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ALICE
and Alexander

LEININGEN
A Family Album

ALBA
The Spanish Stuarts

Amelia, Countess of Roccaguglielma

Queen of the Antilles

by Rick Hutto

Early in the era when wealthy American women married titled husbands, one accomplished an extraordinary marriage to a husband who was the son of the Princess Imperial of Brazil, a nephew of both the Emperor of Brazil and the Queen of Portugal, a grandson of the King of the Two Sicilies, and great-grandson of the King of Spain, the King of Portugal, and the Holy Roman Emperor.

Maria Amelia Isabel Hamel was born on June 19, 1847, in Havana, Cuba, to American parents. She was baptized on July 1, 1849, in the Cathedral de San Cristobal in Havana where her father had extensive business dealings. When she became well-known, she would be referred to in U.S. newspapers as both, “an all-American girl”¹ and a “Cuban belle.”² One authority insisted that she, “although born in Havana, was to all intents and purposes an American girl, having been brought up in the United States where she had lived from her infancy to the time of her marriage.”³

Her father, John Bellow Hamel, Jr., was born in Holland, Erie County, NY⁴ on June 10, 1818, a son of John and Mary Nathan Hamel. His family was well-established in New Orleans by the time of his mother’s death there on November 2, 1838. His father, who was born in Quebec, Canada, in 1792, ran away from home when he was fourteen and worked his way up in the commission merchant and shipping industry. He eventually changed his name to Jean Baptiste “Jacques” Belleau de Hamel, an impressive alteration that must have been helpful to his burgeoning business in New Orleans.⁵ Only two years after the death of his wife, Mary Nathan Hamel, her widowed husband was badly burned in a steamer explosion in 1840 but had recovered sufficiently to travel to Matamoros, Mexico, for business two years later. He was killed in an accidental gun discharge in San Francisco in November of 1850 and was buried in the Yerba Buena cemetery

there. His extensive estate, including land in Louisiana and Texas, was probated in New Orleans the next year and required a court filing of more than 100 pages.⁶

As the eldest son, John joined his father in the commission merchant and shipping business which required extensive travel both for clients and goods. By 1839 he was chiefly in New Orleans and married there on July 31, 1841, Henriette (or Enriqueta) Penot, born in about 1817 at Charleston, SC, to Charles Penot and Marie Cécile Gilbau. It would be the third of their four children, Maria Amelia Isabel, born June 19, 1847, who achieved such a noteworthy marriage.

Empress Eugenie, consort of Napoleon III, presided over the most glittering court in Europe. One of her favorite ladies-in-waiting (*dame de palais*) was the American-born Jane Thorne (1821-1873), Baroness de Pierres. The baroness was from New Orleans and knew the Empress before her marriage to the Emperor. The Baron de Pierres was the Empress’s equerry. Both husband and wife would enjoy their appointments from 1853-1870. In the famous Winterhalter painting of the Empress and her ladies-in-waiting, Baroness de Pierres is seated to the left in a white gown with blue ribbons. As one courtier recalled, *Miss Thorne spoke English with just a slight touch of the best American accent and some of the words which she had brought with her from the other side of the Atlantic — especially that picturesque American slang, which she sometimes employed with much effect in her lively conversation — had a special charm for the Empress... I think it was largely due to this fascinating American woman that her fellow countrymen and women always had such a warm welcome at the Court of the Tuileries.*⁷

Another woman prominent at court was the New Orleans-born Marie Louise Pilié who married the 4th Marquis de Chasseloup-Laubat, Napoleon III’s naval minister, in 1862. She was a niece of Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard.⁸ In the next decade they would be



Amelia Hamel was a beautiful Cuban-American heiress who achieved an impressive royal marriage [New-York Historical Society].



From left: Princess Januária, the Count of Áquila, Empress Teresa Cristina and Emperor Pedro II of Brazil (two sets of siblings)

joined at court by the beautiful and immensely wealthy Alice Heine, another New Orleans native, who would become the Duchess de Richelieu and then Her Serene Highness, Princess Alice of Monaco.

