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THE STORY OF THE LAFAYETTE LANDS IN FLORIDA

Among the various kinds of men who assisted in the achievement of American independence, there is one whose devotion to liberalism and whose generosity to a struggling and, at times, almost hopeless cause cannot be gainsaid. Neither time nor the debunking zeal of some modern historian has dimmed the role of LaFayette in the founding of this republic, and it is to the credit of the nation that the debt was at length generously repaid.

It is not necessary to recount the services of the young Frenchman who ran away from home in his own ship to join Washington's motley troops. Suffice it to say that in addition to distinguished service in the field and long negotiations with France, LaFayette spent about \$200,000 of his private fortune¹ in behalf of the colonies and steadily refused all compensation.²

As long as fortune left LaFayette the position and wealth to which he was born, no thought of repaying this sum was considered. But after his imprisonment by the enemies of France and the confiscation of his estates during the Reign of Terror, the question arose as a means of saving his family from actual want. Madame LaFayette made repeated appeals to the American ministers as well as to individual Americans and, at one time, LaFayette himself hoped to obtain his release through American aid.³ Such petitions were not unheeded, for our ministers contributed generous-

¹ DuPont de Nemours to Jefferson, April 2, 1802. Jefferson Papers 122

² Jefferson to Washington, December 31, 1793. Jefferson Papers 95

³ Brand Whitlock, *LaFayette*, II, p. 36

ly,⁴ and even Washington sent Madame LaFayette two hundred guineas which he claimed was a private debt.⁵

But such aid was no more than a pittance, and the friends of LaFayette wished to take more adequate measures. Moreover, other nations expected the United States to act in behalf of their benefactor.⁶ As far as can be determined, Jefferson took the initiative, partly in response to a query from the President, partly to provide for the unauthorized sums advanced by the embassies. The most feasible solution of the whole matter, according to Jefferson, was for Congress to grant LaFayette his back pay as a major-general, estimated at \$20,600.13. True, the Marquise had declared to Silas Deane that his services would be "without any particular or pension" but no act of Congress had confirmed this agreement.⁷

Congress lent a willing ear to this suggestion and, in March 1794, passed an act granting to LaFayette

⁴ The American ministers at Paris, London, and the Hague placed generous sums at LaFayette's disposal. Monroe alone spent \$4,856.17 which was repaid by the American government on July 23, 1798. Monroe Papers 1. Note of July 23, 1798

⁵ Washington to Madame de LaFayette, January 31, 1793. Monroe Papers 7

⁶ John Edwards to Jefferson, October 28, 1793. Jefferson Papers 94

⁷ Jefferson was taking a very technical view of the case or he was unaware of earlier action by the Continental Congress, for although no law had expressly stated that LaFayette would not receive pay for his services, the following resolution had passed that body on July 31, 1777:

"Whereas the Marquis de La Fayette, out of his great zeal to the cause of liberty, in which the United States are engaged, has left his family and connexions, and at his own expense come over to offer his services to the United States without pension or particular allowance, and is anxious to risque his life in our cause-

Resolved that his service be accepted, and that in consideration of his zeal, illustrious family and connexions he have rank and commission of major-general in the Army of the United States."

Whitlock, *LaFayette*, I, p. 81.

\$24,424, this "being the pay and emoluments of a major-general during the time he was in the service of the United States."⁸

But \$24,424 is small consolation to a man facing the financial ruin which met LaFayette on his return from imprisonment. The lands salvaged from the wreck of his fortunes needed extensive expenditures for which there were no funds, while he was constantly surrounded by a host of relatives and former supporters whose appeals for aid his generous spirit could never resist. With affairs at this low ebb, his friends turned once more to America. Chief among them was Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours, a French liberal, who had established his family in America in 1799. Not only was Du Pont a friend of LaFayette but he was also on intimate terms with Jefferson, now President of the United States, and it was toward the latter that he directed his efforts.

It did not take much imagination to see that \$24,424, the pay of a major-general, was meagre return for the gift of some \$200,000 ; so, in due time, Congress made a new grant to the Marquis. By an act of March 3, 1803, he was extended the right, as a former American officer, to locate 11,520 acres of land on the public domain.⁹ The bill had fixed the location of the lands in the Northwest Territory but, through Jefferson's influence, permission was given to change the site to the newly purchased Louisiana.¹⁰ As the General's debts were pressing, it would be to his advantage to realize on his property as soon as possible and the likelihood of a quick turnover was greater in New Orleans than in Ohio.

