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The French Grant
in Alabama

A HISTORY OF THE FOUNDING OF
DEMOPOLIS

BY

GAIUS WHITFIELD, Jr.

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IX. THE FRENCH GRANT IN ALABAMA, A HISTORY OF THE FOUNDING OF DEMOPOLIS.

BY GAIVS WHITFIELD, JR., Demopolis, Ala.

There is no more romantic or interesting chapter in Alabama history than the one which tells the story of the early French colony in Marengo county. It has long proven an attractive field for Southern writers and a number of excellent papers¹ have been written, each describing some particular phase of the subject. Yet, perhaps, there may still be room for another account which aims to cover the entire movement in a connected way and supply as far as possible the contemporary authorities upon which our knowledge must finally rest.

When the star of Napoleon's glory had gone down at Waterloo, never to rise again, and the famous leader had been exiled to the desolate Isle of St. Helena, his loyal followers were compelled by the Bourbons to suffer many kinds of punishment for having served him whom the powers called the Usurper. Some were sentenced to death, some expelled from France and their property confiscated, some were imprisoned and were given no opportunity of defending themselves when they were at last brought to trial, and others were obliged to sell their property and take up their abode in foreign lands.²

Special ordinances were directed against them by Louis XVIII, partly perhaps from a desire for vengeance, partly also from the fear that their continued presence and persistent devotion to their exiled leader might assist, or even give rise to, future revolutions. The most important of these proclamations were the two following:

¹ Among these special attention is called to the chapter in Pickett's *History of Alabama* entitled "Modern French Colony in Alabama," to Prof. Thomas Chalmers McCorvey's article on "The Vine and Olive Colony," in the *Alabama Historical Reporter*, Tuscaloosa, April, 1885, to Anne Bozeman Lyon's article on "The Bonapartists in Alabama," in the *Southern Home Journal, Memphis*, March, 1900 (since reprinted in the *Gulf States Historical Magazine*, Montgomery, March, 1903) and to a series of articles on the subject in the *Demopolis Express* by Prof. J. W. Beeson.

² Bourrienne's *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte*, vol. iii, pp. 317-318.

"The first of these was issued by the king to the French people,³ and was as follows:

"I wish to exclude from my presence none but those whose celebrity is a matter of grief to France and of horror to Europe. In the plot which they hatched I perceive many of my subjects misled and some guilty.

"I owe it, then, to the dignity of my crown, to the interests of my people, to the repose of Europe, to except from pardon the instigators of this horrible plot. They shall be designated to the vengeance of the laws by the two chambers which I propose forthwith to assemble.

"Given at Cambrai this 28 of June, in the year of our Lord 1815 and of our reign the 21st.

Louis."

The second was a decree issued by Louis XVIII on the 26th of July, 1815,⁴ and⁵ "singles out for example the following general officers, accused of treason against the king before the 23rd of March, etc., Ney, Labedoyere, the two brothers L'Allemand, Drouet d'Erlon, Lefebvre-Desnouettes, Ameith, Breyer, Gilly, Monton, Duvernet, Grouchy, Clausel, Laborde, Debelle, Bertrand, Drouot, Cambronne, Lavelette, Rovigo.

"2. The individuals whose names follow, viz: Soult, Alex, Excelmans, Bassano, Marbot, Felix Lepelletier, Boulay de la Meurthe, Mehec, Fressinet, Thibaudeau, Carnot, Vondamme, Lamarque, (general), Lobau, Harel, Pire, Barrere, Arnault, Pommercuil, Regnault de St. Jean d'Angely, Arrighi (de Padoue), Dejean son, Garrau, Real, Bouvier, Dumalard, Dirat, Defermont, Merlin de Donai, Durbach, Bory, Soint Vencent Felix Desportes, Garnier de Saintes, Millinet, Hullin, Cluys, Courtin, Forbin Jauson eldest son, Le Lorgne Didevelle, shall depart within three days from the city of Paris, and retire into the interior of France, to such places as our ministers of the general police shall point out for them, where they shall remain under surveillance, until the chambers shall decide on their case whether they ought to leave the kingdom, or be delivered up for the prosecution of the tribunals."

Nevertheless, Louis and his ministry thought it would be more advantageous to the interests of the Bourbons if they should extenuate the fault of the offenders. In order to obviate the result

³ *Niles' Weekly Register*, vol. viii.

⁴ *Ibid*, vol. ix.

⁵ An interesting account of the decree, and indeed of the entire situation in France at that time is given in the *Memoirs* of Talleyrand, vol. iii. p. 170, *et seq.*

of a trial the king and his ministers tried to provide the Bonapartists with money for their escape. Even though the arrests were delayed and passports given to the accused, they were arrested while attempting to leave France. But many of them, with courage worthy of their leader, refused to leave the country for which they had undergone so many hardships and braved the perils of numerous battlefields, as their departure would be a tacit admission of their guilt.⁶

After long debates in the chambers, the following law of amnesty was passed and sanctioned by the royal assent on January 12, 1816:⁷

"Art. 1. A full and an entire amnesty is accorded to all those who directly or indirectly took part in the rebellion and usurpation of Napoleon Bonaparte, saving those hereinafter named.

"2. The ordinance of the 26th of July will continue to be executed with respect to the individuals named in the first article of that ordinance.

"3. The king can in the space of two months from the promulgation of the present law, exile from France such of the individuals comprised in the 2nd article of the said ordinance as he shall keep on it, and as shall not have been previously brought before the Tribunals; and in that case such parties shall quit France within the time fixed for them, and shall not return without the express permission of his majesty, under pain of transportation.

"The king may in like manner, deprive them of all property and all pensions granted to them on grounds of favor.

"4. The relations of Napoleon Bonaparte in ascending and descending line—his uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces; his brothers and their wives and their issue; his sisters and their husbands are excluded forever from the kingdom. All are bound to depart therefrom in the space of one month, under the penalties specified in the 91 article of the Penal Code. They cannot enjoy any civil right in France, or possess any property whatsoever, any title or pension granted to them of favor; and they shall be bound to sell, within six months, all the property that they hold in France by purchase.

"5. The present amnesty is not applicable to those persons against whom prosecution has been directed, or against whom judgments have been pronounced, prior to the promulgation of the present law; such prosecution shall be continued, and such judgments executed conformably to the laws.

⁶ Miss Lyon's "Bonapartists in Alabama."

⁷ *Annual Register*, vol. lviii.

"6. Are not comprised in the present amnesty crimes or offences against individuals, at whatever period they may have been committed. The persons charged with such crimes may be always prosecuted according to the laws.

"7. Those of the regicides who in contempt of a clemency almost boundless voted for the Additional Act, or accepted offices or employments from the Usurper, and who by so doing declared themselves irreconcilable enemies of France, and of the lawful government, are forever excluded the realm and are bound to quit it in the space of one month, under pain of the punishment enacted by the 33rd article of the Penal Code. They cannot possess any civil right in France, nor any property, title or pension granted to them of favor."

At the end of 1816 and the beginning of 1817, the imperialists, after the trial and execution of Labedoyere and finally of Ney, began to understand the true light in which they were held by the Bourbons. A number of these Bonapartists, broken in spirit and persecuted by Bourbon hatred, sought America,⁸ where they hoped to find rest from the trying ordeals through which they had passed. It is true their king had shown much nobility towards them, but he might change and they were never certain of the implacable Fouché. After having arrived in America they determined to leave the cities, for they feared that persecution would follow them even there. They decided to form a colony⁹ in the wilds of

⁸ The number coming to America was so great as to start some very wild statements in Paris. See the following extract from *Niles' Register*, Sept. 6, 1817:

"It is said in the Paris papers that the French emigrants that have reached the United States 'do not amount to a less number than 30,000.' People do not think what thirty thousand is. I have a right to know something of this matter; and venture an opinion that three thousand have not arrived here, in ships and vessels, since the first return of Louis; nor do I believe that any have crossed the ocean in balloons. Vessels from France very seldom have more than 10 to 20 passengers. I am certain that they have not averaged 20: this would give us fifteen hundred vessels from France in the period stated."