The Paris textile industry would have been crippled without the import of cotton from the southern U.S., and much of that product was shipped from New Orleans. French sympathies at the time would have been in favor of the Confederate side in the United States' Civil War. In the spring of 1862 the Empress and her friends gave a "Secessionists Ball" to show their support for two Confederate diplomats, James Mason and John Slidell, who were sailing to France to seek official recognition for the South when they were captured by British agents.

That decade of the 1860s would thus have been the perfect time for a pretty New Orleans heiress to make herself known at the French court. Amelia Hamel was only 15 at the time of the Secessionists Ball but she was perfectly positioned to make a fortunate marriage. As one newspaper later reported of her, "...she is beautiful in the full sense of the word...the young lady soon became the pet of the Empress Eugenie."⁹

Her future husband was two years older and had a stellar royal lineage. He, too, was well-known at the Paris court as he had, "...always been a great favorite with Napoleon [III], despite his family connections"¹⁰ to the Bourbons. Louis/Luigi was a Prince de Bourbon y Braganza with a title from both his parents. He was born on July 18, 1845, at the Palais Royale in Naples, the

eldest of four children (only two of whom would reach adulthood). His mother was Januária, Princess Royal of Brazil (1822-1901), and also a Portuguese infanta as a daughter of Pedro I of Brazil and IV of Portugal. From 1835 until 1845, she was the Princess Imperial of Brazil as the heir presumptive to her brother, Pedro II. When her sister, Maria II, became Queen of Portugal and was excluded from the Brazilian inheritance, Januária's position became even more critical as heir presumptive to the Empire of Brazil. At the age of 14 in 1836 she took the solemn oath of allegiance to Brazil in the Senate palace. She remained the Princess Imperial until the birth of her brother's son, Afonso, in 1845.

Her marriage was vital as only a Brazilian member of the Imperial House could inherit the throne. Januária and her brother married siblings from the Kingdom of Two Sicilies. Her husband was H.R.H. Prince Louis (1824-1897), created Count of Aquila (granted by Royal Decree of September 19, 1824) by his grandfather at his birth, while her brother, Pedro, married Louis's sister, Princess Teresa of Bourbon-Two Sicilies. A crucial article in their marriage contract provided that her new husband would take the title of "Imperial Prince" and would enjoy all its rights and prerogatives. Even after a new heir was born, the couple would still enjoy their status as Imperial Highnesses.¹¹ Their marriage was celebrated in Rio de Janeiro on April 28, 1844.

The next year, with the birth of the first child of the Emperor, Januária lost her position as heir presumptive and friction arose between her husband and her brother, the Emperor. No longer as crucial as she had been to the succession, she and her husband, Louis, departed Brazil and returned to Naples where their children would be born. At the time Louis' eldest brother, Ferdinando II, was King of the Two Sicilies and his queen was Theresa, formerly Archduchess of Austria.

Three children arrived in annual succession to the young couple and a fourth died shortly after her birth. The eldest was Louis who would become the husband of Amelia Hamel. He was born on July 18, 1845. Next would be Maria Isabella, born July 22, 1845, who died unmarried in 1859. Filippo arrived on August 12, 1847. As the eldest son, Louis/Luigi was expected to inherit his father's title as Count of Aquila awarded to him in 1824, the year of his birth, by his grandfather, King Ferdinando IV of Naples and Sicily.

Luigi and his family lived mainly in Naples where he served as a vice admiral of the Royal Navy from 11 August, 1849 – 1861, with an appanage of 60,000 ducats a year. In 1857 the heirs of Maria Antonia Serra, Princess di Gerace, sold to him her magnificent neoclassical villa in Naples. The villa then earned the nickname "la Brasiliana" in honor of his consort, Januária.¹² Only three years after purchasing the villa and expanding its gardens, he was exiled to France because of his actions during the Risorgimento of 1860. Inept at best, he badly led what Italy proudly considered to be the best navy in the world and became known as, "an indolent person

without political expertise - an image that remains intact today. The presumed reactionary conspiracy of the summer of 1860 of which he was accused...¹³ caused him to be banished from his position. He had lost the confidence of his nephew, King Francesco II, who thought the uncle wanted to supplant him as regent. He was exiled on 17 August 1860 and from that point, he and his family lived in France.