Notwithstanding these good intentions, the Louisiana lands proved a great disappointment. Twenty

⁸ *Annals of Congress*, III, p. 1428

⁹ *United States Statutes at Large*, II, p. 236

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, II, p. 305

years elapsed before the entire grant was placed and it was never free from conflicting claims.¹¹ The sale of the lands did accomplish the object sought, however, for on August 14, 1814, LaFayette was able to write Jefferson that "thanks to the munificence of Congress and the prudence of my friends, I am perfectly clear of debts and pecuniary embarrassments".¹²

America's interest in the financial struggles of LaFayette waned after the grant of 1803 until the desire to realize an old man's dream brought them once more to the public mind. Amid all the disappointments and disasters of his career, one memory had always comforted him—the thought of the young republic he had helped to found, and a great longing to revisit it grew in him as age advanced. As soon as this desire reached the ears of Congress, a resolution was passed inviting him to be the honored guest of the nation and offering him a public ship for the voyage.¹³

The invitation, duly delivered, thrilled the heart of the old Frenchman but there was some hesitation about his acceptance. James Brown wrote to President Monroe; "I fear he wants money as it has been intimated to me that he wished to borrow a few thousand dollars".¹⁴ Time confirmed Brown's suspicions, for on May 30, he informed the President fur-

¹¹ The full story of the LaFayette lands in Louisiana will appear as an article in the *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* in an early issue.

¹² LaFayette to Jefferson, August 14, 1814. Jefferson Papers; also, Chinard, *Letters of LaFayette and Jefferson*, p. 346

¹³ LaFayette had expressed such a wish in a letter, dated October 26, 1803, to a Mr. Brannan of Washington, D. C. who had sent him a copy of his *Military and Naval Letters of the Revolution*. The Congressional resolution was introduced by Mitchell of Maryland on January 24 and was passed two weeks later. *LaFayette in the United States*, clippings compiled by B. T. Hill, I, p. 8

¹⁴ James Brown to Monroe, January 23, 1824. Monroe Papers, 21

ther of the difficulties which LaFayette was experiencing in arranging his affairs and expressed the wish that Congress had voted him a sum of money instead of a public ship.¹⁵

The funds required were at length raised, however, and on July 10, 1824, LaFayette and his party sailed for America on the *Cadmus*. He had delicately declined the use of the national vessel.

Nevertheless the pathetic struggle necessary to make the voyage possible had not been lost on our government. Brown had hoped that the Americans would make him some gift and the General's friends on this side of the Atlantic seemed to hold the same view. Soon after the *Cadmus* arrived, Monroe wrote to Jefferson: "My hope is that the nation will provide for him in a way to put him at his ease the remainder of his life and to indemnify his family for the losses which the principles which he imbibed in our great struggle, and of which he has been the victim, subjected them to."¹⁶

Accordingly, as soon as Congress convened, the President took occasion to bring the matter to its attention. "It is natural," read the message, "that we should all take a deep interest in his future welfare as we do. His high claims on our Union are felt and the sentiment universal is that they should be met in a generous spirit. Under these circumstances I invite your attention to the subject with a view that regarding his very important services, losses, and sacrifices, a provision may be made and tendered to him which shall correspond with the sentiments and be worthy the character of the American People."¹⁷

¹⁵ James Brown to Monroe, May 30, 1824. Monroe Papers, 21

¹⁶ Monroe to Jefferson, October 18, 1824. Jefferson Papers, 227

¹⁷ Message of Monroe to Congress, December 7, 1824. Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, II, p. 259

Two weeks later, bills were reported in both houses of Congress providing a third compensation for LaFayette's services to the American cause. The Senate measure which antedated that of the House by one day granted the General a township of land located on any unsold public domain and \$200,000.¹⁸

The bill was read twice without any objection being raised and it was therefore something of a surprise to its adherents to encounter a small but persistent opposition when the third reading took place on December 21. Mr. Macon of North Carolina, the leader of this group, argued that the services of LaFayette placed him on the same footing as the "other sons of the family" and that he should be treated accordingly.¹⁹ He was supported by Brown of Ohio who questioned the right of the Senate to pass such a bill in view of the fact that the compensation was to be met by a loan.