⁹ The spirit that animated them is well shown by the following extracts from the tri-weekly *National Intelligencer*, of Sept. 4, 1817:

"Never was a project set on foot under better auspices, or entered into, as we learn, with more ardor and a fuller determination to make a fair experiment to show what Frenchmen can do. 'I am astonished,' said a *Capitalist* of Philadelphia to Generals Clausel and Desnouettes, 'that such men as you who have money at command, should undertake such a Don Quixote expedition, when, by taking your stand in the Exchange, you would get 20 per cent. for your money without trouble.' 'We have been accustomed,' replied General Clausel, 'to labour for the glory and happiness of our country, not to prey upon their or other people's necessities.'—A reply which marks a noble mind."

the West, for they thought it would be a refuge, where they would be able to gather together the forces of body and soul, and begin life again on a new basis free from the cares and dangers of a broken empire.¹⁰

A number of these exiles formed an association in Philadelphia, with George N. Stewart, then a youth of eighteen, as its secretary, to establish a colony somewhere in the West. Therefore they sent out their exploring commissioners, Jean A. Penniers and Bazile Meslier, to select a suitable situation for a colony. They made their observations on the soil, productions, etc., of the country lying between the 32d and 36th degrees of latitude, on the west bank of the Mississippi river, but found no place which they thought suitable for a modern French colony. During the absence of Penniers and Meslier, the association dispatched Colonel Nicholas Parmentier,¹¹ one of their number, to Washington for the purpose of petitioning congress to grant them a tract of land upon which to form a settlement. While Colonel Parmentier was at the capital, the emigrants came to the conclusion that the far West was by no means what their fancy had pictured it. They were easily persuaded by Dr. Brown, of Kentucky, who had traveled some in France, to settle near the confluence of the Black Warrior and Tombigbee rivers, in what was then the Mississippi Territory. He took great interest in their welfare and thought they would find the climate and soil of the South very similar to that of their own country. He believed that with little difficulty they would be able to convert the wild fertile lands into a perfect vineyard. They would find in this region, which had once acknowledged the supremacy of France, many kindred people; for Mobile contained many whose hearts were filled with sympathy, admiration and love for their emperor. Louisiana was only a short distance from Mobile, and it was upon this French country that they based their hopes for help in the furtherance of their plans to restore the great Napoleon to his empire. When they learned these things, there was no doubt in their minds that Alabama was the country in which they ought to settle, and where the oppressor's hand could not reach them.¹² After they decided

¹⁰ Miss Lyon's "Bonapartists in Alabama."

¹¹ Pickett's *History of Alabama.*

¹² *Ibid.*

to settle in the region traversed by the Tombigbee and Black Warrior rivers, congress granted them a tract of land by the following act, approved March 3, 1817:¹³

"An act to set apart and dispose of certain public lands, for the encouragement of the cultivation of the vine and olive.

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That it shall be the duty of the Secretary of the Treasury, under the direction of the President of the United States, to designate, and set apart, any four contiguous townships, each six miles square, of vacant public lands lying in that part of the Mississippi Territory which was formed into a land district, by the act, entitled 'An act for the ascertaining and surveying of the boundary line fixed by the treaty with the Creek Indians, and for other purposes,' passed on the third day of March, one thousand eight hundred and fifteen; and the four townships, so designated and set apart, shall be reserved from public and private sale, anything in the aforesaid act to the contrary notwithstanding.

"Sec. 2. *And be it further enacted,* That the Secretary of the Treasury be, and he is hereby, authorized to contract for the sale of the said four townships, which shall have been designated and set apart, as aforesaid, at the rate of two dollars per acre, to be made payable fourteen years after the contract shall have been concluded with any agent, or agents, of the late emigrants from France, who have associated together for the purpose of forming a settlement in the United States; *Provided,* That satisfactory evidence shall be produced that such agent, or agents, are duly authorized to form such contract, and that the number of such emigrants, being of full age, for which he or they are authorized to act, are equal at least to the number of half sections contained in the four townships proposed to be disposed of.

"Sec. 3. *And be it further enacted,* That the said Secretary shall have power to make such allotment of the lands among the individuals, and to stipulate, in the proposed contract, for such conditions of settlement and cultivation of the vine, and other vegetable productions, as may to him appear reasonable; and that on the fulfillment of such conditions shall the issuing of grants, for the lands, be made to depend: *Provided,* That no patent shall be granted for any of the lands aforesaid, nor shall any title be obtained therefor, either at law or equity, until complete payment shall have been made for the whole four townships, and until they comply with the conditions of the contract, so to be made as aforesaid; nor shall a patent be granted for a greater quantity than six hundred and forty acres to any one person."

¹³ U. S. *Statutes at Large*, vol. iii, p. 374.

Having obtained the grant of land, Colonel Parmentier and others of the emigrants sailed from Philadelphia for Mobile with some of the French gentlemen and their families in the schooner McDonough, which had been procured for the purpose. In a letter to a friend in Philadelphia, Colonel Parmentier wrote thus concerning an accident that occurred while on board:¹⁴

MOBILE BAY, *May 26, 1817.*

"After a passage of 21 days from the capes of Delaware we have arrived within sight of these shores, which not a soul on board had ever seen before; we had, however, a very narrow escape at the moment when about to gain this real land of promise; we were gliding gently along under favor of a pleasant breeze, lead in hand, when suddenly from nine fathoms we made only two fathoms, or twelve feet, and before we could haul off, grounded. You may conceive the feelings of our associates under all our circumstances. However, we were fortunate in possessing in Captain John McCloud, a mind experienced, collected and intrepid; his activity, presence of mind and excellent temper were not disturbed by the indiscreet conduct of some on board, whose imprudence and want of self-possession might have been fatal with a man of less manly and less resolute disposition; he may be fairly said to have saved every person on board by his firmness and discretion. By his good disposition we were enabled to obtain succor from Fort Boyer; a boat from which set off under its intrepid and generous commanding officer, Lt. R. Beal, of the artillery, and Captain Bourke, formerly of the army, who happened to be at the fort. These two gallant men, with four privates, put off on discovering our situation and succeeded in carrying our passengers on shore, after great and persevering fatigue; it is by men like these, whose profession inures them to dangers and privations unknown in common life, that the greatest acts of generosity are usually displayed: not content with rescuing us from danger of wreck, they conducted us into the fort, and with an affection the most unaffected taught us to forget the dangers we had escaped, and to bless the circumstances which enabled us to enjoy their generosity, hospitality and kindness; there was nothing which the country could afford which we were not provided with, and they have left on our hearts impressions of gratitude which time cannot efface.

"Our vessel being lightened, and having suffered no injury, moved into the channel, and having procured the requisite information to proceed to our destination, the same kindness which had flown to our relief, contributed to our comfort and gratification and conducted us on board, and, accompanied by such a variety of

¹⁴ *National Intelligencer*, July 17, 1817.

refreshments, and acts of goodness exercised towards individuals whom they had never seen before, but whose fortunes and destiny appears to have found in their generous hearts a noble sympathy; they furnished us with letters of introduction to their friends. It is impossible to communicate the sense we entertain of the kindness we have experienced—to-morrow we ascend the river Mobile, from whence you shall hear from me again.

"The country on the margin of the sea presents a scene of the highest luxuriance. The foliage brighter than your more northern climate; the bay is a young sea, and appears to be unbounded; but it is too soon to give you any ideas of a distinct landscape, to speak of a soil that we have scarcely touched, and that towards which we are approaching too remote yet to be seen."

The following extracts of a letter from Colonel Parmentier, dated White Bluff, July 14th, 1817, to a friend in Washington, tell of their treatment while in Mobile and of their trip up the Tombigbee river to the White Bluff.¹⁵

"We reached Mobile¹⁶ on the 25th ult., and found that our arrival was expected. The officers of the government, those who would be benefited by the increase of inhabitants and the augmentation of the price of produce, those who were friendly to the prosperity of the country, and, indeed, all who were not actuated by a jealousy as short-sighted as pitiable, were favorably disposed towards our settlement. Mr. Gibson, a public agent, and a man of liberal education, Mr. John Toulmin, brother of Judge Toulmin, and Mr. Lewis, the collector of the port, distinguished for their merit and affability, treated us with the greatest possible attention and introduced us to the first houses of Mobile, from whom we obtained very particular information of the country we were about to traverse. Mr. Lewis offered us the use of the revenue cutter, which we accepted, so that our first excursion up the country was made under the United States flag."

When the revenue cutter started on its way up the river, it left the wharf crowded with many friends whom the exiles had made

¹⁵ *National Intelligencer*, August 30. 1817.

¹⁶ A short description of Mobile taken from the same letter may interest the reader.

"Until lately there was no quay at Mobile to moor vessels to. One is now constructing, which is to be built out far enough to have nine feet of water at its eastern extremity at low tide. It will when completed be very long. The city is situated on a sandy beach perfectly level. The streets are from 60 to 100 feet wide. The houses are almost all of wood, one story high, with some few of two stories. They are raised from two to four feet above the ground on piles of large dimensions. There are from 80 to 100 houses, and they continue to build very fast. The population is estimated at from 1000 to 1500, of every description."

during their brief stay in Mobile. They departed on a bright clear summer morning which presented a marked contrast to the day that they entered the harbor. They entered the port friendless and distressed, now they continued their voyage joyously with many friends to pray for their safe passage up the river. Adieus were waved from the wharf as the cutter set out, and were answered by cheers from the enthusiastic exiles.

"I arrived at Fort Stoddard on Sunday the 31st of May. Judge Toulmin had sent horses to convey me to his residence, distant one and a half miles from the river. This highly respectable magistrate treated me with the greatest possible kindness, and expressed the interest he felt in our settlement. He accompanied me to Fort Montgomery, and introduced me to his son-in-law (Gen. Gaines), who received me in a manner suitable to our recommendations and his well established character. All the topographical documents in his possession were at my disposal, and he instructed those of his officers, who had been employed in reconnoitering the country, to give me the most circumstantial details as to the courses of the navigable rivers, the nature of the soil on their banks, the hills which rise above them, the ways which have been opened on these hills, and the character of the inhabitants who are already established here and there over this immense surface.