At some time in the late 1860s, probably at the French court, the young Prince Louis became captivated by Amelia Hamel. Photos from that period feature her long brown curls hanging to her wasp-thin waist. He would have been aware of her family's financial success and the fact that she received the approval of Empress Eugenie would have been an added attraction. In 1860, his family's Kingdom of Bourbon-Two Sicilies had been lost when it was annexed to Italy. Louis's first cousin, Francesco II, held on to some of their territory until he had no more options and finally surrendered on February 13, 1861, when it was incorporated into the Kingdom of Sardinia and was soon renamed the Kingdom of Italy. Even if young Louis's father had not been the 13th of 14 children, there would have been few financial resources to reach all the way down to his immediate family. He must have reasoned that a beautiful young heiress was exactly what he needed.

When they met Amelia was "traveling with her mother in Paris. The young prince asked his father for permission to marry but this was firmly refused and through the influence of the Brazilian ambassador and the Two Sicilies royal family in Rome the church prohibited its celebration."¹⁴

Having received her father's blessing, Amelia eagerly accepted Louis' proposal but, "*the prince, who is only twenty-four years of age and quite boyish in appearance, was courageous enough to trample on the old dynastic prerogative*



Januária, Princess Imperial of Brazil and Countess of Aquila, with her three children



Januária, Princess Imperial of Brazil and Countess of Aquila, with her sons Luigi/Louis and Felipe/Filippo

*which forbade any scion of the blood royal to marry a plebian. He applied to the Catholic clergy in every country in Europe, but his application in every instance was met by a peremptory denial. 'Rome has spoken' was the truth that flashed on his mind as he found himself doomed to disappointment."*¹⁵

The young couple eloped to Cologne to be married but, "the authorities of the church refused to permit" their union there as well so her father cabled to them that they should come to New York, "and have their nuptials celebrated in a free country."¹⁶ One newspaper reported that they were urged to, "be married in the land of liberty and greenbacks."¹⁷ Accompanied by her mother, the couple made their way to New York City where they checked into the Clarendon Hotel. They were married on 22 March 1869 in a rather seedy Jefferson Market Police Court by Justice Dodge after the Catholic church refused their request to wed. As The New York Times proclaimed, "The whole story is like one of the olden time. It is a real love adventure of a gallant young Prince and a fair lady...and his final triumph and the consummation of his desires by a happy marriage will constitute material for a first-class tale illustrative of the fact that the course of true love never did run smooth."¹⁸

The New York Herald called the bride, "*beautiful... but she is not only pretty in the full acceptation of the word, but surpassingly lovely. Rich in dress ornament with rare jewels, courtly in manner, loving in nature, husband and wife, so soon as the ceremonies were completed, swept out of the hall of justice, arm in arm, to their carriages followed by the residue of the bridal party, and as they left the dingy court room it seemed as if a cloud has suddenly rested*



Amelia's husband, Prince Luigi/Louis, with their granddaughter, Sophie, wife of the 11th Marquis de Preaulx

*upon it and old weather-beaten building in which it is located.*¹⁹

At the time of their wedding, the *New York Times* reported, “Just about the time a gallant young Bourbon Prince landed in this country to marry an American damsel, there was a journal started in this City (The Imperialist) that advocates the establishment of an American throne. Is it a Bourbon we are to have for an Emperor? It is a relative of the young Prince that rules the only other great American power, Brazil.”²⁰