To these critics Hayne, the defender of the project, replied by a burst of characteristic eloquence. Ignoring the query regarding the Senate's power, he emphasized the services of LaFayette and the inadequacy of the return previously made. Even the major-general's back pay had been without interest, he observed, and the lands in Louisiana had become so involved in claims that a much smaller return had been received than Congress had intended. Indeed, the very smallness of the returns had been partly due to the fact that LaFayette had refused to prosecute claims which were unquestionable. Thus he had never received the compensation which he was due. Finally, Hayne demanded, what would Europe think of the

¹⁸ *Debates of Congress*, VIII, p. 101. The suggestion for the character of the gift may have come from Monroe unofficially. See unaddressed letter from Monroe in Whitlock, LaFayette, II, p. 246

¹⁹ *Debates of Congress*, VIII, p. 102

American people if they sent their guest home empty handed in his need.²⁰

The Southern senator's eloquence carried the day and the bill was passed 38 to 7.²¹

Meanwhile a similar measure was meeting difficulties in the House. Some members resented the haste with which the bill was being pushed. It had been in committee two weeks, it was argued, why wasn't the House to be allowed time for proper consideration. Other members wished to reduce the sum offered to \$150,000 or even \$100,000 while still others compared the bountiful gifts to LaFayette with the rewards to American citizens who had made proportionally greater sacrifices. The objection which struck the most fire, however, was the suggestion of Sloane of Ohio that the whole matter be recommitted with the instruction to find out what was the actual extent of LaFayette's services.

At this last remark, McDuffie of South Carolina nearly lost his temper. Compensation to LaFayette, he maintained, was not an indebtedness to be paid off but a gift, and it was an insult to estimate his services in dollars and cents. He was ably seconded by Mangum of South Carolina and Hearick of Maine. The latter urged that the measure be voted at once before its spirit would be ruined by further haggling.²²

After a few additional efforts to postpone a decision, the bill was carried in its original form, 166 to 26.

While this minor battle was in progress in Washington, LaFayette had tactfully retired to Annapolis that

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 103. Speech of Hayne

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 105. The House bill which was sent to the Senate for concurrence on December 23, 1824, was passed unanimously. This may account for the story that the only opposition to the gift came from 26 members of the House.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 209-218

his presence might not prove an embarrassment to his friends. On his return early in January, he was waited upon by a joint committee of both houses and presented with the nation's gift. His joy and gratitude were boundless for, as he wrote Jefferson, "I am now quite rich and equal to all family purposes I might wish".²³ Even the Congressional opposition had its share of his generosity for he declared that had he been called upon to vote for his own compensation, he would have acted as they.

Opinion in the country at large sustained Congress but it was to be expected that some contrary voices would be raised. Not all such opposition could be branded as stingy and ungrateful for many sincerely doubted the propriety of Congress's act "as well from its dangerous tendency" as from the belief that there really was a lack of power to thus sign away the people's money.²⁴

The disposition of the \$200,000 was at once an object of concern to all the General's friends in order that it might be what it was intended, a security for his old age. Jefferson, whose own financial affairs were seldom untangled, advised him to leave the money in government bonds as "there can be no safer deposit on earth than the Treasury of the United States".²⁵ LaFayette's own wish was typical of his whole character. Monroe was, at the time, in financial distress and his friend offered to clear his debts.²⁶ Of course the President refused the sacrifice and, after some discussion, \$120,000 was invested in government bonds and \$80,000 spent in paying up LaFayette's own debts.²⁷

²³ LaFayette to Jefferson, January 26, 1824. Chinard, p. 429

²⁴ *Niles Weekly Register*, XXVII, p. 273. Editorial, "Freedom of Opinion," January 1, 1825.

²⁵ Jefferson to LaFayette, January 16, 1825. Chinard, p. 428

²⁶ *Niles Weekly Register*, 36, July 4, 1829

²⁷ LaFayette to Jefferson, January 26, 1825. Chinard, p. 429

The next question which interested the country was the location of the township and, in this matter, all eyes turned to Florida, the most recent acquisition of the United States. Florida was much before the public mind, for its first real estate boom was in progress. The purchase price of the territory had been \$5,000,-000 payable in claims of American citizens against Spain ; and the United States, hoping to realize this sum from land sales, ²⁸ was making strenuous efforts to attract settlers. The task was not hard for Middle Florida, the only part of the peninsular about which much was known, had admittedly great possibilities for agriculture.