"On Tuesday I arrived at St. Stephens,¹⁷ and on delivering my letters of recommendation, I met with the greatest possible attention. Mr. McGoffin, of the land office, placed at my disposal all the plans and reports of the surveyors: which most singularly corroborated the information I had previously obtained, although by induction, the surveys extended as yet only to the 32d degree of latitude, which is the northern of the lands for sale on the 1st

¹⁷ There is an interesting description of St. Stephens in Parmentier's letter of July 14, and an article in the *National Intelligencer* of September 9, 1817.

"The town of St. Stephens, at the head of ship navigation on the Tombigbee, is advancing with a rapidity beyond that of any place, perhaps, in the Western country. It is built on very uneven ground, and much time and expense will be necessary to level it. It is situated half a mile from the river, and has an area laid out containing 1320 acres. The lots are 45 feet wide and 90 feet deep. They sold on the first settlement of the town at 200 dollars each. The present proprietors continue to sell at the same price, excepting certain situations, for which it is said 2,000 dollars might be procured if they were for sale. There are already fifty houses, twenty of which are stores. New buildings are erected every day, and there is a want of workmen to build them. A hod-man gets two dollars per day wages. An academy has been erected on the most elevated part of the town, it is directed by professors of acknowledged merit, and has already eighty scholars, several of whom are from New Orleans. The annual amount of merchandise brought and vended at this place, is not less than 500,000 dollars and is still increasing."

of July. I acquired much information from Colonels Dale, Fisher, Dinsmore, Watson, and Mr. Malone, etc.”

At St. Stephens they discharged the revenue cutter and procured a barge for the remainder of the trip.

After some time the exiles reached the White Bluff, where some of the party landed while the rest pushed high up the river to “old Fort Tombeckbee.” There they consulted with George Strother Gaines, who was at that time United States Choctaw Factor, upon a favorable place for locating, and he suggested that they settle at the White Bluff. While they were at the fort, Jean A. Pennier and Bazile Meslier, their exploring commissioners, whom they had sent out to seek a location for their colony, joined them and agreed with the suggestion of Mr. Gaines; whereupon it was decided to settle at the chalky cliff upon which now stands the town of Demopolis. These two gentlemen were then sent back to Philadelphia with letters to the association, which convinced them that this was the country in which to make a settlement.¹⁸ In a letter to a friend Colonel Parmentier wrote thus:

“We have explored the country situated on the east side of the Tombigby, above the line called the Choctaw boundary, and we have resolved to fix ourselves on the spot known by the name of the White Bluff, about three-fourths of a mile below the junction of the Black Warrior and Tombigby rivers, as part of our grant. It remains to say in what shape the four townships are to be laid out, and this we will do as soon as the meridian line shall be continued twelve miles above the White Bluff, and the lines of demarcation shall be marked as far as the said Bluff. The season is already advanced, and no resource would be left to a number of individuals during the ensuing winter if the benevolent intentions of the government towards us are not administered with some celerity. White Bluff is one of the finest situations I ever saw in my life, and the lands lying around it are of the very finest quality. Nature here offers us everything. If we know how to profit by these advantages we must be happy.”

The county in which they settled was given the name Marengo, at the suggestion of Judge Lipscomb, while a member of the legislature at St. Stephens, in commemoration of the great battle which the imperial army won over the Austrian general, Melas.

The emigrants chose lots and erected cabins and made such other improvements as were possible in this wilderness. In the

¹⁸ Pickett's *History of Alabama*.

course of a few months quite a number of emigrants had arrived in boats by way of Mobile.¹⁹ They laid out a town on the White Bluff, which they called Demopolis—the city of the people—at the suggestion of Count Pierre Francois Real, one of the Philadelphia incorporators, who never came to Alabama.

In the meantime the land had been surveyed and Charles Villar, agent of the association, had contracted with Hon. William H. Crawford, secretary of the treasury, for township 18, range 3, east, and townships 18, 19 and 20, range 4, east, in the Mississippi Territory, for which the association agreed to pay one hundred and eighty-four thousand three hundred and twenty dollars on or before January 8, 1833. The contract contained the following conditions and stipulations:²⁰

"1. That, before the expiration of three years from the date of this contract, there shall be made upon each tract in the aforesaid four townships allotted to the respective associates a settlement by themselves individually, or by others on their account.

"2. That, before the expiration of fourteen years from the date hereof, there shall be cleared and cultivated within the said four townships at least ten acres of land for each quarter section, taken aggregately.

"3. That, before the expiration of seven years from the date hereof, there shall be cultivated within the said four townships at least one acre to each quarter section, taken aggregately, in vines.

"4. That, before the expiration of seven years from the date hereof, there shall be planted within the said four townships not less than five hundred olive trees, unless it shall be previously established to the satisfaction of the President that the olive can not be successfully cultivated thereon.

"5. That a report shall be made annually to the Secretary of the Treasury by the agent of the said association, or his successor, showing the number of settlements made within the said four townships in each year; the progress made in cultivating the vine and olive, and the degree of success with which the same is attended; and describing the number and kind of such plants which have been cultivated; and also the said agent, or his successor, shall, from time to time, furnish to the Secretary of the

¹⁹ It seems that some also came by way of the Ohio if we may credit the following extract from *Niles' Register*, Sept. 6, 1817:

"*The French Emigrants.*—By a respectable Indian agent, now at the seat of government we learn, that in coming up the Ohio, he met upwards of a hundred Frenchmen, at different times, directing their course towards the new settlement on the Tombigbee."

²⁰ *American State Papers*. vol. v.

Treasury such other information touching the condition and state of the association as he may require.

"6. That the list of the associates deposited in the treasury aforesaid be recognized, and the persons thereon inscribed confirmed in the allotments of land annexed to their names respectively, with the exceptions following, viz: Martin Pignet Joseph, Wiles and Leclerc, V. M. Garesche, Jacques Brand and John Roster, Jean Thomas Carre, Laurent Faures, Englebert, Samuel Jackson, Joseph Robard, Pierce Freres, Jean Baptiste Neel, William Tablee, Bellington, George Gaines, S. Voohees, Guillaume Montelius, Kimbal, shall be erased therefrom, and Jacques Moncravie, R. A. Terrier, Charles Brugiere, Joseph Ducommun, Madame George, Pierre Garesche, J. Bonno, Pierre Drouet, Emely and Conde, be inserted thereon, and be entitled, in the order in which they stand herein, to the allotment of the persons thus erased; and the allotments annexed to the names of the others of the persons thus erased shall be assigned to the other late emigrants, under such regulations as are hereinafter prescribed.

"7. That such emigrants as are inscribed on the said list, who had previously to knowing of the allotments assigned to them respectively, settled and improved land within the said four townships, either in those sections set apart for the small allotments, or in others, and before the first day of August last past, shall be entitled to hold the same, to the extent, and in lieu of the quantity, in the large or small allotment, as the case may be, unless the party to whom such lands were actually allotted shall, within six months from the date hereof, tender to such settler the value of the improvements which he may have made thereon, to be ascertained by two respectable persons under oath; and, on failure to make such tender, the party to whom such land was allotted shall be entitled to the land allotted to such emigrant as the aforesaid to the extent of the allotment so occupied and improved; or, if the same be insufficient, he shall be further indemnified by the assignment of so much land as will make up the quantity, out of any land not otherwise appropriated.

"8. That the land exempted from appropriation by the foregoing provisions may be appropriated to other emigrants from France—not already provided for, and whose names shall be presented to the Secretary of the Treasury for his approbation by the agent of the association, or his successor; but actual settlement shall in all cases be an indispensable condition."

The following is "a list of the names of the persons who entered into contract with the Treasury Department for the culture of the vine and olive, and of the tracts of land allotted to each."²¹

²¹ *American State Papers*, vol. iv.

Nos. of Sections	Nos. or Marks of the Land	Names	Quantity of Land to Each
1	1	Meslier, Bazile,	480
	2	Lauret, Louis,	160
2	3	Conte, Honore,	120
	4	Reudet, Corneille Cadet,	120
	5	Vial, Antoine,	120
	6	Bujey, Antoine,	120
	7	Godemar, Jean Baptiste,	120
	Reserve A.	Colomel,	40
3	8	Jeannet, Louis Rene,	320
	9	Ve, Julie Pastol,	320
4	10	Allard, Henry,	120
	11	Combes, Germain,	120
	12	Combes, Vincent,	120
	13	Sibenthal, freres,	240
	Reserve B.	Latapie,	40
5	14	Derdrauville, Rene,	240
	16	Alma, Anselme,	120
	16	Salmon, Francois,	120
	17	Lintroy,	120
	Reserve C.	Payen, freres,	40
6	18	Shults, Colonel Jean,	320
	19	Comb, Colonel Micheal,	320
7	20	Martin Francis,	480
	21	Pelagot, Antoine Zacharie,	160
8	22	George, Edward,	480
	23	Voile,	160
9	24	Lacombe, Pierre,	480
	25	Lalapie, Antoine,	160
10	26	Richard, Etienne,	160
	27	Papillot, Etienne,	160
11	28	Frenage, Jean Pierre,	480
	29	Rivet, George,	160
12	30	Boutiere, J. Claude Benoit,	240
	31	Ve, Louis David,	120
	32	Delaposte, Louis,	120
	33	Meynie, Jean Ulysse,	120
	Reserve D.	Barthelemine,	40
13	34	Metais, Et. J. B.,	240
	35	Mansuis, Luiller,	120
	36	Jouny, Louis Michel,	120
	37	Vernhes, Jean Vincent,	120
	Reserve E.	Bestos,	40
14	38	Marchaud, Louis Pre. Th.,	480
	39	Martin, Amedee,	160
15	40	Butland, Isaac,	240
	41	Keller, Jonas,	240
	42	Menou, Dieu Donne,	120
	Reserve F.	Fouquet, J. and Moulin,	40
16	43	Jordan, Colonel Ambroise,	320
	44	Vorster, Colonel Emile,	320
17	45	Cadet, Bergache,	240
	46	Gallard, Pierre,	240
	47	Lefeuivre, Claude Joseph,	140
	Reserve G.	(Not appropriated),	40
18	48	Paguenaud, Edward,	240
	49	Transon, Jean,	240
	50	Gaunay, Nicolas,	120

