

STORIES of New Jersey

"Familiar with misfortune, I have learned to help the wretched." His neighborliness was repaid when townspeople, in the winter of 1820, hastened to rescue his many priceless possessions which were endangered by a fire that destroyed the mansion. Another house was at once constructed about the elaborate stables which were remodeled and incorporated into the new 30-room dwelling.

It was in 1820, too, that a delegation came from Mexico--then in revolt against Spain--to ask Joseph to become king of that country. Dramatically he announced: "I have worn two crowns; I would not take a step to wear a third... Follow the example of the United States and seek among your fellow citizens a man more capable than I am of acting the great part of Washington." Napoleon, approaching the end of his lonely exile on an island in the Atlantic, disappointedly said: "He is too fond of the pleasures of life to bother himself again with the burden of a crown..." The following year brought news of Napoleon's death at St. Helena. Joseph, greatly moved, declared that his brother had "died a victim to the cruelty of his enemies."

The "Little Corporal's" death did not change life at Point Breeze. Bonapartes and Bonapartists still journeyed to Bordentown to plot and plan for restoration of their wealth and power in France. In 1822 Joseph's daughter Zenaide married her cousin Charles Bonaparte, and the young couple moved into the large 3-story brick house that was built for them at the lakeside. For their convenience in bad weather, a long shed starting from the house led along the side of the bluff and connected with a brick tunnel. The tunnel, 50 feet long and 10 feet wide, provided a direct passageway from the shore of Crosswicks Creek to the interior of the mansion on the bluff. Doors in the tunnel also gave access to the cellar of the mansion and to the ice house. A section still remains.

Joseph's second daughter, Charlotte, also married a first cousin, Napoleon Louis, who as a child had succeeded his father, Louis Bonaparte, on the throne of Holland for a very brief period. His mother was Napoleon's step-daughter Hortense, daughter of Josephine. Unlike Zenaide's husband Charles Bonaparte, who became famous as an ornithologist, Napoleon Louis had a short and fruitless career. In 1831, at the age of 27, he met his death in a political uprising in Italy where he and Charlotte had gone to live. Also to Italy went Charles and Zenaide in 1828, and there they raised eight children, one of whom became a cardinal in the Catholic Church. From Point Breeze they carried with them memories of Charles' early study of American birds--a study which resulted in the publication of his book, *Ornithology*, and in friendship with John James Audubon, the great American ornithologist.

Before they had left Bordentown, Zenaide and Charles had aided Joseph in entertaining Lafayette when he visited Bordentown twice during his tour as a guest of the nation in 1824. The Marquis was always friendly with Joseph Bonaparte though the two men differed politically. On his first visit, the Bonaparte family and their friends went down the Delaware on the large barge to meet the steamboat carrying Lafayette. They boarded the steamer and the barge was taken in tow. At Bordentown the party returned to the barge and sailed up Crosswicks Creek to Point Breeze. On both visits Lafayette and Joseph rode through the streets of Bordentown, bowing to the enthusiastic cheers of the inhabitants.

A year later, in 1825, when Lucien Murat, the son of Joseph's sister Catherine, came to live at Bordentown, he gave his cousins and his uncle Joseph someone to worry about. Lucien was 22 on his arrival and extremely fond of gambling, hunting and drinking. A constant drain on his uncle's purse, Lucien angered the aristocratic Bonapartes by carousing with the youths of the neighborhood and borrowing money from everyone he knew. He even borrowed from the sta-