Since the arrival of LaFayette in the United States constant rumors had circulated to the effect that he intended to settle in America and his enthusiasm for the new world tended to bear out the stories. Indeed, it was admitted during the House debate on the compensation issue that such was the hope of the Administration. ²⁹ Jefferson had frankly hoped to capitalize LaFayette's popularity in 1803 by making him a resident of Louisiana. ³⁰ What more natural than that Monroe should attempt a similar course in the case of Florida, especially when the region had the reputation of being the best land at the disposal of the nation. The General himself was keenly interested in the proposition, for while in Washington, he had come under the magnetic spell of Richard Keith Call, Florida's representative and her most ardent champion. A strong friendship grew up between the two men and

²⁸ Monroe's Message, December 7, 1824. Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, II, p. 253.

²⁹ *Debates of Congress*, VIII, p. 214

³⁰ Jefferson had taken the matter under serious consideration and had even offered the post of governor to LaFayette. LaFayette to Jefferson, February 26, 1804, and same to same, October 8, 1804. Chinard, p. 227 and p. 232

before they separated, LaFayette half-way promised to visit Florida.³¹

To select the site of the township, Monroe appointed Colonel John McKee, congressman from Alabama and a veteran land speculator of the southeast.³² He was well versed in Florida affairs, for he and George Mathews had been the agents who had attempted to foment a revolution in East Florida prior to the War of 1812.³³ According to the agreement drawn up between McKee and George Graham, the Commissioner of Public Lands, the former was to have three months in which to make the selection³⁴ and in return for his services, would receive one section of the township.³⁵

From the Pensacola Gazette (April 23, 1825) it is learned that McKee reached Florida early in the month. He went at once to Tallahassee, the new capital of the territory and also the center of rich plantation lands. The usual spring rains delayed his task for, as he wrote George Graham, "I have been here since the seventh but the woods are so rotten I have made but little progress in examining the country. We have not had three fair days since I arrived". Even under such trying circumstances, however, the first Township North in Range 1 East appeared to him superior to the rest of the land inspected. "As far as I have examined it, I have seen no land that may not be cultivated and a great portion of it is first rate."³⁶

³¹ Long, *Florida Breezes*, p. 102

³² *Pensacola Gazette*, June 11, 1825

³³ Instructions to McKee and Mathews. Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, I, p. 505

³⁴ George Graham to LaFayette, March 9, 1825. Records of the Public Land Office, Miscellaneous Letters, 55, p. 317

³⁵ McKee received section 15. LaFayette heirs to William P. Gould, Leon County Deed Book D, p. 321

³⁶ McKee to George Graham. April 21, 1825. Records of the Public Land Office Miscellaneous Letters, M, no. 276

Further investigation justifying this early opinion, Graham was able to report to LaFayette on June 22, 1825 that the selection had been fixed. Although he assured LaFayette that the site was the "best in Florida", he reminded him that he did not have to agree to the choice. "If you are in possession of, or may previous to your departure from the country obtain any information that may in your opinion make it expedient to select a township in any other part of the country, you will be at liberty to do so".³⁷ Needless to say, no change was made and, on July 4, 1825, the warrant for the township was signed by the President.³⁸

The people of Florida shared the hope of the Administration that LaFayette would remain in the country. In one of the local papers, a writer of Chipola expressed the wish that a colony of Frenchmen would come to the territory "to refine the rough inhabitants of the vicinity and render us by their example the politest people in the United States".³⁹ More official expression was given to the same feeling by a resolution of the Territorial Legislature which urged the General "if it should be consonant with his inclinations and not inconsistent with his interests, to establish his permanent residence in the United States and that Florida may be honored as such residence".⁴⁰ Governor Duval inclosed the resolution in a personal letter to assure him that "we should receive you with open arms as our fellow citizen, our neighbor, and our friend."⁴¹

