

## **The General's Family ~**

Mary Esther Videau (1737-1815) married her cousin, General Francis Marion, on April 20, 1786, after the close of the Revolutionary War, he being as well advanced in his bachelorship as she in her spinsterhood. The nuptial ceremony was performed at Pond Bluff, a plantation on the Santee River, in St. John's Berkeley Parish, then owned by Mary Esther, the widow of Anthony Ashby, the same evening that Theodore Samuel Marion (1763-1827), the General's cousin (son of the General's brother Job), was united in marriage to Charlotte Ashby, the widow above mentioned, and daughter of Gabriel Marion (abt.1720-1777)(the General's brother), of Belle Isle Plantation. The Rev. William Ellington, Rector of the Parish of St. James' Goose Creek, being the officiating clergyman for both couples.

An interesting family history note on Theodore Samuel and his uncle, Francis, goes like this: Theodore Samuel began wooing Charlotte, the daughter of Gabriel, and the widow of Anthony Ashby, once a captain in the old Second Regiment. As his own courtship prospered, Theodore hinted to his uncle that he, too, should try matrimony. His friends and relatives also whispered that Mary Esther Videau, a very eligible spinster of St. John's Parish, always listened with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes when anyone began reciting the exploits of the Swamp Fox. Francis took the hint. Mary Esther was his first cousin, the daughter of his Aunt Anne Cordes and Henry Videau. She was about his age, and he had known her since childhood. Though normally shy, now bolstered by well-wishing kin, he began paying court. She received his attention modestly . . . but warmly. Finally, he proposed, and she accepted. On April 20, 1786, surrounded by the women and children for whose safety he had fought and by the men whom he had led to victory, Francis met Mary Esther at the altar. Theodore also led Charlotte. This double wedding was doubly happy, for it solemnized the union of the families of his beloved brothers.

The marriage was a natural and suitable one; the parties being cousins, and already close friends and correspondents, and the handsome fortune of the lady was, along with herself, a fitting reward for the war-worn and laurelled hero, whose finances had been rendered none the better by the perils of war.

Mary Esther Videau, like himself, came from good old Huguenot stock, he proposed to her and was accepted. Neither of them was young - - - this marriage, alike of love and convenience, was without issue; but, both husband and wife, yearning for some object of parental affection, each sought gratification of the feeling in the adoption of a child. Before his marriage, the General, it is said, had

designated, as his heir, his favorite and gallant nephew, Gabriel Marion (1750-1780), son of Gabriel, one of his elder brothers, a noble and interesting youth, and a Lieutenant in the Continental service, who was captured and murdered, by a party of Tories, near Georgetown, during the Revolutionary War.

After his marriage, the General adopted, as his son and heir, his grand-nephew Francis Marion Dwight (1777-1833)(son of Samuel Dwight and Rebecca Allston Marion, his wife,) the grand-son of Isaac Marion, the General's eldest brother, and Rebecca Allston, his wife. The General's wife, Mary Esther, on her part, adopted, as her daughter, Charlotte Videau Ashby, a grand-niece of the General, and the grand-daughter of Gabriel Marion (the General's brother), and daughter of Charlotte Marion by Anthony Ashby, her first husband. Both of the adopted children, it is believed, became inmates/residents of the General's family, and they were loved and cared for as son and daughter.

The death of the General took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1795, and by his last will and testament, dated 16 October 1787, he left his widow absolutely all the property she had brought him in marriage; and the whole of his own estate, real and personal, during her widowhood, and, after her death, or marriage, to his adopted son, Francis Marion Dwight, on his legally taking the name of Marion, (which as subsequently effected by act of the legislature,) and appointed her sole executrix, with directions to give his adopted son a liberal education.

The General, although poor at his marriage, had before his death, by successful culture as a planter, accumulated a handsome estate, in addition to that derived from his wife; and she was therefore left a very wealthy widow. His will was drawn in his own hand-writing, and signed by himself, but was not executed in the presence of any witness or witnesses, and as the law of this State then stood, it was operative only to pass personal, and not real estate. The consequence was that he died intestate as to his lands, and, by our statute of distributions (in 1791), one half went to his widow, and the other half between and among his numerous nephews and nieces, he having survived all his brothers and his only sister, and it so happening that his adopted son (whose mother, the General's niece, had died before him), being only a grand-nephew, inherited no portion of his lands, according to our law of distributions, not extending beyond brothers' and sisters' children (nephews and nieces), and altogether excluding grand-nephews and grand-nieces in favor of nephews and nieces.

Widow Mary Esther Videau Marion purchased from most, if not all, of the heirs of her deceased husband's distributive shares of real estate, and remained in possession of his homestead (Pond Bluff), on the Santee River, in the Parish of St. John's Berkeley, until her death. The personal estate of the General, on her death, passed, under his will, to his adopted son.

Another bit of family history in an August 21, 1863 *Charleston Courier* newspaper, I found the following related story:

Negro Fidelity – We take pleasure in recording the instance of love and fidelity in a slave to his master, it being the fifth of the kind in the same family connection. The faithful and attached fellow is the slave of Capt Francis Marion Dwight, a South Carolinian by birth, but now a resident of Georgia, who was among the paroled prisoners at Vicksburg:

*Sunny Side, August 1863*

*Dear -----: I wrote you so hurriedly that I don't think I told you of the addition of another black hero to our family. The Yankees took Patrick from Frank, as he was marching out of Vicksburg. Patrick cried bitterly, on his separation from his master, but it did not move a Yankee heart. He was taken to Gen. Logan's headquarters, and offered many inducements to stay with the Yankees. He says they offered him a hundred dollars a month and a gun to shoot his master. He indignantly rejected the proposal, saying, "Wna'sort a nigger you tek me to be --- go shoot my moser I lub --- I tell you, if I git way, I won't stay wid you for a thousand dollars a day." He said, --- "Missis --- I nebber cus white man befo', but I cus'em den." He was kept at Gen. Logan's headquarters all day, and at night, he made his escape, and went to Lieut. Suttles, of Frank's Company, who fell badly wounded at Vicksburg. Lieut. S. passed Patrick as his own servant, and, as wounded men were allowed to carry out their servants, he brought Patrick out with him. Even after he got home, Patrick seemed seated. Poor fellow, he was wise. He told his captors --- "You'd feed me wid soft corn now, dem bum by you'll choke me wid de cob"; whereupon, he says, the Yankees called him "a bad, sassy nigger."*