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CORRESPONDENCE OF FRENCH CONSULS IN CHARLESTON,
SOUTH CAROLINA, 1793-1797

RICHARD K. MURDOCH *

(continued)

All is
not lost

Returning to my subject about the southern states that I am able only to sketch roughly and [about] which Citizen Genêt will include a more extensive outline. You can see enemies of every sort against the Republic [but] now I am going to show you her friends. They are all the honest people at heart very different from the gentlemen who we have known only too recently; all the good farmers and not the pompous planters; nearly all the inhabitants of the countryside, that is to say 50 to 1; nearly all of the officers and men who poured out their blood to become free; all the dissatisfied who are a great number, those that the government has neglected, scorned or thwarted, and bear in mind that I am speaking to you of 15/20th of the nation.

Political
tactics

I can wager that Congress will be forced to declare itself in favor of France and abandon the fantastic project of a treaty with England. We have a majority in the House of Representatives and a minority in the Senate. But if the Republic speaks out with energy, if her head bears a few laurels, the Senate will be obliged in spite of itself to accept the universal opinion. Then they will ask you for a protecting fleet; in the north, ships of 74 and some frigates of 36 and 40; in the south, some sloops of war of 18 to 27, and some armed sloops. Arrange things so that your squadron can transport numerous landing troops. Thus don't concern yourself with transport vessels, privateers, etc. Such things concern the United States. Providence and Jamaica have no more privateers [as] there are no more colonists on St. Domingue to plunder. Providence, New Orleans, St. Augustine are a matter of surprise.

Among the deputies of South Carolina, there are Izard in the Senate and William Smith in the lower house, confirmed monarchists.²⁸ But the

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²⁸ Ralph Izard (1742-1804) was senator from South Carolina, 1789-1795, and William Laughton Smith (1768-1812) was representative from the same state, 1789-1799, and was also Izard's son-in-law and a leading federalist.

remainder are for us and Major Butler undertakes to cramp King Izard, Commodore Gillon [the same] for Smith brought up under the eyes of the magnificent Council of Geneva.²⁹ Gillon is a man of great talent [and] he has some deep vengeance to carry out and he will acquit himself well in spite of the notes you will find in the correspondence of my predecessors. At another time and under other conditions, Gillon will plead the cause of officers not as yet paid and of peasants vexed by the excise on distilled brandy, etc. By this means he will become more popular with the people of the countryside [and] sure of his forces he will request concessions relative to the treaty . . . relative to that one broached by Thomas Pinckney in London with all the official documents on this subject. He will thus further our cause more or less quickly, according as he will find the strength more or less united. Citizen Genêt moreover will be on the spot to elucidate personally, according to the instructions that I have given him.

You may be certain that England will start to scatter guineas. In spite of the epidemic in Philadelphia which is in truth easing, I would only attribute to England the fixing of the Congress in that city. They assure me of this. We have *in place of gold only iron, only soldiers and good and sufficient reasons.*

**Military
projects**

Upon the arrival of Citizen Genêt he requested me to make inquiries on the state of the Floridas and of New Orleans. Constantly occupied with these objects, I was able to make use of the maritime and pecuniary forces that were at hand in procuring for him dependable and trustworthy information both from experienced and enterprising officers, about East Florida and New Orleans. In a month there will be made by means of dissatisfied Georgians and Floridians, an undertaking against St. Augustine. Another is preparing to take Louisiana from the rear and we are awaiting these with impatience.

St. Augustine Major Bert of whom I have had the honor to speak to you before and to whom you have assured employment upon his arrival in France, is much more useful to us here. Connected with the brave friends of liberty, excellent military man, he has been my spokesman among them. They will fight on condition that they have a free and independent republic in the form of the most pure democracy, a sister and friend of France, so that the citizens of the two countries will have respective and reciprocal rights.

[omission]

²⁹ Pierce Butler (1744-1822) was a senator from South Carolina, 1789-1796, and Commodore Alexander Gillon (1741-1794) was a state representative, 1793-1794.

There in [East Florida] upon peace [there will be] a convention of the inhabitants to give themselves a constitution. And if the United States falls out with us, we will have a port to arm privateers, a market to sell their prizes, a place from which we can threaten the Bahamas. This state will be soon be peopled with all the dissatisfied and all the poor of the United States. There will be [no more need] to buy wood for construction from the United States. If one reflects that the state of Georgia which was not settled until 1748 has more than 80,000 inhabitants in spite of the injustices of the English Crown, in spite of the disasters of the war, in spite of the obstacles of a bad constitution, one can believe that Florida freed of the jealous tyranny of Spain and endowed with simple and pure laws, will have an extremely rapid growth.

Within a month Colonel Hammond will have 3 to 400 cavalry ready on the banks of the St. Marys River which separates Georgia from East Florida. On the other side Major Bert commissioned on Spanish soil to enroll defenders against the French Republic and even to commission them, will meet this corps of Georgians [as if] by chance. It will immediately join the corps supposedly as French. Bert will hand over the command to Hammond. They will push on toward St. Augustine while growing larger on the way with Floridians and they have every reason to hope to surprise that place where Hammond has information that the governor³⁰ who although surprised gave him an entry card, only awaits the French or the Devil to shake off the weightiest yoke.

