYC, 1863.
- ¹⁵ *Bonaparte v. Camden & A. R. Co.*, Case No. 1,617, Circuit Court, D. New Jersey, 3 F. Cas. 821; 1830 U.S. App. LEXIS 273; Baldw. 205, October, 1830, Term
- ¹⁶ Bertin, Georges, *Joseph Bonaparte en Amérique, op cit.*
- ¹⁷ Bertin, Georges, *ibid.*
- ¹⁸ History of the Camden & Amboy RR at <http://jcrhs.org/camden&amboy.html>.
- ¹⁹ The following letter, written by Joseph, Count of Survilliers to the Members of the Chamber of Deputies at Paris in 1830, was found in the archives of du Ponceau, and illustrates Joseph's belief in a Popular Sovereignty, and the people as the arbiters of power, in his own words: (This letter was never read in the Chamber of Deputies.)
- Gentlemen, there are no governments upon the earth legitimate, except those acknowledged by nations; nations alone create or destroy them, as they think necessary; nations alone have the right, individuals and particular families only have duties to fulfill.... Napoleon's family was named by three million five hundred thousand votes: if the nation thinks it will be advantageous to it to make another choice, it and it only has the power and the right to do so.
- The liberty of the press is the triumph of truth—by it the conscience of every one is enlightened—let it speak, and let the will of the great nation be accomplished; I subscribe to it with all my heart and soul.
- [Reprinted in *A Biographical Sketch of Joseph Bonaparte*, by “A Young Patriot,” [Robert Walsh, Louis Belmontet] published by J. Ridgway & Sons, Piccadilly, in 1834, with a foreword by Joseph Bonaparte himself.
- ²⁰ <http://www.monmouth.edu/newswire/default.asp?iNewsID=5404>, April 2010.



Fig. 18: A map of the Bonaparte estate (known locally as Bonaparte Park) prepared for the estate sale in 1847.

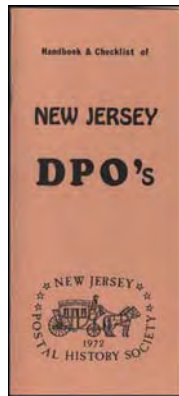
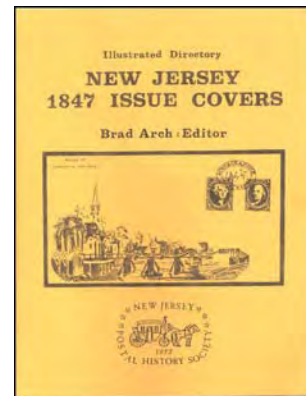
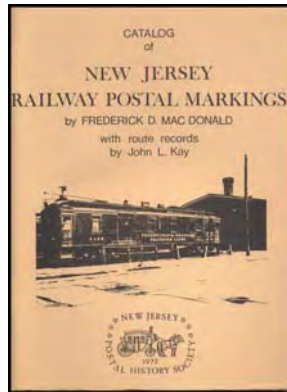
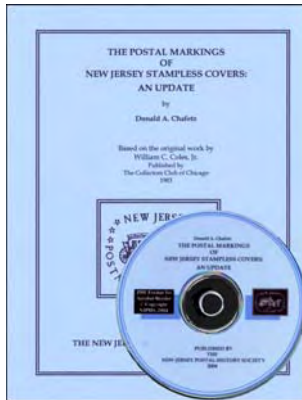


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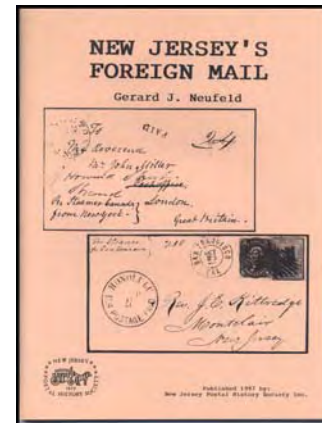
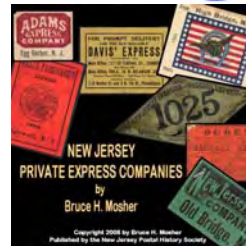
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