³⁷ George Graham to Lafayette, June 22, 1825. *Ibid.*, 56, p. 218

³⁸ Record of Donation Patents, VII, 79

³⁹ Rerick, *Memoirs of Florida, II, p. 153*

⁴⁰ Resolution of the Territorial Legislature of Florida, December 11, 1825. *Gulf States Historical Magazine*, November, 1902, p. 201

⁴¹ Duval to LaFayette, January 10, 1826. *Gulf States Historical Magazine*, November, 1902, p. 200

In spite of LaFayette's appreciation of these tokens of goodwill and his genuine affection for the American people, there is no evidence that he ever seriously considered expatriating himself. Part of the township he planned to retain as the American estates of his house but the rest he was willing to put on the market at once. Graham, to whom he gave the power of attorney in September, 1828,⁴² urged him to lay off the land adjacent to Tallahassee in town lots but advised holding the rest of the grant. The value of the township ought to be \$150,000, he reported, but current prices were too low to realize that sum.⁴³

The ideal estimate which LaFayette accepted with his usual childlike faith probably accounts for his refusal to sell to R. K. Call half the township for a flat sum of \$50,000;⁴⁴ doubtless it is also the basis for later complaints that the lands near Tallahassee were held at prohibitive prices and thus the growing city "would remain subject to a wilderness on its border".⁴⁵

But the Florida township meant more to LaFayette than the realization of \$150,000 through land sales; it provided him with a chance to try out one of his projects. The American experiences of his youth had matured his political philosophy and had also given him decided ideas on slavery. Abolition was a cause to him from then on ; in fact, he was so eager to hasten the day of freedom, that he purchased a plantation in French Guinea. At La Belle Gabrielle,

⁴² Leon County Deed Book B, p. 54. LaFayette to George Graham, September 2, 1828

⁴³ Graham to LaFayette, June 22, 1825. Records of the Public Land Office, Miscellaneous Letters, 56, p. 218

⁴⁴ LaFayette to Duval, May 30, 1833. Leon County Deed Book D, p. 23

⁴⁵ *Niles Weekly Register*, 36, p. 181, May 16, 1829

near Cayenne, he and his wife had set about preparing the negroes for gradual emancipation.⁴⁶

During his visit to the United States, the growth of the plantation system had been a disturbing sight and in Florida he saw an opportunity of establishing a free community. As he wrote Call, "In those parts of the country where the plague of slave labor has been entailed by Great Britain, I know the difficulties that offer to the planter whatever be his losses, his regrets, his anticipations-But wherever the southerners under a climate, upon a good soil, with suitable free, white, and on the whole cheaper labor, can in that manner obtain additional wealth, strength, and population, I cannot think why they should not continue the opportunity."⁴⁷

The "free, white, and on the whole cheaper labor" which was to bring wealth to Florida was to come through European immigration, preferably from a climate similar to that of the Territory. These settlers, who were already looking for an escape from the hardships of Europe, would not establish cotton plantations but would devote themselves to the cultivation of vineyards, olive groves, mulberry trees and silk worms as they had done in Europe.

However Utopian this dream may have been, LaFayette himself took it seriously and it aroused at least the passive support of Call and others in America. In 1831 a colony actually reached Florida from France armed with seeds, cuttings, and tools but pitifully unprotected against the hardships of hewing a settlement out of a semi-tropical wilderness in mid-summer.

Only one description of this venture can be found

⁴⁶ Whitlock, *LaFayette*, I, p. 296. La Belle Gabrielle was lost to the Lafayettes during the Revolution.

⁴⁷ LaFayette to Call, January 1 (1827?) found in the manuscript of Call's journal.

although mention is made in numerous other sources.⁴⁸ According to this report, the colony consisted of some fifty to sixty Norman peasants led by three old friends of LaFayette whose fortunes had fallen on rocky paths and needed to be retrieved. They arrived in March, 1831, and located on a bluff overlooking Lake LaFayette.

In spite of the excellent soil and the generous grants of land the enterprise did not prosper, and at the end of three months only fifty acres had been cleared. The difficulty seemed not to be the quality of the settlers but the fact that they were unable to stand the ravages of the climate. No physician had come with the party, with the result that the maladies of the settlers were not properly attended. The crowning discouragement was not due to local hardships, however, rather it was the discovery that the deeds giving land to the settlers had not been properly certified by the United States Consul and were, therefore, void. Gradually, the colony began to break up. Most of the survivors returned to France or went on to New Orleans ; a few remained and, with the aid of Prince Murat, Call, and others, made a living, if not on the LaFayette lands, at least in or near Tallahassee.