Within two months Amelia was pregnant and the couple were determined to marry in the eyes of the church. On May 28, 1869, accompanied by her parents but with no prior notice, they appeared at St. Peter's Church in Jersey City, New Jersey, where they attended mass in the morning and received communion. Father Wiseman then blessed the bride's ring, “which determines the irrevocability of the marriage. The priest had previously applied to Bishop Bayly for a dispensation but none was received and, after ascertaining that no law of the church was in the way, he acted on his own judgment. A dispatch was sent at once over cable to the Empress Eugenie with whom the bride was formerly a great favorite.”²¹ Having married officially in the eyes of the church, “The knot is tied at last, and the Bourbon dynasty, whether on the throne or in exile, must accept the situation.”²² Not long after the marriage, a Louisiana newspaper called the local girl, “the Queen of the Antilles,”²³ a title which would be adopted by other sources as well.²⁴

The marriage was announced as having been non-dynastic andmorganatic, as indeed it was for Brazil, Portugal, Spain and Two Sicilies, but that concept was never adopted by France. Thus many thought, as the “fully-

fledged” lawful wife of Prince Louis, Amelia was indeed a Bourbon princess. At his father's death in 1897, the younger Prince Louis would inherit the title of Count of Aquila. But as his 1869 marriage to Amelia Hamel was without permission of the King, he forfeited his Two Sicilies succession rights and titles.

The couple had a daughter, Januária Amelia, in 1870, ten months after their civil marriage, and a son, Louis, in 1873. Perhaps bowing to the inevitable, his parents, the Count and Countess de Aquila, recognized the marriage in 1872. As the *New York Times* reported, “If to this universal recognition a fair income is added, the young folks will have no reason to complain.”²⁵ Prince Louis' first cousin, Francesco II, ex-King of Naples and head of the family, created for them on January 31, 1872, the title of Count and Countess de Roccaguglielma, the only title created by the Bourbons in exile to be recognized by the Italian crown. He also deprived Louis of any dynastic and succession rights as well as any princely titles although that decision would be revisited by future generations.

Louis proved to be a heavy gambler and was soon deeply in debt. The unhappy couple separated and then divorced in 1891. Because their marriage had taken place in the U.S., it was subject to U.S. laws and a court there ordered him to pay \$2,000 in annual alimony (almost \$60,000 in today's equivalent). Louis refused to pay and his mother, the former Princess Imperial, paid it for him until her death in 1901 when he sued repeatedly to gain control of her fortune. Knowing her son's financial situation, she left his share of her fortune to his two children whose father's brother sued unsuccessfully to have access to their funds. Amelia attempted to sue her former husband for alimony but he had no assets to seize. She was ultimately to depend upon her own children for financial support until a small trust was established from her late mother-in-law's estate that gave her a modest income for life.

Amelia's children were Maria Gennara/Januária (named for her grandmother), born in Havana in 1870, and Luigi born in Paris in 1873. Gennara's marriage in Nice in 1898 was to bring her closer to a disputed Bourbon line. Her husband, William Louis Freeman, was 25 years older than his bride. His grandmother, Amy Brown (1783 – 1876), had been the acknowledged mistress (and some say wife) of Charles Ferdinand, Duc de Berry. When the duke lay dying having been stabbed by an assassin, he called Amy and their two daughters to his bedside where the duke's wife, Princess Maria-Carolina, promised to adopt the two girls and rear them as her own. The two were given the titles of Countess d'Issoudun and Countess de Vierzon.

In addition to Amy's relationship with the duke, she had a son in 1804 named John Freeman. Although some historians insist that Freeman was a son of the duke and thus added, “de Bourbon” to his name, he was almost certainly conceived before Amy Brown's long relationship with the duke. Supposedly Queen Victoria was instrumental in bringing about the marriage of Marie Januária to Amy's grandson, William Louis Freeman.²⁶

