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Patricia Tyson Stroud, *The Man Who Had Been King: The American Exile of Napoleon's Brother Joseph*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005. 269 pp. Plates, notes, bibliography, and index. \$34.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-8122-3872-9.

Review by Wayne Hanley, West Chester University of Pennsylvania.

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Few people, even specialists of the Napoleonic era, realize that Joseph Bonaparte spent nearly two decades during his exile living in and around Philadelphia. In her cultural biography of Joseph, *The Man Who Had Been King*, Patricia Tyson Stroud details those years in a manner that should appeal to both enthusiasts and scholars of the Napoleonic era. Throughout her discussion, Stroud makes use of previously unused or little-used sources to shed greater light on the dilemma of Joseph's exile: his contentment with his life as a country gentleman, and his longing to be reunited with his family and to return to France.

From the moment of his arrival in America in 1815, one striking feature of Joseph Bonaparte's exile was his attempt to maintain a low profile. Drawing on the correspondence of former congressman Joseph Hopkinson, US Attorney-General Richard Rush and others, Stroud suggests that Joseph's initial desire for anonymity was well founded. Napoleonic France was unpopular among many in America, and Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo was a cause for celebration. Joseph's presence could have been the cause for a diplomatic incident between the United States and the new Bourbon government in France. Ironically, many of his most skeptical critics, including Hopkinson and Rush, would become some of Joseph's closest American friends (p. 17). What won over these individuals was not only the affability of Joseph's personality, but also his refusal to participate in the political intrigues of other Napoleonic exiles. While he supported various efforts to settle these émigrés in America and while he welcomed such figures as Marshal Grouchy, General Lefebvre-Desnouettes and the Lallemand brothers at his New Jersey estate, the Count de Survilliers (Joseph's title of choice in exile) declined an invitation to accept the Mexican throne or to participate in various plots to rescue his brother from Ste. Helena. He was determined to live the life he had always sought--that of a country gentleman.

Although the basic narrative of Joseph's American exile is generally well covered in secondary literature, it is in describing this life that Stroud is at her best, providing greater detail than one typically finds in earlier sources.[1] She describes the evolution of Joseph's estate in Bordentown, his gradual acceptance as an important member of the community, and his integration into Philadelphia society. After several residences in Philadelphia, Joseph learned of an available property in New Jersey that would meet his needs. The estate, Point Breeze, allowed easy access to both Philadelphia and New York, and the region had previously been recommended to Joseph by Madame de Staël. In July 1816, the property was purchased by James Carret on behalf of the Count de Survilliers. In January 1817 Joseph assumed sole ownership when the New Jersey state legislature amended the laws to allow a non-citizen to own property within the state. According to Stroud, "Joseph found some measure of tranquility he had longed for all his life, and as soon as he bought Point Breeze, he set to work with plans for improving his estate" (p. 23). It was not unusual for visitors to find the former king toiling in the gardens alongside laborers to complete those improvements. Eventually the Bordentown estate would include nearly eighteen hundred acres, and, with the help of prominent friends such as banker Stephen Girard, Joseph built one of the most impressive mansions in America of the period.

There, the Count de Survilliers entertained frequently, inviting prominent Philadelphia residents, his friends at the American Philosophical Society, and others to dine as his guests and to view his collections of art (which sometimes challenged their puritan sensibilities). According to Stroud, "...the superb collection of European art that Joseph had shipped to America to embellish the estate at Point Breeze made of that house the finest gallery of its kind by far in the young country..." (p. xii). At the invitation of the Philadelphia Academy of Arts, Joseph frequently lent selected works of this collection to its annual exposition, including David's Napoleon Crossing the Alps. Similar loans were also made to the American Academy of Fine Arts in New York and to other cultural institutions. The former king even introduced the ballet to America (although, once again, the art form shocked the sensibilities of its audience). With examples such as these, Stroud successfully argues that "Joseph's patronage of the arts was...no doubt his greatest contribution to the culture of the young republic" (p. 126).

