

Tale of Son Being Reared by John C. Calhoun Is Not Countenanced

Columbia, July 8. – The story that the lost Dauphin of France, son of Louis XVI, was smuggled to America and had a son who was reared by John C. Calhoun was discounted yesterday by A.S. Salley, secretary of the South Carolina historical commission.

“The story is an old one,” Mr. Salley said, “but there is no foundation for it.”

It originated, he said, when James Henry Rion, of Winnsboro, S.C., made a death-bed statement in which he asserted his father, Henry Rion, was the Dauphin.

Several days later, one of James Henry Rion’s sons, Preston Rion, declared his father had been under influence of an opiate and was not responsible for the statement he made on his deathbed.

James Henry Rion died December 12, 1886, after a brilliant career as a lawyer.

Little is known of his parentage, Mr. Salley said, except that his mother was a brilliant woman whom Calhoun met in Savannah and secured to become his housekeeper and act as companion to Mrs. Calhoun.

Rion attended school at South Carolina College, now the University of South Carolina, and became a practicing lawyer in Winnsboro.

During his entire career, he refused to accept any political office, although he was one of South Carolina’s most prominent men. This has been used, Mr. Salley said, in the argument to show he believed he was heir to the French throne and had no right to be an officeholder in America.

Newspapers of South Carolina carried the story of Mr. Rion’s death-bed statement and of his son’s denial.

Dispatches from Clearwater, Fla., yesterday quoted Mrs. Madeline Buchanan Gill as telling of the smuggling of the Dauphin from France and how he settled in Canada, where he died before his son, who was given the name of James Henry Rion, was born.

[Newspaper article, no publication information; no date. Obituary Scrapbook, Richard Winn Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution (2014.129)]