LaFayette never sent another colony to America but, from time to time, various Frenchmen came to Florida, frequently due to his encouragement. These, together with the remnant of the ill-fated settlement, gave a certain foreign flavor to the life of the Territory's capital.

Not long after the fiasco on Lake LaFayette, the

⁴⁸ This account is in a series of articles entitled *Reminiscences of Early Tallahassee* found in the *Weekly Tallahasseean* of December 8, 1886. The account of the events here related are largely obtained from the traditions and stories of pioneer settlers and are liable to considerable error. Because it is the only narrative of the situation, however, it has been used rather freely.

township attracted the attention of three pioneer planters and land speculators, W. B. Nuttall, Hector W. Braden, and William P. Craig.⁴⁹ Their idea was to purchase the available township at a flat sum payable in ten years and market it during that period. If the expected rise in land values occurred, a handsome profit could be realized.

This project required the special consent of LaFayette as, so far, he had allowed only half of the township to be put up for sale.⁵⁰ Some of his friends wrote him of the offer, apparently urging his acceptance in spite of the fact that the amount offered fell short of his expectations. Obviously disappointed at the price, LaFayette yielded to the inevitable pressure of his debts and allowed all but a small part of his property to be sold. As he wrote his friends ; "I am determined in honor to the gift and in compliance with my own feelings, to remain in possession of a part of the land. I had contemplated to retain several sections but will be content with one and a half, a little more than three hundred acres for each of my children after me, provided that share is selected near the city on the most pleasant and promising spot."⁵¹

Armed with this authority Colonel R. W. Williams, his agent, concluded the deal with Nuttall, Braden, and Craig, November 18, 1833. By its terms, the General

⁴⁹ William B. Nuttall was the owner of El Destino, one of the well-known plantations of the Tallahassee region. Both he and his partner's played influential roles in early territorial days even though there were those who questioned the soundness of their ventures.

⁵⁰ Power of attorney from LaFayette to John S. Skinner. Leon County Deed Book C, p. 514. George Graham, the Commissioner of Public Lands, had been LaFayette's first agent. At his death, his successor in the Land Office had received similar authority with permission to substitute a deputy in Florida. Skinner had chosen Colonel R. W. Williams of Tallahassee June 4, 1832.

⁵¹ LaFayette to Duval, May 30, 1833. Leon County Deed Book, D. p. 23

bonded himself to the sum of \$100,000 to deliver "a good and perfect title in fee simple" to 26 3/4 sections of the township upon payment to him or his heirs of \$46,520 on or before January 1, 1844, with 7% annual interest.⁵² Of the remaining 9 1/4 sections of the township, two quarter sections had already been sold and two other tracts, of one section each, spoken for.⁵³ This left 6 3/4 sections in the hands of LaFayette and his heirs instead of the 1 1/2 requested, a fact which cannot be explained from the records unless one admits the probability that numerous claims existed at the time which were not substantiated.

The marketing of such a large tract was ambitious even for the optimistic Florida speculators and it is not surprising that they set up a series of checks on each other. They agreed to share equally all profits and to be equally bound for the amount of the principal and interest, and penalties were fixed to insure punctuality of payment by each of the partners. In the words of the contract, "it is agreed between the several parties that if either or any two of the said parties . . . should fail to pay his or their portion of said interest for a period of three months after the same shall become due, the other party or parties shall be entitled to demand and receive from such delinquent or delinquents in addition to his or their respective amounts of interest then due 12 1/2% on such amount or amounts, and if they should delay the payment of such interest for twelve months after the same shall have been due they shall pay 25% in addition to the amount due by them as interest."⁵⁴

⁵² General LaFayette to W. B. Nuttall, Hector W. Braden, and William P. Craig. Leon County Deed Book D, p. 20.

