

II. JOSEPH BONAPARTE THE EX-KING OF SPAIN IN LANCASTER

By William Frederic Worner

Joseph Bonaparte, eldest brother of Napoleon, was born January 7, 1768, at Corte, on the island of Corsica. He was educated at the Colloge at Autun, in France. In 1785, he returned to Corsica, and, shortly thereafter, began the study of law at the University of Pisa. He was frequently employed by his brother, the First Consul of France, in various negotiations. The treaty between the United States and France bears his signature.

Following the coronation of Napoleon, Joseph was made commander-in-chief of the Army of Naples. By the decree of March 30, 1806, Napoleon proclaimed Joseph King of Naples. In May, 1808, he was summarily transferred by the Emperor to the throne of Spain. Upon the defeat of the French troops, commanded by Joseph, at Vitoria (June 21, 1813), his rule as King of Spain came to an end.

After the battle of Waterloo (June 18, 1815), he accompanied Napoleon to Rochefort. Each had intended to sail separately for North America. In his last interview with Napoleon, Joseph generously offered to give up the vessel hired for his own escape, but meanwhile Napoleon had determined to surrender himself into the hands of the English.

Joseph managed to elude the British cruisers; and arrived in America safely on August 29, 1815. It was said that he had accumulated great wealth in Spain and Naples; and it was also intimated that he brought considerable property with him. Relative to his arrival in the port of New York, the Lancaster Journal for Wednesday, September 13, 1815, contained the following:

"New York, Sept. 7. Joseph Bonaparte, the Ex-King of Spain, arrived some days since in this city, and is at present at Perth Amboy."

The same issue of the Lancaster Journal contained another news item about the arrival of Napoleon's eldest brother in America. It was copied from the New York Gazette; and, under the caption of "Joseph Bonaparte," reads as follows:

"It will be recollected that the brig Commerce, Captain Misservy, bound to Charleston, arrived here on the 29th ult. [August] from Bordeaux, and landed five passengers; and that it was reported the celebrated Carnot was one of them. We have made some inquiry, from which we are inclined to believe it was not Carnot, but Joseph Bonaparte, (the Ex-King of Spain) his secretary and servants, who were landed here. After receiving those five persons on board the Commerce, Captain Misservy got under way immediately, and beat out to sea with the wind ahead."

That the American people were more or less interested in the movements of the royal fugitive is indicated by the following excerpt copied from the Lancaster Journal of Friday, September 15, 1815:

"Philadelphia, Sept. 12. Although it is a matter of very little importance to the public, we can state it as a fact, that the fugitive [ex] King Joseph, of Spain and Naples is now in this city [Philadelphia]. His present quarters are at the Washington Hall hotel. He is accompanied by two or three French gentlemen, whose names and former rank are not precisely known. He also has an American gentleman in his suite at present.

"Since the above was in type, we are informed that the Ex-King and suite departed from the Washington Hall hotel early this morning for the southward."

The Lancaster Journal for Monday, September 18, 1815, stated that Joseph Bonaparte, Ex-King of Naples and Spain, visited Lancaster borough on Saturday, September 16, 1815. He stopped at the State Arms hotel, which

at that time was kept, in all probability, by Samuel Slaymaker. It stood on the north side of East King street, on or contiguous to the present site of McCrory's five and ten cent store. It will be recalled that it was in this hostelry that General Lafayette was entertained when he visited Lancaster in 1825. The paragraph referred to in the Lancaster Journal concerning Joseph Bonaparte's stay in Lancaster borough, reads as follows:

"The Ex-King of Spain, Joseph Bonaparte, arrived at Lancaster about 5 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, from Baltimore. He was accompanied by three persons—one (a young lad) is said to be his son, the next his secretary, and the third his guide, or equery, being Commodore Lewis, who not long ago commanded some gunboats at New York.

"He stopped at the house of Mr. Slaymaker, where many persons, with full as much curiosity as difference or politeness, crowded to see him; and yet they could see nothing more than a man. He is about 5 feet 10 inches high, tolerably thick set, well made, dark complexion, face neither handsome nor ugly—nothing remarkably strong in his features, wears a plain green coat and white waistcoat. He started at 5 yesterday morning.

"It is expected he will reach Philadelphia this afternoon."

Joseph Bonaparte continued to excite the curiosity of the public mind. It was the custom of the newspapers of the day to print advertisements on the front page, to the exclusion of all news. His name did not appear emblazoned in large letters as it undoubtedly would on the first page of our modern dailies. It is not to be inferred from this that people evinced little interest in his affairs or failed to follow his movements from place to place; on the contrary, they eagerly sought for information concerning him. Tucked away among the local news, on the inner pages of the Lancaster Journal for Wednesday, September 20, 1815, we find this delicious bit of gossip concerning the distinguished foreigner who had so recently been entertained in Lancaster borough:

"By the Baltimore papers, it appears that Joseph Bonaparte left that city on the 13th 'on his way to Washington.'

"We find, on enquiry, that he went no farther than Ellicott's Mills, where he procured a hack, returned through the precincts of Baltimore, and pursued his journey to this place [Lancaster, Pa.] The horses were very indifferent, and he had a tedious journey. The cause of his return from Ellicott's Mills is not known. Perhaps he was not certain before his arrival there that Mr. Madison was at Montpelier, and not at the seat of government. We are sorry to learn that the crowd at Baltimore behaved with uncommon rudeness in gratifying their curiosity to see the Ex-King. It is a shame, it is a disgrace to our country, that a man in his situation could not pass through it, without having doors burst open, to gaze at him. Surely, no matter what was Joseph's former condition, he has thrown himself upon our hospitality, and if we treat him with incivility, it is a proof at least of bad manners.

"He was furnished by Mr. Slaymaker with a light stage or coachee, and a relay of horses, to take him to the city of [Philadelphia]. He had no outriders, nor any servants, unless the person that in our last paper we supposed to be his secretary, might have been an upper or 'chosen servant.' Himself and retinue all travelled in one carriage. He does not speak English."

That the public continued to manifest an interest in the affairs of Joseph Bonaparte is evident from the extract, from the Intelligencer and Weekly Advertiser, a newspaper published in Lancaster, Pa., under date of October 14, 1815:

"It now appears that Joseph Bonaparte (Ex-King of Spain), after his late tour through Philadelphia and Baltimore to Ellicott's Mills, has returned by the way of Lancaster [Pennsylvania], to New York, and taken up his residence at the house near that city where Lord Courtenay lately dwelt. This house, with handsomely improved grounds, is about nine or ten miles

from New York and pleasantly situated on the banks of the river Hudson, and is well calculated for a comfortable retreat from the cares and perils of royalty."

It cannot be denied that this is a belated notice of Joseph Bonaparte's passage through Lancaster I question seriously whether any modern daily would print a news item nearly one month after the event had transpired.

Joseph Bonaparte subsequently settled on the banks of the Delaware, near Bordentown, N. J., where he engaged extensively in agriculture. During his residence in America, he was known as the Count de Survilliers. He went to England in 1832. In 1841 he was allowed to return to his wife, who had remained in Italy since 1815. He died in Florence, July 28, 1844.

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