Nos. of Sections	Nos. or Marks of the Land	Names	Quantity of Land to Each
	Reserve H.	Glenville,	40
19	51	Astolphi, Laurent,	480
	52	Knappe, Phillippe,	160
20	53	Grousche, Colonel Alphonse,	320
	54	Grouchey, Captain Victor,	160
	55	Pillero,	160
21	56	Drouet, Pierre,	480
	57	Bailley, Michel,	120
	Reserve I.	Dupui and Ragon,	40
22	58	Lemaigen, Pierre Paul,	480
	59	Lerouyer, Francois,	160
23	60	Gavesche, Pierre,	480
	61	Formento, Felix,	160
24	62	Gavesche, Pierre,	240
	63	Burkle, Emanuel,	120
	64	Coquillon, freres,	240
	Reserve J.	Parat, R.,	40
25	65	Drouet, Pierre,	240
	66	Baizeau,	60
		Fagot,	60
		Delpit,	60
		Lapeyre,	60
	67	Boutierre, Francois Gaspard,	120
	Reserve K.	Miot,	40
26	68	Robin, Thomas,	240
	69	Nartique, J. Justin,	240
	70	Gerard, Hyacinth,	160
27	71	Follin, Auguste Firmin,	480
	72	Follin, freres,	160
28	73	Chapron, J. M.,	480
	74	Wiell, James,	160
29	75	Dupouy, Nicholas Alex'r,	480
	76	Manoury, P. Max,	160
30	77	Madame, George,	480
	78	Tournel, Jacques,	160
31	79	Martin, Picquet, L. I. F.,	480
	80	Moucravie, Jacques,	160
32	81	Emely,	480
	82	Martin, Picquet, pere,	120
	Reserve L.	Mangon and Martial,	40
33	83	Aieze, freres,	240
	84	Brugiere, Charles,	240
	85	Barrau,	160
34	86	Lecampion, Francois,	240
	87	Brechemin, Lewis,	240
	88	Humbert, Jacques Estienne,	160
35	89	Jamet,	480
	90	Rigau, Narcisse Pericles,	160
36	91	Promis, Gillaume,	480
	92	Desmares,	160
37	93	Durand, Jean Baptiste,	480
	94	Robaglia, Joseph,	160
38	95	Garnier, fils,	240
	96	Peniere, fils, Emile,	240
	97	Ve, Audibert,	120

Nos. of Sections	Nos. or Marks of the Land	Names	Quantity of Land to Each	
39	Reserve M.	Mignon,	40	
	98	Nidelet, E. F.,	480	
	99	Cousin, David,	120	
40	Reserve N.	Doudel,	40	
	100	Galabert, Colonel Louis,	320	
	101	Petitval,	320	
	41	102	Anduze, Mathew Bernard,	480
	42	103	Frederick, Louis Auguste,	160
		104	Gubert, J. H.,	480
	43	105	Moynier, Jos. Ariste Theo.,	160
		106	Colonel Douarche,	320
	44	107	Grouchet, Louis,	320
		108	Villar, Charles,	480
	45	109	Pagniere, J. Alexander,	160
		110	Dirat, Louis M.,	480
	46	111	Mondin,	160
		112	Pagaud, Pierre,	480
	47	113	Fallot, Eugene Hyacinthe,	160
114		Frenage, Marce Antoine,	480	
48	115	Laurent, Clement,	120	
	Reserve O.	Dalaunay,	40	
	116	Vondame Gl,	480	
49	117	Angeli, Hiacinthe,	120	
	Reserve P.	Foquet, aine,	40	
	118	Poculo, Benoit,	320	
	50	119	Baltar,	160
		120	Moquart,	160
	51	121	Besson, Louis An.,	480
		122	Lemeunier, J. Joseph,	160
	52	123	Mesnier,	240
			(Not appropriated),	240
		124	Henry, Germain,	160
		125	Colonel Rigau,	480
	53	126	Mariano, Pompee,	160
127		Texier, Lepomerave,	320	
128		Harraneder, Charles,	160	
54	129	Mataye, Jean Pierre,	120	
	Reserve Q.	Penard and Amedee,	40	
	130	Martin, J. Du Colombier,	480	
	55	131	Campardon, Bte,	160
		132	Ravesies, F.,	480
	56	133	Bordas, Elie,	160
		134	Debrosse, Charles,	480
	57	135	Merle, Etienne,	160
		136	Lauderelle, M. F. Aug.,	480
	58	137	Canobio, Francois,	160
138		Davis, L. A.,	240	
59	139	Charles, Fermin B.,	240	
	140	Montalegri, Hiacinthe,	160	
60	141	Duval, Jacques S.,	480	
	142	Bacle, Alexis, fils, aine,	160	
61	143	Lakanal,	480	
	144	Desportes, Leonte,	120	
146 and 147	Reserve R.	C. Desafoe,	40	
	145	Tulane, freres,	240	
148		Antoine,	240	
		Boitau, Francois,	120	

Nos. of Sections	Nos. or Marks of the Land	Names	Quantity of Land to Each
	Reserve S.		
62	149	Pueek,	40
	150	Leboutellier, Michel,	480
	151	Plantevigne,	160
63	152	Moneravie, Jacques,	240
	153	Bringier,	240
	154	Monot, Charles,	160
64	155	Cluis, J. Jerome,	480
	156	Ruffier, Ferdinand,	160
65	157	Garnier, frere,	480
	158	Simon,	160
66	159	Terrier, R. A.,	240
	160	Macre, Jean M.,	120
	161	Dumas, Antoine,	120
	162	Dalmazeau, J.,	120
	Reserve T.		
67	162	St. David,	40
	163	Foutanges, P. F.,	480
	163	Godan, Victoire, (N),	120
	Reserve U.		
68	164	Blancon and Taverly,	40
	165	Belair, Louis,	480
	166	Sagnier, Henri Antoine,	160
69	167	Lallemand, General Charles,	480
	168	Valcourt, Aime,	160
70	169	Clausel, General Bertrand,	480
	170	Blaquerolle,	160
71	171	Sary, Jean M. Alex.,	160
	172	Gatly, Antoine,	160
	173	Ilari, Benoit,	160
	174	Millon, Solidor,	160
72	175	Ducommun, Joseph,	480
	176	Genin, Charles Franc,	160
73	177	Colonel Charassin,	320
	178	Vasques, Jean,	320
74	179	Roland, Jean Francois,	320
	180	Pichon, Claude Charles,	320
75	181	Clareton, Joseph Louis,	480
	182	Grillet, Francois,	160
76	183	Texier, Jean,	240
	184	Martinet, Pierre Louis,	240
	185	Vitalba, Jean Baptiste,	160
77	186	Jogan, Antonin,	240
	187	Cavoroc, Charles,	120
	188	Brugiere, Charles,	120
	188	Chapon,	120
	Reserve V.		
78	189	Make,	40
	190	Dubarry, John,	480
	190	Salaiguac, Louis,	120
	Reserve W.		
79	191	Lebrusse,	40
	192	Descourt, Leonard Alex.,	240
	193	Onfray, Jean Baptiste,	120
	194	Pochard, Aug. Francois,	120
	195	Fux, Louis,	160
80	196	Colonel Raoul,	320
	197	Neel, J. B.,	160
	198	Gilbert,	160
81	197	Seveligne,	480
	198	Mane,	160