These activities (and the personal relationships they engendered), however, only partially abated the loneliness the former king experienced during his American exile. His wife, Julie, and daughters had remained in Europe, and Stroud's impressive use of personal correspondence (which draws, in part, on the previously little-used collections in the Princess Napoleon archives) reveals a man longing to be reunited with his family. In February 1818, for example, Joseph wrote to Julie: "I have planted trees of all kinds hoping that their fruits, their flowers and their shade will please you" (p. 32). Later that summer, Joseph complained that "I have been alone here for three years, if I could honorably be a prisoner in Europe I would come to join the rest of my family..." (p. 54). When his letters could not convince Julie to make the trans-Atlantic voyage, eventually Joseph found other ways to ease his loneliness, including taking Philadelphia native Anna Savage as his mistress (with whom he had two children). In December 1821 his daughter Charlotte became the first of his family to visit him in America. During the following summer her older sister, Zénaïde, arrived via New York with her new husband, Charles-Lucien Bonaparte (about whom Stroud wrote an earlier biography). They soon took up residence in a lake house Joseph had especially built for them at Point Breeze. As Stroud contends, this was perhaps the happiest period of his exile.

After the return of his daughters to Europe, Joseph's life became increasingly occupied with, and frustrated by, Bonapartist politics. Stroud notes that following the death of Napoleon in 1821, Joseph became the leader of the Bonaparte clan and the torchbearer of the Bonapartist claim to the French throne. He helped to found a French-language newspaper in New York, *Le Courier des États-Unis*, in part to promote his political interests both in Europe and among French *émigrés* in America. When news of the Revolution of 1830 reached him, Joseph journeyed to London in 1832 to better promote the claim of Napoleon's son. Ironically, by the time his ship docked in Liverpool on 24 July, the Duke of Reichstadt had died of tuberculosis. Joseph's subsequent meeting with Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, the future Napoleon III, proved less than inspiring (and his nephew's bungled attempt to overthrow the July monarchy in 1836 ended any hopes Joseph had of returning to France or even visiting his family on the European continent). In October 1835, Joseph once again returned to Point Breeze and, except for another brief stay in London, remained there until he finally received permission from Italian authorities to join his family in Italy in 1841. He would die in Florence three years later.

While a fascinating telling of Joseph's life in America, *The Man Who Had Been King* suffers from several shortcomings which occasionally detract from its many virtues. The rare factual error and overgeneralization made it through the editorial process. General Junot, for example, is twice referred to as a marshal (a not uncommon mistake). In attempting to condense Joseph's life before exile to a manageable length, Stroud also overstates the impact of the Louisiana Purchase on Napoleon's foreign policy by claiming that it financed his invasions of Spain and of Russia (p. 86). In fact, the book would probably be enhanced by a fuller discussion of Joseph's life before exile: Stroud only spends two pages discussing Joseph as king and only one paragraph on Spain (pp. 10-12). There are also several jumps in chronology without adequate transition, the most telling of which occurs when Stroud moves from

noting Joseph's appointment as King of Spain to his sailing to America without any discussion of Joseph's life between 1808 and 1814 (p. 12).

A more consistent problem, however, is Stroud's occasional mind-reading, attributing ideas (however logical) to various individuals without adequate documentation to justify those suppositions. Writing of Joseph's relationship with his banker, Stroud writes that "he thinks the Baring firm will not accept his proposition [for the firm to pay Joseph an annual stipend based on his lands in France]" (p. 31). And again several chapters later Stroud contends that for Charlotte "the knowledge of his extra-marital affair [with Anna Savage] must have been difficult to accept because of loyalty to her mother" (p. 91). Stroud's extensive use of personal correspondence may have led her to draw these conclusions, but her contentions--in cases like these--are not adequately documented.

These problems aside, Patricia Tyson Stroud's *The Man Who Had Been King* sheds new light on an often overlooked aspect in the life of Joseph Bonaparte and explains why, in his 1968 biography of Joseph, Owen Connelly suggests that the former king might have preferred Point Breeze to final resting place at Les Invalides.[2] It was at his New Jersey estate that Joseph, a man who never sought the crowns he wore, finally had the opportunity to lead the life he had always wanted, that of a simple country gentleman.

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## NOTES

[1] See, for example, Michael Ross, *The Reluctant King: Joseph Bonaparte, King of the Two Sicilies and Spain* (New York: Mason/Charter, 1977); Owen Connelly, *The Gentle Bonaparte: The Story of Napoleon's Elder Brother* (New York: Macmillan, 1968); Arnold Whitridge, "Joseph Bonaparte in America," *History Today* 6 (1959): 308-18; and Clarence Edward Macartney and Gordon Dorrance, *The Bonapartes in America* (Philadelphia: Dorrance and Company, 1939).

[2] Connelly, p. 300.

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