New Orleans Having found a man who fits the plan to recover Louisiana and to carry it out from the rear, that is to say, an adventurer eager for glory and sufficiently popular in the west to be followed by a sufficient number of poor men, lured by the hope of the possession of fertile lands, of free navigation of the Mississippi, and of the looting of New Mexico, I sent him with an outline of the plan to Citizen Genêt.³¹ At that time our squadron had recovered from its earlier disorganization, putting our hopes afloat again. Genêt has authorized the raising of a *Revolutionary Legion of America*, but desiring to be certain of the movement of this squadron, he preferred with [good] reason that it carry this corps by sea to New Orleans. As a result he authorized the American citizen, Wm. Tate,³² to

³⁰ The governor of East Florida in 1793 was Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada.

³¹ The reference here is to General George Rogers Clark.

³² William Tate was a native of South Carolina and had served in the American Revolution.

make his recruiting *outside the United States* and to have the recruits travel toward Port Royal or Beaufort, South Carolina. I conferred with the governor and we agreed that the corps would march through in inconspicuous groups as far as Beaufort and that there as in all places in the United States where one finds scarcely one person on a square league, it would be supposed [that they were] arriving there either out of curiosity or to exchange supplies of the country for our money. [Since] the squadron has abandoned us, it is therefore necessary to follow the former plans. Recruitment is taking place with an ardor so great that instead of 1500 men, we have almost 4000. The manner of such an affair [we] are able to keep secret! The legislature is meddling in it (Note: see newspaper of 9 December, first column of page 2) and yesterday in virtue of a *Search Warrant*, the sheriff of Columbia, the place where it holds its sessions, went to the homes of Colonel Drayton and of Major Hamilton⁸³ to send them to prison and to seize their papers. This injustice is against the American constitution. The sheriff, a good republican, found nothing that he could make a charge to. Our two friends have put up bail to present themselves next May. Drayton came to tell me about it this evening. Neither he nor I are disconcerted. It is necessary that the project go ahead. But I am going to redouble my prudence and to postpone the departure of *munitions* until the legislature shall be terminated. I am going to put my secret papers safe from a search warrant which I believe possible only in the case that my inviolability ceases along with the fear of the vengeance of the Republic. Don't worry, neither Genêt nor I are compromised, having ordered the officers to recruit outside of the United States.

Salutations in the name of the Republic, one and indivisible.

Mangourit R. S. V. P.

I forgot, Citizen Minister, to inform you that I have asked the legislature (Note: see newspaper of 9 December, page 2, 2nd column) of South Carolina for the payment so long overdue of the sum [due] by this state to France. This sum comes to about 60,000 dollars. (Note: He demanded of the legislature of South Carolina payment of the sum due by that state to France) The Colonial Assembly sent Dr. Polony⁸⁴ two years ago to ask help for St. Domingue [and] the legislature granted him 3000 pound sterling.

⁸³ Stephen Drayton was private secretary to Governor Moultrie and Major James Hamilton was a South Carolinian and a veteran of the American Revolution.

⁸⁴ The activities of Polony, a deputy of the general assembly of St. Domingue, were noted in a dispatch from Jean de Ternant, French minister to the United States.

The government of South Carolina asks this year for help for the refugees from St. Domingue (Note: see newspaper of 7 December, 2nd page, 4th column). If the legislature will go along with this, I do not intend to make a deduction until after I have received your orders. The intention of the Republic, I think, is not that they distribute her money without her consul being consulted. I was not at all consulted concerning the distributions made by the Committee of Charity at Charleston. Thus they gave them out according to imagined ranks or according to the story of vanished or suspended wealth, or according to the tactlessness of the petitioners. If they had consulted me, I would have said that misfortune and indulgence are equal in the eyes of humanity [as] exercised by just hands.

Mangoruit

Consulate for
the Carolinas
and Georgia

3 June 1797
Charleston, the 15th Prairial
Year 5

[Received 7th February Year 6]

The Consul of the French Republic at Charleston to the
Citizen Minister of Foreign Relations

N. 3620

Citizen Minister

Registered

I am sending you a copy of the correspondence that has taken place between the Spanish consul³⁵ and myself relative to an English schooner loaded with merchandise and sent under a flag of truce from the governor of East Florida.

I have been informed that at St. Augustine [and] at Pensacola in the Floridas and in other Spanish ports where the English house of Panton, Leslie, Forbes and Company was established with privileges from the King of Spain, that this house has known how to win over the Spanish governors to such a degree that not only has it remained in its establishments and continued to carry on trade there, but also that it obtained for its vessels under the English flag, permission to carry

See Ternant to Montmorin, Philadelphia, December 10, 1791, in Frederick J. Turner (ed.), *Correspondence of the French Ministers to the United States, 1791-1797*, American Historical Association, *Annual Report*, 1903, 2 vols. (Washington, 1904), II, 79-84.

