

The more Col Gabel unearths, especially evidence about the origins of items Col Rion listed as evidence of his royal paternity, along with the DNA test, the more it seems Col Rion was either on laudanum, was trying to assure his kids he wasn't a bastard and/or clear John C. Calhoun of adultery (protect the Calhoun family from any scandal), believed it and was trying to shore it up with the artifacts, or some combination.

If it weren't true, why would Calhoun tell him the Dauphin story? Because he'd been told? By whom? Or because some story of the Col's birth other than Calhoun was necessary? It is possible that a number of émigrés were perpetuating such stories thinking they were protecting the real dauphin.

Other than Dr. Hanahan's letter related the Col's death bed story, there is no evidence Calhoun told the Col he was the dauphin.

There are more anomalies or holes in the story. Calhoun was Sec. of War from 1817-**1825**. He wanted to go to war with Britain when a congressman in 1812, when the dauphin would've been about 32, and supposedly a British army officer. James H. Rion was born in **1828**, when the dauphin would've been about 48 (very unusual age for a first marriage and child in those days), and Calhoun was vice president.

Why didn't the Col. do anything to try to claim some at least of his inheritance, being the lawyer and fighter he was, and not that wealthy. Fear never seemed to count much with him, and by the 1870s and 80s, query how much danger there would've been.

Even to a child in the 1950's, the "a French Man of war will come for you if you are to be reinstated", didn't make any sense. How would the French even know where to find Preston or who he was? According to the Col's, the only, story, only Calhoun and the Col's mother knew who he was, and they were both dead. How was Preston's French? What kind of training/education did the Col acquire/give him to prepare him for a throne? On the other hand, the Col's mother certainly went to great lengths to educate him very well.

Mrs. Rion would have been sure of its origin of the silver tureen the Calhouns gave them and bought back after the Col's death when his family was in dire straits. It is possible that she was aware of when the other items, the ball, crucifix and snuff box came into Rion's possession, but there's not the same definitive proof. They may all have been given to Rion by his mother before or after James and Kitty got married. The story about the different origin of the snuff box cannot be verified and could be just another story. Unless of course they were the dauphin's, query if Margaret Hunter Rion wouldn't have sold the articles (other than the tureen which the Calhouns gave the Rions) when they were in such straits in 1828.

Why did he falsely name those items as evidence? That is almost as hard to explain as anything else, given his character. All the evidence of his integrity, honor and character indicates he would've been more inclined to manufacture evidence for his tale if it were to serve the Calhouns and his children rather than his own grandiosity, which he apparently lacked, unless you count the total inability to accept any insult or anything disparaging of his honor.

There is more support for a theory that he made up the story as cover. Twain's Huckleberry Finn, with the Duke of Bridgewater and the Lost Dauphin, as well as (Wheeler?) the model for such were prominent at the time. The Col. likely read Huckleberry Finn and had a sense of humor. Most really intelligent people do, and there's some evidence (his derailing the lynching "do any of you gentlemen have any clean linen" was written down shortly after his death, but there's no other record of such a dramatic event so the story is probably apocryphal, but why did it stick around if not also his style, and there is that "that's funny" re his friend's sending a letter when he was to meet with him). His humor was unusual, it appears.

What better poetic justice that to substitute really/absurdly big lineage for the Calhoun rumor for those SC folks who were such rumor mongers and required lineage-self-made from brilliance education, honor, integrity and hard work—not good enough, and there was a long standing tradition of hidden high birth showing up in excellence—nobility will out.

The theory which best fits the evidence is that the Col made up and perpetrated the dauphin story to, in effect, clean his family and the Calhouns' escutcheons of the stain of the rumor John C. fathered him out of wedlock, that he never believed it but acted as if he did to accomplish this on his deathbed—and he did, substituting a bigger legend, another Lost Dauphin story, like about 400 others over the years—his being one of the latest. Of course, I'm very biased, and this story fits my image of him as sane and honorable above all else.

Jim Rion to Col Gabel in two emails

Col. [JAGabel response to first email](#)- 09/19/06 3:55 AM >>>

Your postulation does make sense. However, I still feel that Col. Rion was told the story early in his life and believed it. If we can believe what Judge Thomas wrote, Rion showed an interest in the story of the "Lost Dauphin" as early as his wartime service. So it wasn't a story he came up with later in life. A couple of other clues to the timing of when he may have been told the story

is that he said he did not learn the story until he was 21 years old and was sworn to secrecy. When he responded to the census taker on 15 Oct 1850, he said he was 20 years old and was born in Alabama. (The cover-up had already started.) I had postulated that when John C. Calhoun had returned to Washington, DC from Fort Hill in December 1859, he had stopped off at SC College and visited with Rion and told him the story (when Rion was actually 21 years old). It is also possible that Rion and the two Calhoun boys, James and Willie, had returned to Fort Hill for the winter break between semesters. In any case, Calhoun died in Washington, DC in March 1850, so this would have been the last opportunity for him to have been the source of the story.

For some reason, by the 1860 census, Rion had corrected his age and birthplace, giving them as 32 and "Lower Canada."

The mystery continues.

Jim

### Press Release Fairfield Cnty Museum @ Sep.13, 2006

Another interesting story is well known by many locals. Colonel James Rion was a prominent lawyer in Fairfield and an officer in the Confederate Army. On his deathbed, he revealed to his family that he was the son of the lost Dauphin of France, the son of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI who were beheaded during the French Revolution. Although historical accounts indicate the royal son died while being imprisoned, the story that excited many generations of Winnsboroans was that he was secreted out of jail by the wife of the jailer and substituted with a pauper boy who shortly afterwards died. The grown royal heir ended up in Canada and married a Canadian whose father served in the British Army. Mr. Rion died before the boy, James Rion was born. South Carolina Senator, U.S. Secretary of War, and US Vice President John C. Calhoun became the boy's sponsor, paid for his education, and secured his advancement in law and business after his service in the Civil War.

Recent DNA tests were performed on the desiccated heart of the boy who died in jail. At an official autopsy a French doctor had secreted the organ away and, over the generations, it ended up in a European museum in a jar of preservative. The tests were compared to the DNA in a known lock of Queen Marie's hair and proved that the boy dying in jail was the actual royal heir, or Dauphin. Regardless of this recent testing, the story of Winnsboro's claim to royalty persists to this day.