Nos. of Sections	Nos. or Marks of the Land	Names	Quantity of Land to Each
82	199	Richard, George,	160
	200	Nardel, Francois,	160
	201	Chauvot, Charles,	160
	202	Pladaut, Francois,	160
83	203	Bono, Charles,	240
	204	Tasche,	120
	205	Blanden, Jean,	120
	206	Azan,	120
	Reserve X.	Devengen,	40
84	207	Victoire, Delaunay Jos.,	480
	208	Castan, Etienne,	160
85	209	Lefrancois, freres,	480
	210	Groning,	160
86	211	Pothier, Simon,	240
	212	Shubart, Henry,	240
	213	Fisher,	120
		Soulas,	40
87	214	Beylle, Joseph,	480
	215	Malozewsky, Constant Paul,	160
88	216	Teterel, Francois,	480
	217	Pagniere,	160
89	218	Bubosq,	120
	219	George, fils, aine, Edward,	120
	220	Lesucur,	120
	221	Dor,	120
	222	Maillet, Henry Pre. A. As.,	160
90	223	Stallenwereck, freres,	480
	224	Vallot, Joseph,	120
91	225	Matthieu, Dr. Joseph,	480
	226	Allain, Joseph,	120
	Reserve Y.	Mayer,	40
92	227	Jeandrau, Jean,	240
	228	Carlebaux, Guillaume,	240
	229	Buttand,	120
	Reserve Z.	Constantin and Dechoule,	40
93	230	Colonel Taillade,	320
	231	Olivieri, Joseph,	160
	232	Luciani, Pascal,	160
94	233	Mal, Grouchy,	480
	234	Deschamps, Francois Me,	160
95	235	Baumier, Cesar,	160
	236	Barbe, Antoine,	160
	237	Stribaud, Charles,	160
	238	Decorme, Charles,	160
	239	Chaudron, Edward,	480
96	240	Gilbal, Antoine,	160
	241	Martin Prosper,	480
97	242	Desplan, Samuel,	160
	243	Melizet, Francois,	480
98	244	Carso, Francois,	160
	245	Hamel, Victor,	480
99	246	Havard,	160
	247	Peniere, pere, J. A.,	480
100	248	Fauchon, Hoc,	160
	249	Lecoq du Marcelay,	480
101	250	Godat,	120

Nos. of Sections	Nos. or Marks of the Land	Names	Quantity of Land to Each
	Reserve AA.		
102	251	Morin,	40
	252	Defourni, Col. Fabius,	320
	253	Guillot,	320
103	253	Badaraque, Thomas,	480
	254	Conte, Marius,	160
104	255	Desfouch, Charles,	160
	256	Pascal, Paul,	160
	257	Fouasche, Pierre,	160
	258	Bernard, Henry,	160
105	259	Rapin, Joseph,	480
	260	Contardi, Lewis,	160
106	261	St. Guiron, Jeune,	480
	262	Demony, Dominique Victor,	160
107	263	Ravesies, E.,	240
	264	Fournier, Honore,	240
	265	Farcy,	160
108	266	Champenois, P. J.,	240
	267	Savary, Joseph,	240
	268	Belmere, pere, and fils,	160
109	269	Gen. Lallemand, Hy.	480
	270	Prompt,	160
110	271	Bayal, Honore,	480
	272	Duriere, Francois,	160
111	273	Conde, Charles,	240
	274	Conde,	240
	275	Laurent, Maurice,	160
112	276	Chaudron, Simon,	480
	277	Boilandry, Eugenie,	120
	Reserve BB.	Darembert,	40
113	278	Arnaud, Camille,	240
	279	Deprest, Rene, frere and Zach,	240
	280	Batre, Charles,	120
	Reserve CC.	Lagay,	40
114	281	Belange, Mal. Denis,	320
	282	Chasserian, Benoit,	320
115	283	Real, Pierre Francois,	480
	284	Penazi, Louis,	160
116	285	Bujac, Mathew and Alf'd. freres,	240
	286	Germond and Riviere,	240
	287	Guybert, H'y,	120
	Reserve DD.	Payen, freres,	40
117	288	Ducoing, Pre,	480
	289	Stephens, Samuel J.,	160
118	290	Fourestier, Elie,	480
	291	Gregoire, Etienne,	160
119	292	Manfredi, Math. Ferd.,	160
	293	Dupont,	95
	Reserve EE.	Hurtel, J.,	384
120	294	Lefebvre, Gen. Desnouettes,	480
	295	Desroures,	160
121	296	Jeannet, George,	480
	297	Jeannet, Je,	160
122	298	Dumenil,	240
	299	Ducommun, Joseph,	120
	300	Parat, F. Romain,	120
	301	Burgues, Jn. Bernard,	120

Nos. of Sections	Nos. or Marks of the Land	Names	Quantity of Land to Each
	Reserve FF.	Cuchet,	40
123	302	Ve, Demerest,	240
	303	Boulon, E.,	240
	304	Lapeyre, Jn. Bte,	160
124	305	Thouron, pere and fils,	480
	306	Larau, Sully,	120
	Reserve GG.	Janin,	40
125	307	Bonno, J.,	480
	308	Landerin, Francois,	120
	Reserve HH.	Bonneau,	40
126	309	Legrix, Bellisle,	240
	310	Legras,	240
	311	Bulliard, Etienne,	160
127	312	Follin, George,	480
	313	Fauquier,	160
128	314	Emery and Duteste,	480
	315	Vogeslang, Daniel,	120
	Reserve II.	Chapotin,	40
129	316	Haez,	120
		Prudhomme,	120
		Morel,	240
	317	Murrat, Jean Baptiste,	160
130	318	Mestayer, Michel,	480
	319	Rieger, Gabriel V.,	160
131	320	Parmentier, Nicholas Sim.,	480
	321	Bauzan, Pierre,	160
132	322	Villemont,	240
		Guilleault,	180
		Quepart,	60
		Verrier,	60
	323	Fischer,	160
133	324	Dufourg, Jean Jacques,	240
	323	Dufourg, D. V.,	120
	326	Dufourg, F.,	120
	327	Lacloux, Rene Francois,	160
134	328	St. Guiron, Pre Pascal, aine,	240
	329	Farrouilh, A.,	120
	330	St. Felix, Jean R.,	120
	331	Decave, Marc Lewis,	120
	Reserve JJ.	Rapin,	40
135	332	Barbarroux, Joseph,	240
	333	Cirode, William,	120
	334	Shooun, Sebastian,	120
	335	Gouiran, Joseph Michel,	120
	Reserve KK.	Allouard and Achard,	40
136	336	Lajonie,	480
	337	Truck,	160
137	338	Colona, Dornano B.,	320
	339	Peraldi, Toussaint,	160
	340	Scasso, Vincent,	160
138	341	Laroderie, Alphonso,	240
	342	Savournin, Joseph,	240
	343	Balbuena, Joseph,	160
139	344	Canonge, Pierre August,	480
	345	Lucien,	160

Nos. of Sections	Nos. or Marks of the Land	Names	Quantity of Land to Each
140	346	Vaugine,	240
		Bogy,	240
	347	Torta, Jean,	160

The colony's severest blow came in the discovery that the location of Demopolis was not included in the townships set apart for them by the contract entered into between the secretary of the treasury and the agent of the association. The improvements made by the exiles were upon land which did not belong to them. The land had been allotted by the association in Philadelphia, irrespective of the claimants; and they were compelled to leave their improvements and begin anew further in the depths of the forest.²² General Charles Lefebvre Desnouettes, who seems to have been the acknowledged leader of the colony, made a journey to Philadelphia in behalf of the settlers. He very unfortunately could do nothing for his friends, although he secured his own tract and improvements. Upon his return he regretfully saw them abandon the lots upon which they had spent much labor, and begin clearing and building in new parts of the wilderness.²³ They laid out another town about a mile east of the White Bluff, which they called Aigleville in token of their love for Napoleon's standard which bore the eagle perched upon its summit. Later it was found that many of the emigrants had settled on land that was not allotted to them individually by the association in Philadelphia. They were, therefore, compelled again to leave their hard earned comforts. It seemed that no matter how far they went into the forest, some trick of fate compelled them to give up their rough-hewn homes and commence again the work of clearing and preparing new land for cultivation. But in spite of all these vicissitudes, the grantees who remained strove earnestly to stand up to their part of the contract. Each time they were compelled to move, they went to work with wonderful zeal to prepare the land for the cultivation of the vine and olive. They finally became settled on the land allotted to them and made many attempts, which were fruitless, to grow the grape.

The country in which they settled had until within the last few

²² Pickett's *History of Alabama*.

²³ Miss Lyon's "Bonartists in Alabama."

years been a part of the land held by the Creek Indians. It was covered by virgin forests and luxuriant growth of cane, broken here and there by stretches of open prairie. These lands, which are now the garden spot of Alabama agriculture, were then a wilderness so thickly overgrown with cane of various kinds that it was almost impassable.²⁴ There were no roads traversing it and scarcely could a path made by the deer or the savage, be found leading through the dense jungle, which covered what are now the richest plantations in west Alabama. In this wild, level, "canebrake" region there were few springs and water was very hard to find after a little distance had been put between the traveler and the river. The exiles could not move far into this region for lack of water and the means by which to transport goods to their huts.²⁵ As they were unable to continue their labors unaided, and had no slaves of their own, a number of German redemptioners were imported through the enterprising and generous Desnouettes. But these people proved more of a burden and expense than an assistance, for they disregarded entirely the obligations of their contract.

Pioneers less suited by nature and training for subduing the forest and overcoming the trials of frontier life could not have been found, and never were stronger hands and stouter hearts needed in any undertaking than in this country, then barely known to civilized man. Among other trials the refugees were repeatedly stricken with sickness. The lands which they settled were often overflowed two or three times a year by the rivers, and the stagnant pools left by the receding water caused malarial fever, from which many of the exiles died. On an old map of Demopolis are seen two crosses which mark the graveyards where rest the remains of many of this brave and sturdy band.

