

Winnsboro, S.C.

April 17, 1958.

Dearest Riley:

I am sitting in my room watching the strong wind blow the trees outdoors, and also watching the putting down of large black iron pipes for water and sewerage on the block on Buchanan Street just west of my house before the hardsurfacing material is laid on this block- on Woodward Street- the new street from Vanderhorst to Garden next to Joyner house. I guess I have never grown up for I have always been fascinated with construction work. And out the window I see huge iron pipelifters, road behemoths that cut a pipe ditch as quickly as a man winks. I can watch such for an hour at a time when close to machinery. I am that way about house building, too, I shall be interestedly looking at the Foster house when it starts in June right across from my piazza.

About Colonel Rion, his legal claim to be the son of the heir to the French throne secreted to Canada by Royalists in the terrible annihilation of babes to catch him during the Reformation in France is proven. This by the legal testimony and records of a lady from Florida, who never heard of the son of the Dauphin living in Winnsboro. She was the descendant of a Dr. John Buchanan of Montreal Canada, Buchanan from Scotland at the date given as stated in her family Bible- brought the heir to the F. throne, a child, and his widowed mother, who had married the grown-up Dauphin in Canada- to Savannah to be left there to be taken hastily over and put on the throne if the cause proved to be strong enough to do so. This child, and wife were under the guardianship of James H. Calhoun. The cause in France grew weaker, and hopeless, so Calhoun took the babe and reared him in his home, giving him the care and love of a child of his own- retaining his name. Colonel Rion*- James Henry de Rion as he was first known- had there under Calhoun a beautiful education, including a legal training. He was in the Civil War, and refused a brigadier-generalship- because he felt he could be nearer his men, and inspire them to better efforts as colonel. He came to Winnsboro. and was a noted barrister- a man of brilliant mind, and a charming personality. With no law schools then, many young men read law under James Rion here. During the Civil War his mother was in charge of the Confederate Hospital, which was in the old Cathcart house that once stood where the A.R. P. Church is today. She was proved to be a woman of fine intellect, and character.

Colonel Rion had heart trouble, and my grandmother Buchanan's first cousin, Dr. Thomas Robertson (lived in the old house John Buchanan took down to build his store) was his doctor. Colonel Rion and Mrs. Rion were intimate friends of my parents- they were almost like relatives; and Colonel Rion in his humble way told Dr. Robertson he had something he wished to divulge to his family just before the end. And he exacted a promise that Dr. Robertson would tell him when he thought his end was near so he could tell them a secret. So on a night Dr. Robertson told him he could tell his family what he wished. He called his wife, and said for her to look in the corner of his trunk, and bring him a carefully-wrapped package. She did, and when it was unwrapped there were gold snuff box with the Bourbon crest, and an ivory crucifix with

gold Bourbon initials on it. He said " I have never told you but I am the son of the Dauphin of France, and these belonged to my father, ~~had~~ to the throne. He was secreted to Canada, grew up there, married an English Canadian, and died a very young man in Canada. I wish the eldest male of every generation to be named James Henry, and to have these mementoes".

The morning afterwards, old Mrs. Rion. sent a note for my mother to come to her she had something to tell her- and that she was greatly grieved the Colonel had passed in the night. This is the story that Mrs. Rion told my mother. This lady in Florida wrote the news of the ancestor bringing the Rions to Savannah. She was from Clearwater, Florida, and in the Clearwater Museum is the complete history of the Dauphin from the time he came to this continent. It was written and placed there by the Mrs. Madeline Buchanan Gill, whose great-great-grandfather had brought the Rions to Savannah. Holbrook Rion of Columbia, and Ed Rion, both have all this data, too, had from the Florida record. Colonel Rion was the only rich man in the county immediately after the Civil War. He was the lawyer for the Charlotte, Augusta, and Savannah Railroad (now the Southern) He got his fees from them and two other corporations in United States tender- while the rest of the country was starving without any good script. He lived in luxury, and entertained the prominent men of the state lavishly. He had his private gas plant for lighting, and some heating- bellpulls and speaking tubes were taken out of the house by the Rabbs, who bought the home. He connected a filter plant he made with the water tank of the Southern Railroad that used to stand in front of Pat Walker's house on the tracks there. When my father built the home for my mother in 1883, Colonel Rion was generous and kind in letting us connect with his pipes. So we never have been without waterworks since the house was built, tubs up and downstairs was our luck when Winnsboro had no sewerage, and water works. We had a gasoline pump and a 20 foot tank in our cellar. His children did not reflect too much glory on the name. The youngest, a fascinating daughter, Hannah, had 4 husbands, and goes down in Who. history as holding a record. I recall, when she divorced the first, and arrived in town with Number 2; very handsome son of the Williams of Sherwin-Williams Paint owner, the Obear, and Walker households were the only homes to receive her. She was considered a disgraced woman, beyond the pale of society. This is a book? I hope to get exact copies of these records some day, and publish this charming, and rare romance that makes the 'Boro outstanding for I am sure no other town in the country has such. Lockwood Doty, N.B.C. commentator, three years ago said no one ever knew what became of the babe that legend said escaped to Canada. I wrote him, and we had a great correspondence on the subject, and he asked what would be the relation of Colonel Rion to the Pretender to the French throne, who only two years ago was allowed to return to France. I worked out 4th. cousin- but to be sure asked the French Ambassador in W. He agreed with me in the relationship.

Hope you are keeping up the good work, and will be in town soon. Love to you and Mary Lou,

Alvin

P.S. When my ship comes in one of the first purchases will be a good typewriter. Please excuse machine. A.W.