

When the King of France Lived Up the River

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On Monday, January 21, 1793, Louis-Auguste Capet, 16th King of France of that name, met Madame la Guillotine on the Place de la Révolution in Paris. His wife, Maria Antonia, Archduchess of Habsburg (his second cousin once removed), followed him ten months later. They were survived by two of their four children: Marie-Thérèse-Charlotte, who became Duchess of Angoulême; and Louis-Charles, the Dauphin (Crown Prince). Following the Revolution, the family was imprisoned in the tower of an ancient building known as the Temple, originally the Paris headquarters of the Knights Templar. After the execution of the Queen on October 16, 1793, Louis-Charles was placed in solitary confinement in the tower. He was kept in unspeakable conditions and in such secrecy that no one could indisputably confirm that the boy in the tower was the Dauphin. His death from tuberculosis was announced in 1795, but rumors persisted that he had been spirited away by Royalist sympathizers. Controversy swirled around the fate of the Dauphin.

Over the years, more than 100 young men came forward to claim the French throne, appearing in London, Russia, America, and even the Seychelles. The Dauphin was sighted in Brittany, Normandy, Alsace, and the Auvergne. Mark Twain, once our guest at the Literary Club, mocked him as “Little Boy Dolphin.” Finally in 2000, journalist Philippe Delorme arranged for DNA tests of a heart preserved from the body presented as the Dauphin’s in 1795. These tests showed that the heart belonged to Louis-Charles, and in 2004, the Dauphin’s remains were buried next to the bodies of his parents in the Basilica of St. Denis.

The cadet branch of the House of Bourbon was represented by Louis Philippe Josef D’Orléans, Louis XVI’s first cousin. He broke with the royal family and actively supported the Revolution, changing his name to Philippe Égalité, but he, too, fell victim to the guillotine during the Reign of Terror in 1793. He was survived by four of his five children, of whom the eldest was Louis-Philippe, the next Duke of Orléans. Louis-Philippe was implicated in a plot to ally with the Austrians to invade France and overthrow the Revolution. He fled France at the age of 19 in 1793, leaving his father to face the music. Louis-Philippe was on the run for the next 20 years.

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Neville is a tiny village of 100 souls on a southern bend of the Ohio River approximately 30 miles southeast of Cincinnati. It was almost washed away in the flood of March, 1997, when it lost more than half its population. When the village was laid out in 1808, it was named for General Presley Neville, whose father, General John Neville, had the site surveyed by Robert O'Bannon in November, 1787. The village has boasted a United States post office since 1816, although the road that we know as U.S. Route 52 was not there then; transportation was by means of the river.

Presley Neville was from a military family in Winchester, Virginia and served as aide-de-camp to Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, for two years during the American Revolution. In 1782, Neville married Nancy Morgan, the daughter of General Daniel Morgan. They initially made their home near Pittsburgh, but moved to Ohio soon after the village on the river was established.

During the middle of the American Revolution, Lafayette sailed home to lobby for increased French support of the colonies and returned to America in 1780 to command the troops in Virginia that blockaded General Cornwallis at Yorktown and led to the British surrender. Lafayette returned to France again in 1787. He was appointed to the Assembly of Notables and

later elected to the Estates General, where he helped write the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen with the assistance of Thomas Jefferson. He joined the revolutionaries and helped storm the Bastille, but in August, 1792, the increasingly radical Committee of Public Safety ordered his arrest. He fled France through the Austrian Netherlands, was captured by Austrian troops, and spent more than five years in prison.

Lafayette returned to France after Napoleon Bonaparte secured his release from Austria in 1797. After the Bourbon Restoration in 1814, he became a member of the Chamber of Deputies, which position he held for most of the remainder of his life. In 1824, he returned to America for a grand tour of all 24 united states at the time. He was offered leadership of the French government during the July Revolution of 1830, but declined in favor Louis-Philippe. Lafayette died on May 20, 1834 and was buried in Paris under soil carried there from Bunker Hill.

So how do we get from the French Revolution to a rude village on the Ohio River? The answer probably lies in the relationship between the Nevilles and the Marquis.

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Following travels in Scandinavia and Finland, Louis-Philippe came to the United States, first to Philadelphia, where his brothers, Antoine and Louis-Charles, were living. He moved on to New York City and later, Boston, earning his living by teaching French.

Louis-Philippe returned to France in 1815 after the abdication of Napoleon Bonaparte and the ascension of his cousin, Louis XVIII, to the restored throne. However, Louis-Philippe fell out with the new regime and once again returned to America, this time traveling west. Late in 1815, Louis-Philippe arrived in Neville, where he was welcomed by Presley. Louis-Philippe settled into the village and became its first teacher, giving lessons in French and music. It is said that he began the tradition of barn dancing in Neville while he lived there.

Although not known for certain, it is probable that Louis-Philippe was introduced to the Nevilles by Lafayette. Louis-Philippe remained in Neville for some years, returning to France when the new regime began to disintegrate under Louis XVIII's brother and successor, Charles X, who took the throne in 1824. In 1830, Charles X was overthrown and abdicated in favor of his 10-year old grandson, Henri, Duke of Bordeaux. However, the French were not about to turn the country over to a 10-year old boy, so Louis-Philippe was invited to assume the throne, which

he did on August 9, 1830. Thus, the cadet branch of the Bourbon family finally supplanted the original line.

During his reign, Louis-Philippe survived seven assassination attempts, including a bizarre attack with a volley gun employing 25 barrels fastened to a wooden frame known as the *machine infernale*. Louis-Philippe was popular with the French people because of his travels in America, which they believed enabled him to understand and relate to the common man.

However, economic conditions in France deteriorated during his reign, and he was perceived to become increasingly conservative and monarchical. He even fell out with Lafayette.

Deteriorating conditions led to another revolution in 1848 and Louis-Philippe's abdication. He and his wife fled Paris under the names of Mr. & Mrs. Smith to exile in England, where they took up the titles of Count and Countess of Neuilly and lived at an estate made available to them by Queen Victoria. Louis-Philippe died there on August 26, 1850. Appropriately, the estate was named for the French Department of Claremont, meaning clear hills and mountains, from which Clermont County, Ohio takes its name.

Louis-Philippe D'Orléans was eulogized by Victor Hugo in *Les Misérables* in 1862:

What is there against him? That throne. Take away Louis-Philippe the king, there remains the man. And the man is good. He is good at times even to the point of being admirable. Often, in the midst of his gravest souvenirs, after a day of conflict with the whole diplomacy of the continent, he returned at night to his apartments, and there, exhausted with fatigue, overwhelmed with sleep, what did he do? *He took a death sentence and passed the night in revising the criminal suit*, considering it something to hold his own against Europe, but that it was still a greater matter to rescue a man from the executioner.

Such was the man who served as the first music master in Neville, Ohio.

SOURCES

Deborah Cadbury, *The Lost King of France* (London: Fourth Estate, 2002).

Articles by Richard Crawford in the *Clermont County Courier-Press*, and Colonel Charles B. Duncan in the *Clermont County Community Journal*, January 27, 1976.