Their nearest neighbors were the Choctaw Indians, who possessed the land lying west of the Tombigby river. This was a war-like, brave and honest tribe. They were honest in paying their debts and sturdy in their protection of their white friends. Their chief, Pushmataha, was magnificently developed both mentally and physically and was an orator of some genius. He was

²⁴ Prof. McCorvey's "Vine and Olive Colony."

²⁵ Conversations with old settlers of Demopolis.

known far and wide as the white man's friend, and kept his tribe on friendly terms with the emigrants, whom they helped greatly by teaching them how to clear and work their land.²⁶ They learned very readily anything the white man would teach them. Later came the unprincipled American squatters. They were a great source of annoyance to the hard-working Frenchmen, whom they harrassed no little by taking possession of their lands without the least shadow of a title and declaring that they did not expect to give them up under any conditions. Such occurrences brought on lawsuits. In every instance the court decided in favor of the grantees. In many cases, however, the Frenchmen, worn out by troubles with the squatters, sold their lands for a very small part of their real value.²⁷

Their homes are described by William L. Adams, agent of the treasury department, in a report to the secretary of the treasury thus:

"The owner or some one on his or her account, built on the allotment a log cabin of a common height for such kind of buildings, hewed down inside and out, covered with a good board or shingle roof, laid with a plank or puncheon floor, with a log chimney, and made quite comfortable for a building of the cabin kind. The smallest size cabin which I examined was 16 by 18 feet on the inside; and the largest, 19 by 23 feet. Every building had enclosed about it from one to five acres of land, and cost the owner from 85 to 150 dollars, varying in price according to the size of the cabin and the quantity of land cleared and enclosed."²⁸

One can scarcely imagine the discomforts which the settlers, who had been accustomed all of their lives to live in luxury, had to suffer in these pioneer homes. Their ignorance concerning the commonest domestic affairs was most pitiable. The clothes they wore during their daily tasks were very unsuitable garments in which to work. Women dressed in silk gowns and satin slippers, which they had worn at court balls, were seen dropping corn or wading out in the mud to milk the cows; and the men ploughed, ditched and cleared land while dressed in their richest uniforms.²⁹

²⁶ Notes taken by Mrs. W. A. Gayle during a conversation with Judge William E. Clarke.

²⁷ Pickett's *History of Alabama*.

²⁸ *American State Papers*, vol. v.

²⁹ Conversations with old settlers of Demopolis.

But in spite of all their trials the French refugees were happy and their native gayety prevailed. They brought with them many ornaments, books, musical instruments, and even their fine china, glass and silverware, the latter often the present of royal friends. Among them was always seen the gay grace and social culture for which Paris is so famous. Although the days were filled with trials, yet, when night came on the day's troubles were forgotten and all was given up to pleasure. Beautifully attired ladies accompanied by gallant gentlemen might be seen going in and out of the rough cabins, where music and dancing were enjoyed by all. As long as they had money they were determined to enjoy life. Their tables were loaded with luxuries and on festive occasions their boards flowed with the richest wines, long before a grape had been planted on the grant. Their tables were supplied with all kinds of game from the surrounding forest, where it could easily be procured with little skill, and with many varieties of vegetables which in season the rich garden spots brought forth in abundant supplies. Along with these things they often had large supplies of wines and other luxuries sent them by friends at home. Upon the arrival of these gifts from France, the town always put on the appearance of a minute French village, and the pastimes engaged in did not comport with the self-denial and hardships necessary for success in settling a wilderness; but it must be remembered that pioneers of this class are very seldom found, and it could hardly be expected that men and women, who had been reared and taught in the fashionable courts of France, would be able readily to abandon their former customs for the uneventful routine of farm life.³⁰

The exiles made a mistake in the location of their land for the vines and olive trees which they planted were total failures. If the grant, which lay in the prairie region of Marengo and Hale counties, had been located about twenty-five or thirty miles farther north towards the hills of Hale, the vineyards, at least, might have been a success. Yet they could not know this country of great forests as it is known to-day, nor be able to tell that about thirty miles to the north of their settlement, where they tried to grow the grape, was land which Nature had covered with extensive wild vineyards. The land was new and it took many years

³⁰ Prof. McCorvey's "Vine and Olive Colony."

of hard labor to get it into a condition suitable for productive cultivation.³¹

Besides the trials of continually having to leave their clearing and improvements, and the encroachment of the squatters, there was trouble at Washington and Philadelphia. The government had been misled, no doubt by designing persons, and made to believe that the colony was founded merely as a speculation on the part of the leaders.³² As early as December 14, 1818, the secretary of the treasury in a communication to the house of representatives, states that many of the grantees had transferred their allotments and followed the French generals, who were attempting to make a settlement on the Trinity river, in Texas; or had engaged in occupations which prevented them from complying with the requirements of the contract.³³ It is true that General Henry L'Allemand and a small band of French exiles seized a tract of land in Texas and tried to form a colony,³⁴ but the greater

³¹ Miss Martha Young.

³² As a sample of the accusations made in the press and otherwise, the following extracts from *Niles' Register*, Aug. 8, 1818, will serve:

"Among the splendid fooleries which have at times amused a portion of the American people, as well as their representatives in congress, was that of granting, on most favorable terms to certain emigrants from France, a large tract of land in the Alabama territory, to encourage the cultivation of the vine and olive, passed the 3rd of March, 1817.

"This tract contains 92,000 acres, and was sold at \$2 per acre, payable without interest, in 14 years—in truth, much better than a mere gratuity of so much land considering the license of selection, and which could not, at this time, probably be purchased of the proprietors for less than two millions of dollars. What was honestly intended as a common benefit to a number of unfortunate persons, is understood to have immediately centered, like banking, into the benefit of a few; and I am told that one man's gain by this speculation are estimated at from 500,000 to a million of dollars."

"It was the abuse of the Alabama grant that caused the rejection of the petition of the Irish emigrant associations for the laying off of a tract of land in the Illinois, though everybody felt satisfied that their design was an honest one."

"By way, however, I very much question the policy of any act of government that has a tendency to introduce and keep up amongst us a foreign national language or dialect, manners or character, as every large and compact settlement of emigrants from any particular country, must necessarily occasion."

³³ Prof. McCorvey's "Vine and Olive Colony."

³⁴ The following taken from *Niles' Register*, August 8, 1818, and written by one of the band, shows their intentions in forming the colony.

"Champ D'Azile, province of Texas, May 11, 1818.

"Reunited by a series of the same calamities which have torn us from our homes, and scattered us in different countries, we have resolved to seek an asylum, where we may be able to recall our misfortunes, and that we may draw from them useful lessons.

part of the emigrants were opposed to this proceeding, and strove to carry out their part of the contract. They were charged with having converted what was intended as a common benefit to a number of unfortunate persons into a benefit for a few scheming leaders.

Another element of the earliest settlers of the French grant, whose history is very little known, is a band of West India refugees. These French were living in San Domingo at the time of the great negro insurrection which drove the whites from the island. Many of the French were murdered in the insurrection, but a few escaping to the coast sailed for America and ultimately reached Philadelphia, where they were living at the time the grant was made for the cultivation of the vine and olive. Some of them were determined to cast their lot with the Tombeckbee Association. They did not come to Alabama with the first settlers, but joined them in the year 1820. Among those of the West India

“A vast country presents itself to us: a country abandoned by civilized man, where is only to be seen, some points occupied, or traversed by Indian tribes, who contented with the chase leave without cultivation a territory as fertile as extended. In the adversity of which we boast, far from humbling our spirit, we exercise the first right granted to man, by the author of nature, in establishing ourselves in this land, to fertilize it by our labors, and to demand from it the products which it never refuses to perseverance.

“We attack no one, we have no hostile intentions. We ask peace and friendship from all who surround us; and will be grateful for the kindness, which will be extended to us. We will respect the religion, the laws, the manners, and the usages of the civilized nations. We will respect the independence, the customs, the mode of life of the Indian nations, whom we will not restrain either in their hunting, or in any other point of their existence.

“We will maintain with all those, to whom it will be expedient, social relations, and good neighborhood, as well as commercial pursuits.

“Our deportment will be peaceful, active and laborious; we will be useful to the extent of our power; and will render good for good.

“But if it be possible that our situation be not respected, and that persecution may follow to the deserts where we have sought a retreat, we ask it of all reasonable men; what defense would have ever been more legitimate than ours? It will be that of the most entire devotion. Our resolution is taken before hand. We have arms. The care of our preservation has imposed it upon us to furnish ourselves with them, as men in our situation always have done. The land, on which we have placed ourselves, will behold us prosper or die. There we will live honorably and free, or will find our tomb; and just men will grant a testimonial of esteem to our memory. But we have a right to look for a more happy result; and our first care ought to be to merit the general assent in tracing the simple regulations, which will be a guarantee of our dispositions.