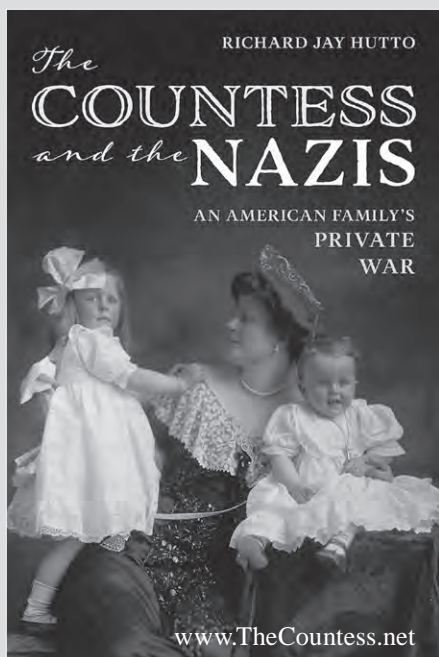
They, in turn, would have a daughter, Sophie Freeman, who married Amaury, the 11th and last Marquis de Preaulx, but they had only daughters and the line is extinct in the male line.²⁷

Amelia and Louis's son, Luigi, who would inherit his father's title as Count of Roccaguglielma, served in the Italian army as "Prince Louis de Bourbon." He was a favorite of King Umberto and Queen Margarita who steered him toward a fortunate marriage to Enrica Weiss di Valbranca, the daughter of an "immensely rich German merchant,"²⁸ Emilio, Count de Valbranca, who was consul general of Portugal at Naples. Luigi would file many lawsuits seeking access to the fortune of his late grandmother. He and his wife had three children (including a son who would inherit the Roccaguglielma title) and in 1910 he filed for a judicial separation from his wife, naming as co-respondent a painter, Tullio Campriani,²⁹ whom she would marry after her divorce. Luigi in 1932 took as his second wife Adeline Landegren.

By his first wife, Luigi had two sons, Louis and Carlo, who each in turn inherited the Roccaguglielma title, and a daughter, Januária. The elder son, Louis, had only a daughter, Marie Christine, who would be recognized as Princess of Bourbon Two Sicilies by Infante Don Carlos, Duke of Calabria and disputed head of his house. Her father's younger brother, Carlo, had a daughter, Isabella, who was also recognized as Princess of Bourbon Two Sicilies by Prince Ferdinand, Duke of Calabria and head of his house. Both women were granted the style of "Her Royal Highness." Thus the great-granddaughters of Amelia, "Queen of the Antilles," enjoyed the titles she was denied. Her former husband died in Nice in 1909 and joined several members of his family in Père-Lachaise Cemetery. Amelia died in 1914 and was buried along with members of her birth family in Montmartre Cemetery in Paris where she was interred as "Princesse de Bourbon."



Amelia's marriage was not happy and she had great difficulty receiving financial support after their divorce. [New-York Historical Society]



The Countess and the Nazis

An American Family's Private War

by Richard Jay Hutto

"With extensive knowledge and prodigious research, Richard Jay Hutto has unearthed an extraordinary saga, ultimately tragic, proving once again that rich American girls should have nothing to do with unworthy European aristocrats. The book has an important subplot: the poignant story of Queen Geraldine of the Albanians. A most enjoyable read." — Hugo Vickers, royal biographer.

"Richard Jay Hutto's *The Countess and the Nazis* is a vividly detailed account of rich Americans and European aristocrats, from the glamour of the Gilded Age to the deadly dangers of the Third Reich. At the heart of the story is the complex and courageous American heiress Muriel White, Countess Seherr-Thoss, who engages the reader from the dramatic first page through the rest of her turbulent life. Hutto describes her world and its famous and infamous characters as though he knew them all. — Patricia Beard, *Gilded Age* author.