³⁵ James (Diego) Murphy was the acting Spanish consul for North and South Carolina and Georgia.

the flag of truce in pursuance of a Spanish passport similar to the one that [is] attached here in copy as No. 5, in which the surety of these vessels *is not only enjoined to the cruisers of the King of Spain, but [also] to all the warships of friendly and allied nations.* The Spanish governors claim to excuse this ridiculous clause of their passports by the Royal Ordinance declaring in favor of the house that carries it, that in case of war, it will be accorded a safe conduct from seizure for all of its properties, and they allege that this order includes a delay that should be extended to it to get out of Spanish territory, and does not determine the length of the delay; and that it permits this house to extend its residence up to peace.

I have complained to the Spanish consul in this city about a rule as reprehensible, as contrary to the rights of man, and above all to the spirit of the alliance and intimate union that should animate Spain and France against their common enemy.

When one of these ships arrived in Charleston, I knew that [it was my] duty to demand of the Spanish consul that he withhold its passport. I represented to him that at that time when the Floridas were menaced, when our ministers in Philadelphia⁸⁶ had written us to act in common and to unite our efforts to frustrate the hostile projects of the English who hoped to find in the United States a portion of the help necessary for their invasions, nothing would be more useful than to upset the operations of the house of Panton, Leslie, Forbes and Company. This house has an establishment in Jamaica, one in Providence, one in Port au Prince, and in the last two places it carries on the affairs of the English government. There is no doubt that its stay in Florida and the influence it has to maintain [itself] there can be regarded by the English only as one of the most certain means to succeed in the conquest of these provinces.

[omission]

You have certainly learned that Trinidad has been freed, the Spanish there having burned several vessels but after having taken care to land the provisions and naval stores that they contained for the Havana squadron lest these articles become the booty of the enemy. Without the zeal and fearlessness of the crews of several french vessels that were in Porto Rico, treachery was about to open the gates of this redoubtable fortress to the English. From information I received about Santo Domingo and about several Spanish colonies, it appears that all

⁸⁶ The French minister to the United States was Pierre Auguste Adet and the Spanish was the Marquis de Casa Irujo.

the ecclesiastical leaders who there enjoy such great reputation, and a portion of the civil and military officers who have not been fully altered since Spain adopted a much wiser policy in allying herself closely with the Republic, are very badly intentioned toward us and desire to render illusory the respectable alliance that has been contracted between the two nations. It is equally certain that the emigrés who retain the command posts in the Spanish navy, the English and Irish officers in the service of His Catholic Majesty who have the governance in the American colonies, are all devoted to the interests of Great Britain, and we ought to fear lest this power with infinite ease encroach upon a great part of the possessions of the King of Spain in the new world.

Salutations and Respect

V. du Pont

THE WIGGS OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Compiled by BESSIE M. LEWIS *

The chronicle of the Wiggs of South Carolina begins in 1705/1706 with Richard Wigg. He first appears on the records of the Court of Ordinary on the 26th of February of that year, as an appraiser of the estate of John Marshall, trader.¹ In 1708 Richard Wigg executed a bond to Governor Johnson for John Moore's proper administration of the estate of Simon Merrick of Berkley County.² From that time on, until after the middle of the following century, the records of South Carolina abound with mention of the Wiggs in public affairs. Yet in the 1860's the surname Wigg had all but disappeared from the Low Country. William John Grayson, writing of Beaufort in 1860, said of the Wiggs, "The name so common at one time as to comprise the majority of the vestry of St. Helena Parish, is now confined to Mr. William Wigg and family, lately residents of St. Luke's Parish."³

Neither the name nor the family is extinct. The fortunes of war caused the removal of the family to other sections of the United States. They have continued to distinguish themselves, and the name Wigg is still a favorite among them.

The exact date of the arrival of Richard Wigg in the Carolina colony is unknown, but his great-grandson (John Grayson) wrote that he was one of the earliest emigrants from England to Port Royal.⁴ Since he was in the colony in 1705/1706, and had been there long enough to have acquired civil status, he must have arrived some time in the latter part of the 17th, or very early 18th century.

The proven lineage of Richard Wigg begins after 1450, with John Wigg, lord of the rectory manor of Mentmore in Buckinghamshire.⁵ Six

* Miss Lewis, who lives in Townsend, Ga., is Historical Consultant for Fort King George under the Georgia Historical Commission. She has contributed to a number of historical publications.

¹ "Abstracts from the Records of the Court of Ordinary of the Province of South Carolina, 1700-1712", ed. A. S. Salley, Jr., *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* (hereafter designated as *SCHGM*), 12 (1911), 213.

² *Ibid.*, 13 (1912), 60.

³ "Autobiography of William John Grayson", ed. Samuel Gaillard Stoney, *SCHGM*, 48 (1947), 128.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Research in England compiled for James Lewis Kirby, Jr., by Mrs. Elizabeth Elvey.

A letter received from Mr. Gerald R. Elvey, Chalfont St. Giles, Buckinghamshire, after this article went to press states that he has been able satisfactorily to