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REAL ROYALTY ONCE GRACED FLORIDA'S CAPITAL

By HAMPTON DUNN

TALLAHASSEE --- He was a nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte and she was a grandniece of George Washington. They were married by a Justice of Peace in Tallahassee on July 12, 1824, and lived happily the rest of their lives. Today, the bodies of the royal pair rest in old St. Johns Episcopal cemetery.

Charles Louis Napoleon Achille Murat, the prince, was son of Napoleon's sister and her husband who was King of Naples. Exiled by both France and Italy, the glamorous prince wound up in Florida at the behest of Lafayette.

The prince --- who resembled his handsome, famous uncle --- fell in love with a young widow, Catherine Willis Gray, who lived in Pensacola. Her father was a close pal of Andrew Jackson.

The royal couple built a country home, "Lipona," in Jefferson County which became the social center of the area. The prince was a learned man and traveled much. At one time after their marriage he was commander of Belgium King Leopold's "Foreign Legion." When he bade his troops goodbye, he addressed them in seven different languages. He also was active in the Seminole War in Florida and was a friend of many Indian chiefs. Prince Murat served as mayor and postmaster of Tallahassee and as county judge of Jefferson County.

But one historian recorded that it was Murat's fate to be remembered in Florida for his omniverous appetite. The story goes that the only exception he made among all available creatures that crawled, swam or flew, was "ze turkey boozard." He died in 1847 at the age of 47. The princess moved into another home, Belle Vue, which still stands. She died in 1867.