Notes

- 1 Marquise de Fontenoy, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 27 May 1910. There are some sources who insist she was born in New Orleans, “for our Havana correspondent says she is a native of New Orleans whose family removed to Havana some fifteen years ago.” Note 47, *The Constantinian Order of Saint George*, 2018, Guy Stair Sainty.
- 2 *New York Times*, 30 May 1869.
- 3 Marquise de Fontenoy, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 27 May 1910.
- 4 Some researchers have made the mistake of assuming Holland is the country, not the city, of his birth and have it listed incorrectly. He attested in his passport application that he was born in the U.S. Holland, NY, is only 30 miles east of Lake Erie and the port of Buffalo, and his father was a commission merchant dependent upon shipping.
- 5 His paternal grandmother was a Belleau. The family name would continue to be fluid. One son became Enrique Bealleau D’Hamel (1836-1914) and served as a Confederate Lieutenant in the 33rd Texas Cavalry Regiment. Other descendants used De Hamel and Dehamel. Dr. W. J. C. DuHamel was a surgeon who served on the White House staff of Presidents James Buchanan and Andrew Johnson.
- 6 Louisiana, U.S. Wills and Probate Records, 1756-1984, case number 392.
- 7 *Memoirs of the Empress Eugenie*, vol. 1, pp 366-367; Count Fleury, D. Appleton & Co., New York City, 1920. Her sisters, Mary and Alice, married respectively Baron Camille de Varaigne and Count Amédée d’Audebert de Férussac.
- 8 He had suffered rejection and ridicule for his mixed-race Creole heritage. After the war, he returned to New Orleans where he advocated for civil rights for blacks, including suffrage, and acquired great wealth by promoting the Louisiana lottery. One of his soldiers wrote home after serving under him at the Battle of Shiloh, “Hurrah for Beauregard our Chief. It is strange Pa how we love that little black Frenchman, but there is not a man in the army who wouldn't willingly die in following his lead.”
- 9 *The Opelousas Courier*, June 19, 1869; p 1.
- 10 *The Opelousas Courier*, June 19, 1869; p 1.
- 11 Botafogo, A. J. S. (1890). *O Balanço da Dinastia*. Imprensa Nacional. p. 131. Her brother’s wife (Louis’s sister), Teresa Cristina, would be called “the Mother of the Brazilians” and would become Empress of Brazil as the consort of Pedro II from their 1843 marriage until 1889 when the monarchy was abolished.
- 12 Following Garibaldi’s revolution the villa was sold in 1860 to a businessman who in 1897 sold it to Lord Rosebery, the former Prime Minister of the UK. It is now one of three official residences of the President of Italy.
- 13 *Monarchy and Exile: The Politics of Legitimacy from Marie de Medicis to Wilhelm II*, edited by P. Mansel, T. Riotte, 2011, p 263
- 14 Guy Stair Sainty, *The Constantinian Order of Saint George*, 2018.
- 15 *The Opelousas Courier*, June 19, 1869; p 1, copied from the *New York Herald*.
- 16 *The New York Times*, 8 May 1869.
- 17 *Atlanta Daily Intelligencer*, 28 Mar 1869.
- 18 *New York Times*, 8 May 1869. The Jefferson Market Police Court in what is now Greenwich Village is where drunks, prostitutes, and petty thieves were taken to await sentencing.
- 19 *Archivio di stato di Napoli, Archivio Borbone*, 1342, no. 232.
- 20 *The New York Times*, 10 May 1869.
- 21 “The Bourbon Romance Concluded- The Marriage of the Prince de Bourbon to the Cuban Belle Consecrated in Jersey City,” *New York Times*, 30 May 1869.
- 22 *The Opelousas Courier*, 19 Jun 1869.
- 23 *The Opelousas Courier*, 19 Jun 1869. The Antilles, including Cuba, is an archipelago bordered by the Caribbean Sea to the south and west, the Gulf of Mexico to the northwest, and the Atlantic Ocean to the north and east.
- 24 *New York Daily Herald*, 22 Mar 1869.
- 25 *New York Times*, 24 Mar 1872.
- 26 André Castelot, *The Duke of Berry and his double marriage*, Paris, SFELT, 1950, p 315.
- 27 The last Marquis de Preaulx was a heavy spender and “people still talk about the ten Rolls Royce motor cars he owned,” according to former MP Amédée Renault in his article, “700 years of the history of Preaulx.”
- 28 Marquise de Fontenoy, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 27 May 1910;
- 29 Marquise de Fontenoy, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 27 May 1910;



Amelia’s father-in-law, Prince Luigi/Louis of the Two Sicilies, Count of Aquila