⁵³ Section 15 belonged to John McKee, and Section 8 to Isadore Inardine, a Frenchman. The quarter sections had been sold to John Caruthers and Edward Doyle. Leon County Deed Book, C, pp. 530, 615, and E. p. 659 and K, p. 321

⁵⁴ Memorandum of Agreement between Nuttall, Braden, and Craig, November 18, 1833. Leon County Deed Book D. p. 22

Later, May 28, 1835, a new agreement between the partners provided that three sections of land should be allotted to each, the remaining lands continuing as a joint possession. The worth of these holdings was to be determined by an abstractor and any difference in value was to be equalized from the proceeds of the lands held in common.⁵⁵ Each partner was "in penal sum" of \$20,000 to the others to carry the agreement into effect.

Notwithstanding these precautions, the Nuttall, Braden and Craig venture travelled a rough path. Nuttall died in 1836 leaving his affairs in such a wretched state that years of litigation followed and his portion of the LaFayette township was sold for his debts.⁵⁶ On January 12, 1838, the partners sold the entire concession to the Union Bank for \$29,476.24 and turned over the bonds for purchased lands which aggregated \$25,996.24. Before long, the bank, which had had a dizzy career, crashed but, fortunately for the LaFayette heirs,⁵⁷ all the bonds, notes, and securities realized from the land sales had been transferred to Williams upon trust that he should collect the same and apply it to the extinguishment of the debt.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Agreement between Nuttall, Braden, and Craig, May 3, 1835. Leon County Deed Book, E, p. 402. The sections 25, 35, 36 allotted to Nuttall were of less value than those taken by Braden and Craig for after Nuttall's death, the partners gave his widow, Mary W. Nuttall \$1,000 apiece to equalize the value of the three holdings.

⁵⁶ Francis Eppes vs. LaFayette Heirs. Records of the Circuit Court of Middle Florida, File 410. The land was sold to W. H. Brodie in 1838. Nuttall's debts were estimated at \$45,000.

⁵⁷ LaFayette died May 20, 1834. His heirs were his son and wife, and two daughters and their husbands.

⁵⁸ For agreement between the partners and the Union Bank, see Agreement between Mary W. Nuttall, Hector W. Braden, and William P. Craig and the Union Bank, January 12, 1838. Leon County Deed Book E, p. 452. For the record of the transfer to Williams, see Francis Eppes vs. the LaFayette Heirs, Petition of Eppes to the Court, July 27, 1855. Records of the Circuit Court of Middle Florida, File 410

When January, 1844, arrived, final payment of the \$46,520 was not possible as the condition of the country was such that concessions had to be made to the purchasers or the lands sold at a heavy sacrifice. Gradually, adjustments were worked out and by 1856, Williams was able to state that enough had been collected to discharge the obligation to the heirs.⁵⁹ The previous year, the last of the lands originally retained by the LaFayette family were sold.⁶⁰

Thus ended the long and varied history of LaFayette's township, for although the name will always linger over the region, the family had no further connection with the land. For twenty-four of its thirty-one years of existence, R. W. Williams had been its steward. Only once was a LaFayette in Florida, namely, in 1850 when Edmond de LaFayette and Ferdinand de Lasteyrie, grand-sons of the Marquis, visited the United States and came south to confer with Williams. The charm of the name still lived, however, for the gentlemen were enthusiastically welcomed and the General Assembly voted Edmond de LaFayette "the hospitalities of the State" and invited him to a "seat within the bar of either house".⁶¹

No story of the LaFayette township would be complete without some statement concerning the amount realized by the family from their holdings. To the student of territorial land values in general, and especially those of Florida, the variations in price from 1825 to 1856 would provide interesting research, but such a study is not possible here. According to the tale of the deed books, LaFayette and his heirs re-

⁵⁹ Francis Eppes vs. LaFayette Heirs, Answer of R. W. Williams to the Court, 1856. Records of the Circuit Court of Middle Florida, File 410

⁶⁰ Lafayette Heirs to William Bailey, March 1, 1855. Leon County Deed Book L, p. 29

⁶¹ *Journal of the Proceedings of the Senate of the General Assembly of the State of Florida*, pp. 23, 36, 153-155

ceived \$102,722.90 for the lands between the dates given above. Due to the intricacies of many, in fact most, of the transactions it is possible that compromises may have been privately reached which lowered the returns officially recorded. Although \$103,000, roughly speaking, was considerably less than the \$150,000 to \$200,000 at which the General's friends valued his property, it was a handsome donation and, together with the \$200,000 in stock, placed the value of America's last gift to LaFayette at a generous quarter of a million dollars.

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