

*file wt. Col Rion history / make copy for Confederate / Civil War  
file to*

**From:** <JAGabel@aol.com>  
**To:** <jrion@drss.state.sc.us>  
**Date:** 3/10/2005 3:39:57 AM  
**Subject:** Re: your great response to my col rion stories

In a message dated 2/28/2005 10:27:45 AM Mountain Standard Time, jrion@drss.state.sc.us writes:

> The lack of any record of Henri Rion is extremely interesting and  
> consistent with a very open door or hole re the Col's. paternity. There  
> may have been no Henri Rion. then who? John C. Calhoun? Also do you  
> read anything into the convergence of dates. in spring and summer of  
> '28-Henri Rion dies. Col James H. rion is born. His mother's parents  
> die. He and his mom go south.

Although some at the time wanted to read a potential for John C. Calhoun's paternity into the circumstances surrounding Rion's association with him, I don't think so. (Even Dr. Hanahan's statement about his death, showed that some at the time, including his own family, thought that was the case.) There are too many independent accounts of the almost accidental events that lead up to Mrs. Rion becoming the housekeeper at Fort Hill. Another thing that somewhat points away from an earlier association between them is that in an early letter by Calhoun, he spells the name "Ryan," which I don't think he would have done had he been intimately associated with them before.

The convergence of the dates reinforces the story line that Mrs. Rion felt she was under threat of death by some source and disappeared from Montreal to protect herself and her son from meeting the same fate as her husband and parents. The fact that she successfully avoided the census taker during her life in the US only feeds into the belief that she was hiding from someone.

>  
> I don't think I'd heard anything about Henri supposedly being murdered.  
> anymore on that?

The story that Henri Rion was poisoned was all part of the story that Mrs. Madeline Buchanan Gill wove about "The Lost Dauphin of France" after she resurrected the story in 1931. She just stated that it happened, but never provided any documentation to support the claim. So much of her story was supposed to be supported by material in the "Secret Archives" in the Cathedral in Montreal and in Austria.

>  
> I also found the news on the letter with Nelle (McMaster) Sprott in  
> Winnsboro very interesting, and I will pursue, perhaps, with the  
> Sprotts. "Here sister, Jane (McMaster) Roehrs, had just found the typed  
> story on a piece of paper in a dresser that had been passed down in the  
> family. " That is my favorite Col Rion story, that even Faulkner

> couldn't top. Twain's "The Man who ruined Hadleyville", great as it is,  
> doesn't compare.  
> Any idea re origins or truth. Does "Any of you gentlemen have clean  
> linen I can borrow" sound like him? Too humorous?

It does sound more humorous than the rather staid picture that I have formed of Col. Rion. Let me know what you find out about the origin of the story.

Something else you may be able to find out for me is what happened to Col. Rion's son, William Calhoun Rion. He died 10 Aug 1889 and his youngest daughter, Lucile, died 10 Jul 1889. Kate Obear, in her book "Through the Years in Old Winnsboro," describes the events after Col. Rion's death as "Maggie lived with her brother Willie most of the time. Mrs. Rion seemed very restless, and to find it hard to adjust herself to changed conditions. At one time, no one was with her but little Jimmie, Preston's oldest son. Then Willie was stricken with a fatal illness, and she had him with her until he died, after which Maggie secured a position as librarian at the University of South Carolina and moved to Columbia, taking Lucille (sic), Willie's widow, and her two children, Willie and Margaret, to make their home permanently with her."

When I was back in Winnsboro doing my research, I poured over the microfilms of the local paper and was unable to find anything mentioning that time frame. From the fact that Obear describes it as a fatal illness and Willie's youngest daughter died a month earlier, the thought came to mind that there was some type of epidemic that occurred that got them both. If you have the time, maybe you can find some mention in the newspapers in the surrounding towns, or possibly even Columbia.

Jim