“We will name the place, where our colony is situated, *Champ D'Azile.*

refugees who joined the colony in the canebrakes of Alabama, were the Stollenwerks, Martiners, Fourniers and Ravesies.³⁵

The company was entirely a corporation, as shown by the act of Congress making the grant, and in no manner allowed complete individual ownership of land. The exiles were assigned certain tracts of land, which they were to cultivate, but were not allowed to hold deeds to the land until complete payment had been made for the entire four townships. However, on April 26, 1822, was approved "an act supplementary to the act, entitled 'An act to set apart and dispose of certain Public Lands for the Encouragement of the Cultivation of the Vine and Olive.'"³⁶ It is as follows:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
That, whenever any individual or individuals, named in the contract entered into between the Secretary of the Treasury and Charles Villar, agent of the French Association, on the eighth day of January in the year one thousand eight hundred and nineteen, by virtue of the Act of Congress, entitled 'An Act to set apart and dispose of certain public lands for the encouragement of the cultivation of the vine and olive,' passed on the third day of March, one thousand eight hundred and seventeen, or the heirs or devisees of such individual or individuals, shall have complied with the condition of settlement and cultivation, in said contract prescribed, in proportion to his or their interest, under said contract, and in the lands thereby set apart, and shall have paid the amount of purchase money, proportionate to his or their interest

"This denomination, in recalling to us our reverses, will also recall the necessity of fixing our destiny; of setting up anew our household gods; in a word creating a new country.

"The colony, essentially agricultural and commercial, will be military for its preservation.

"It will be divided into cohorts:

"Each cohort will have a chief, who will be required to keep a register of the persons who compose it, and to preserve it in order.

"A general register formed from that of the cohorts, will be kept by the direction of the colony.

"The cohorts will be collected in the same place, that they may be the better protected from insult; and that each may live tranquilly under the protection of all.

"A colonial code shall forthwith be made, to guarantee safety and property, to prevent and repress wrongs; to secure the peace of just men, to curb the evil intentions of the wicked."

³⁵ These statements are based on a conversation with Mrs. Bayal, one of the settlers of Demopolis.

³⁶ U. S. *Statutes at Large*, vol. iii, p. 667.

in said land, within the particular periods in the said contract limited, it shall and may be lawful for the Secretary of the Treasury, and he is hereby required, to cause letters patent to be issued to such individual or individuals, or his or their heirs or devisees, for the amount of his or their interest in the lands set apart and contracted for by virtue of the said act, anything in the said act or contract contained to the contrary notwithstanding: saving, always, to the widow of any such deceased proprietor her right of dower in said lands, according to the laws of the State of Alabama.

Thus was set aside the principal object of the grant which was "not that a small number of tracts of land should be cultivated in vines and olives, but that the whole tract should be settled by persons understanding the culture of those plants."

The government kept in touch with the colony through the agent of the association, who was required by the contract to send in an annual report. There was also an agent appointed by the treasury department. A report by Charles Villar, dated Aigleville, December, 12, 1821, thus states the progress of the colony:³⁷

"In spite of our enemies, we have done more work than could be reasonably expected, considering the many losses that we have sustained to repair the spot, and, after the beginning of our settlements, the want of communication in a rough and hardly explored country, the greater part of which has been overflowed nine months of this year, and the sickness which has visited us, and deprived yet many families of their hands. Nevertheless, we may assure your excellency that between 81 actual planters for themselves or their commetans (23 being dead), forming 327 persons, we may present to the government 1,100 acres in full cultivation with their own hands, and 1,500 acres of land cultivated by lease. By anticipation we have 10,000 plants of vine in full growth; and that number had been treble had it not been for the loss of so much by accidents at sea, or out of season. As every planter now present in this State has made all possible exertions to answer fully to the expectations of the government, it would be very easy for me to prove substantially to your excellency that, from the time we left our homes till this day, we have, by an average, spent more than \$160,000. What better badge of our intention to fulfill the conditions of the contract?"

The following taken from a report of Mr. William L. Adams, agent of the treasury department, dated February, 1827, shows

³⁷ *American State Papers*, vol. iii.

how much work was done towards the cultivation of the vine, olive, etc. :

"From my own examination, and the best information I could obtain, there are seven thousand four hundred and fourteen acres cultivated in vine, corn, cotton, small grain, etc. The quantity of land planted and cultivated in vine within the four townships granted is two hundred and seventy-one and one-half acres, and the manner of planting the vine is by putting the vines ten feet apart in one direction and twenty the other, and fastening the vine to a stake put in the ground for that purpose, of a size and height to suit the vine. The plantings are in their cotton fields, and are cultivated in the same manner as their cotton is. The number of olive trees planted within the four townships granted has been three hundred and eighty-eight, some of them about six years ago, and the latest three years since. Two hundred trees were imported, and perished on the way, and twenty-five thousand seed have been planted. The tree perishes with every winter's frost, but puts up fresh shoots in the spring, which also perish with the succeeding winter's frost; and I feel confident in the belief that the tree will not succeed in this climate."

Mr. Frederic Raveries, "agent of the Tombeckbee Association," in a letter to the secretary of the treasury, dated Aigleville, February 27, 1827, thus gives some of the reasons why the conditions of the contract were not carried out.³⁸

"It will be recollected that the members of our association were chiefly composed of officers and merchants, possessing an extremely limited knowledge of either the science or practice of agriculture; that the region of country to which they were to remove was a perfect wilderness; and, under circumstances like these, it is to be expected that very many unforeseen and unexpected difficulties would present themselves; and as the common necessities and means of support must be obtained before an entrance could be made upon the principal object of the association (the culture of the vine), we have, in many instances, been obliged to neglect the performance of our contract, and yield to the more immediate and pressing demands upon our industry for a bare competency and support. Many of the grantees, unfortunately for themselves, came prematurely to their lands, they came to the trackless desert or country, almost impervious to the approach of man, without a road or passway; consequently, the means of transportation to their particular allotments of land was so impracticable and expensive that many persons upon their arrival were compelled to settle, temporarily, on their small allot-

³⁸ *American State Papers*, vol. iii.

ments around the town of Aigleville, where their funds were exhausted and they became unable to make a second settlement upon their large allotment. The surveyor's report of these lands will exhibit the difficulty of passing through the country, their notes showing that for many days they could not proceed more than 2 or 3 miles per day.

5. "Many of us were obliged to pay as much as four or five dollars per bushel for corn, and a proportionate price for many other articles of provisions, which prices were very frequently doubled by the difficulties of transportation to their residences. 40 or 50 dollars have often been paid for a cow and calf, which can now be purchased for 8 or 10 dollars. Thus commenced our settlement; and possessing little knowledge of agriculture, strangers to the language, the manners, and habits of the people of this country, we have been greatly retarded from making that rapid progress which, perhaps, the citizens of the United States would have made.

"In addition to those natural difficulties under which we labored, we had other and more serious ones to encounter; for upon almost all that part of our grant which was the easiest to settle and cultivate, the squatter, who is the pioneer of all new countries, had fixed himself. He, just having experienced the difficulties of settling a new country, at once became hostile to our claims, and sternly refused possession to the grantees, in some instances denying the right of the emigrants, and in many others threatening the most violent and determined vengeance upon any person who would interfere with his settlement. From these circumstances many were deterred coming to their lands and in many instances those difficulties exist until this day, there having been as yet but one decision upon the subject, which was in 1825, which judged to the grantee the right of possession and entry, but many continue wrongfully to hold our lands, and refuse possession.

"Again, many of the allotments, from their natural locality, being within the prairie country, admit of no settlement, on account of the impracticability of procuring water, many having dug to a great depth unsuccessfully; these still remain unsettled and unimproved. I further will remark that for several years the colony was remarkably unhealthy, scarcely a family escaped sickness, and many of the grantees died. These, sir, are some of the reasons why failures have occurred in regard to the conditions of settlement, etc. You will now permit me to mention some of the causes which have produced the failure in the condition relative to the vine; and here some of the same reasons present themselves that have been previously stated—the necessity of first acquiring the means of subsistence; the difficulty and length of time required in preparing and clearing land for that, that the 7 years had nearly elapsed before this was accomplished; yet

very early importations of the vine were made long before the time necessary for planting them. But a large quantity of those first imported arrived out of season; and when we consider the lateness of the season in Europe when the cutting must be taken, and the early time at which they must be planted here, it will be seen that any delay in the arrival of vessels must prove fatal to the vines, and they will arrive out of due season. Many more vines have been shipped in due time, and had they all safely arrived, those would have been more than requisite to comply with the condition of the contract, upon all of the allotments, by the time required. All that have arrived alive have been carefully planted, and none wasted; as evidence of which they sold at first for 25 cts. a piece, then twelve and a half, and the last year at six and a quarter cents. A great number died after planting, owing as we believe to the newness of the soil on which we were obliged to plant. The vine requires old land which we have not; and at first, not knowing the cause, the result was discouraging. Those planted in older soils grew better, and are not so apt to die. Again, many kinds of the vine have been imported which do not succeed in this country, and it is but very lately that we are enabled, in some degree, to ascertain the quality and kind of vine best adapted to this climate. At this time the great question seems to be the proper mode of cultivation, and, instead of seven, perhaps seventy years may be required to ascertain this fact. This will be readily conceded when it is known that in France, in many places, the mode of cultivation is radically different on opposite sides of the same river or mountain, and on farms differently situated in the same country. Your excellency is well aware how many years, nay centuries, Europe has required to obtain this experience and perfection. We can assert that from our own experience, seven years are not sufficient to enable us to cultivate the vine successfully in an old country, and much more so in a wilderness."

As late as the year 1828 some of the grantees were striving to cultivate the vine. In a letter of Frederick Ravesies to the treasury department, dated January 18, 1828, is the following: "We have suffered severely from the unparalleled drought of the last summer; many of our largest and finest looking vines, which had just commenced bearing luxuriantly, were totally killed by the dry hot weather. Yet, notwithstanding this misfortune, the grantees, with increased diligence, are using every exertion to procure others which are thought to be more congenial to the soil and climates, and are now generally engaged in replanting."³⁹

³⁹ *American State Papers*, vol. iii.

Although the tone of these reports was always hopeful, yet the grantees found themselves contending with difficulties which could not be overcome. The vine and olive had both proven totally unsuited to the soil and climate. Eyed with suspicion by the government, harrassed by squatters, their situation unknown to the association in Philadelphia, it was impossible for them to continue their undertaking. In spite of their many efforts to make the cultivation of the vine and olive a success, the forces which had been at work were rapidly causing the destruction of the colony. The wealthiest and most prominent of the exiles began one by one to seek more peaceful homes in the neighboring cities, or to return to Europe. Many, mindful of the kindness they had received, sought homes in Mobile; while many of the chief men were allowed by the Bourbons to return to France and again take their places among the leaders, both in military and civil affairs. After the leaders had left, many of the others were not slow to follow their example; for as soon as they could raise a sufficient amount by disposing of their grant and other property, they sought other places of abode, and before many years the grant ceased to be distinctly French. There were some who remained on their grants, but they were soon swallowed up by the great tide of American emigrants who sought the fertile lands of the "black belt" of Alabama.

It is true that this association, organized to cultivate the vine and olive in Alabama, had but a very brief existence, yet there are names found in Marengo and the adjoining counties, which serve constantly to remind us of the little band of Bonapartists who settled on the White Bluff. To-day, one can find no evidence in the typically Southern town of Demopolis, which will show that it was once the abode of a band of Napoleon's heartiest supporters. Yet the talents and virtues of the colonists and their descendants have made a lasting impression, for Alabama boasts of no names more honorable than those borne by the descendants of the original shareholders in the French grant in Alabama.

There were many distinguished characters among this band of emigrants. The most noted of these, perhaps, was General Lefebvre-Desnouettes, who was born in 1773. He was an aide-camp to Bonaparte at Marengo and for his gallantry at Austerlitz was made commandant of the Legion of Honor. He shared

Napoleon's carriage in the disastrous retreat from Moscow. In the battle of Saragossa he commanded a division and was captured in Soult's pursuit of Sir John Moore to Corunna. He was conspicuous in the victory of Bautzen and received a wound in a charge at Brienne. Napoleon made him count of the empire and lieutenant-general upon his return from Elba and he took part in the battle of Waterloo. Upon Napoleon's departure for Elba in bidding farewell to his soldiers at Fontainebleau he embraced Desnouettes in behalf of them all. In his will the Emperor bequeathed him 150,000 francs. He was marked for one of the victims of Bourbon hate, and in May, 1816, was condemned to death, without trial, by the first court martial of the second division, but in the meantime he had escaped to the United States. He was vivacious and active, handsome in person and graceful in carriage and one of the best riders of his age. He was very wealthy and spent his fortune liberally for the benefit of the colony. Near his main dwelling was a small cabin which he called his sanctuary, in the center of it stood a very handsome bronze statue of Napoleon, and the walls of the room were hung with flags, swords, pistols, and other trophies of war. His wife, the sister of the celebrated banker La Fitte, often sent him large sums of money from France, and it was through her negotiations and the influence of her family that the government at last gave him permission to reside in Belgium. He left his grant in 1823 and sailed in the ship *Albion*, which was wrecked off the coast of Ireland. The distinguished refugee was washed overboard and found a watery grave.⁴⁰

Nicholas Raoul, another distinguished settler, accompanied Napoleon in his banishment to Elba and led his advance guard of two hundred grenadiers upon his return march to Paris. He was a colonel under Bonaparte and an officer of great merit. At the time of his stay in Alabama he was in the prime of life. He was a large, fine looking man, his air and bearing being decidedly military, energetic in speech and action and quick to resent the slightest insult. He dwelt upon his grant for several years, but becoming much reduced in circumstances, was forced to keep a ferry across French creek, three miles east of Demopolis. His

⁴⁰ Pickett's *History of Alabama*, Brewer's *Alabama*, and Prof. McCorvey's "Vine and Olive Colony" are my chief sources of information for these sketches of the most prominent men.

wife, a handsome woman of the Italian style of beauty, and a native of Naples, had been Marchioness of Sinibaldi, and maid of honor to Queen Caroline. Her two children by a former husband came to this country with her. Travelers passing over the creek often wondered what manner of people these were who kept the ferry. In 1824, Colonel Raoul and his wife went to Mexico, where the colonel took part in the revolution. At length returning to France he obtained a commission of general in the French army and held other important positions in the service of his country, among which was governor of Toulon.

Jean A. Penniers was a member of the National Assembly and voted for the execution of Louis XVI. He remained about Demopolis for a few years engaged in agriculture, but having procured an appointment as sub-agent to the Seminoles, moved to Florida where he died in 1823. He had been distinguished in France and honored with many civil appointments and was at last expatriated for his adherence to the fortunes of Bonaparte.

J. Jerome Cluis, another of the refugees, cultivated his grant near Greensboro. He had been an aid to Marshal Lefebvre, the Duke of Rivigo, who later became the head of the police department of Paris. Colonel Cluis was then his secretary. When Napoleon had Ferdinand VII, king of Spain, imprisoned near the Spanish frontier, Cluis was appointed to keep him in custody. Like many of the refugees he found that he could accomplish nothing by planting the vine and olive in Alabama. Having become reduced in circumstances he kept a tavern in Greensboro. After some years he left his tavern and moved to Mobile where he spent his last days.

Simon Chaudron, "the blind poet of the canebrake," was another of the settlers. He formerly resided in Philadelphia, where his house was a center of elegance and wit. He was a poet and scholar of repute, and had been editor of the "*Abeille Americaine.*" The eulogy, which he delivered before the grand lodge of Philadelphia upon the life and character of Washington was pronounced a fine effort both in Europe and America. He lived about Demopolis for a few years but finally moved to Mobile where he died in 1846 at a very advanced age. He left behind him many very interesting works which were published in France.

General Count Bertrand Clausel, an officer of merit throughout Napoleon's campaigns, had command at Bordeaux during the Hundred Days. Having made the Duchess of Angouleme prisoner, he released her for reasons which were never known. He did not occupy his grant on the Tombigby but in 1821 settled on the bay near Mobile, where he raised vegetables for the market and carted them into the city himself. In 1825 he was allowed to return to France and was made governor and marshal of Algeria by Louis Philippe.

Henry L'Allemand, who had been a lieutenant-general and commanded the artillery of the imperial army, was an officer of great merit and a man of high ambition. General Charles L'Allemand, his brother was an officer of distinction in France and commanded Napoleon's foot artillery. They were both at Waterloo and gave proof of the greatest courage. Henry L'Allemand was filled with ambitious and daring projects which could not be satisfied in the colony on the Tombigby. He soon made a hazardous expedition to Texas, having collected his followers at Philadelphia and in Alabama. His band suffered greatly for want of provisions after arriving at Galveston Island but was generously relieved by the pirate La Fitte. Prostrated by sickness and annoyed by Indians, in a short time many of the colonists perished and the undertaking failed.

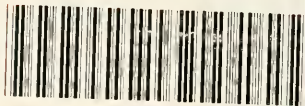
Marshal Grouchy was one of the Philadelphia associates. He was a man of middle stature and his appearance showed very little of his military training. As his comrades could not stand his presence, on account of his conduct at Waterloo to which they imputed the loss of the day, he did not settle his grant in Alabama but sent his son Victor who had been a captain in the French army. The marshal, wishing to vindicate himself, became involved in controversies with the emigrants in the American papers. After some years of exile he was allowed to return to France and to enjoy honors under the Bourbons.

M. Lakanal, a savant, was one of the members of the National Assembly and had voted for the death of Louis XVI. During the empire he had charge of the department of education; a position where many honors were bestowed on him. He did not live on his grant but settled on the bay near Mobile in 1819. After a long residence in Mobile he returned to France where he died in 1843.

Frederic Raviesies was a native of Bordeaux. Being Bourbons his family were compelled to flee upon the downfall of the monarchy. His father took his family to San Domingo where he opened extensive plantations. His mother and sister were murdered in the insurrection, but he and his father escaped to Philadelphia where his father soon died. Frederic rose very rapidly in business and held many positions of trust and was for a long time director of the Bank of Philadelphia. He first married Mary Roan and after her death he married Madame Adele Gertrude Davide, widow of General Davide, one of Napoleon's favorite generals. In 1820 he obtained the agency of the "Tombeckbee Association." He lived on his grant for some years but finally moved to Mobile where he died in 1854 at the age of seventy-eight.⁴¹

⁴¹ From a sketch of his life written by Prof. J. W. Beeson in an article on Demopolis.

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