

MALMASION INFORMATION

In 1792 Louis Leflore, a French-Canadian, came to Mississippi. The United States government at that time was establishing trading posts in the territory. Louis Leflore, a very able business man, was chosen to manage a trading post in a small colony of the French people at Lefleur's Bluff where Jackson, now our State capitol, stands.

Louis Lefleur married a Choctaw princess. Some documents say that Rebecca Cravat was the daughter of a full blooded French man, John Cravat, and an Indian mother. So, she was half French and half Indian. In 1800 this couple, Louis and Rebecca Cravat Lefleur a son born to them. He was named Greenwood after a sea captain friend of theirs. So, Greenwood Lefleur had a strong French heritage. However, he changed the spelling of the name when he grew up.

Greenwood Leflore's parents moved to a French Camp in Choctaw County, a little village or stopping place after a day's run on the stage between Nashville and Natchez. It was necessary of course to have such a place for stables loding and food. Louis Leflore was the inn keeper.

During Greenwood's boyhood, Major Samuel Donely, was was very much involved with the Leflore family, had the contract for carrying the mail from Nashville to Natchez, along the Natchez Trace. During his numerous stops at the Inn, he came to know young Greenwood. The boy spoke broken English at age 12, and fluent Choctaw. The major recognized that he had unusual abilities for one so young. Donely took the boy to Nashville to be educated with his own children, one of whom was a beautiful blonde daughter named Rosa.

Greenwood Leflore married three times. His first wife was Major Donely's daughter Rosa. Greenwood went to Major Donely and asked him what he would do if he were in love with a young girl and her father thought she was too young to marry. Major Donely replied, "elope." So Greenwood (age 17) and Rosa (age 15) eloped. They had a daughter named Elizabeth and a son whom they named John. Rosa died in 1829.

Greenwood was 30 years old at the time. He had accumulated a great wealth of land, livestock, and slaves.

In 1822 the Choctaw Indians lost their Chief. By unanimous vote Greenwood Leflore was made their chief. They didn't elect their chief by heredity in the tribe. If a man was a very able business man, especially a good speaker, and liked politics, he might be chosen. These were things they considered favorable in electing their chief, not only his family's position in the tribe.

Greenwood Leflore introduced many reforms and abolished many vicious tribal customs of his people. He was always quick to rally to the defense of the Choctaws and to intercede for their rights.

His second wife was Elizabeth Cody, who was a Cherokee. She was a cousin of William Cody of "Buffalo Bill" fame. Greenwood married Elizabeth in 1832, and she died in 1832.

He was married again in 1834 to Rosa's younger sister, Priscilla. In 1837 they had a daughter, named Rebecca Cravat Leflore after her beautiful French-and-Indian grandmother. They continued to live in the early log cabin until 1835, when a larger frame building was built.

During the time he was Chief, he made a carriage trip to Washington to ask for the removal of the Indian Commissioner. There was an Agency Commissioner that the government appointed to take care of this territory. These Commissioners weren't always what they should be, and this man apparently wasn't. Greenwood Leflore thought he was very incompetent, so he made a carriage trip from Mississippi to Washington to see President Jackson. President Jackson didn't like it. Somehow they did not get along well at first. He said, "I, Andrew Jackson, President of the United States, say that the Commissioner if an honest gentleman." The daring young Choctaw Chief replied, "I, Greenwood Leflore, Chief of the Choctaws, say he is a rascal and should be removed." That took a great deal of nerve to speak that way to the President of the United States. But he knew this man was not doing his duty as he should. So

he faced the President, and told him he should be removed. But as Greenwood Leflore turned to leave President Jackson called him back. They talked and became fast friends. The Indians did not want to be governed by the American law, they wanted to live by their own tribal laws. It was breaking the tribe up. They were pulling away from the white man. Greenwood Leflore had always loved the white man. This law was pulling them away, and something had to be done. So the treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, three years later, came about because of Greenwood Leflore's desire to make peace between the Indians and the white men.

The treaty started in 1827. The settlers in Mississippi passed the law that they wanted to govern the Indians by American laws. This treaty was rewritten three times, because the first versions did not satisfy Leflore, and was signed September 27, 1830.

Two men sent from the United States government with Leflore demanded that his Indian Councilmen lay down their arms. Leflore answered, "Come and disarm them" Finally, after changes were made offering the Indians more land, more money, and more protection, the treaty was signed.

The treaty was a good treaty. Any person who has criticized Greenwood Leflore for the terms of this treaty should first avail himself the privilege of reading the treaty in full. He insisted that it embrace the terms which he thought were right for his people.

Our government did not live up to its promises. Anyway-what was said in this treaty is a matter of history. The Choctaws were told about the virgin territory they would move into. They were to receive supplies to keep them going until they could build their own homes and take care of themselves, also payments of money annually for a period of years. They were to be transported by wagons and/or steamboats. They ended up walking and thousands of them died. It was a very bad thing in history.

Greenwood Leflore kept his part of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. His heart was broken at the weight of the injustice done to his people after the treaty was signed. There are many claims today unpaid and apparently they will never be paid to the Indians who went west under the terms of the treaty. Among these are the executors of the Greenwood Leflore estate. These claims lie dormant today among many of the others of the Choctaw tribes in the Court of Appeals. A few Choctaw of the Oklahoma tribe have become oil rich, but not many.

In recognition of his services Greenwood Leflore was given valuable land grants in 1864, which made him even wealthier than he already was. His father had amassed a considerable fortune, of which Greenwood received his share. He used this as a basis for his own business success.

He had 15,000 acres of land, 400 slaves, saw mills, a brick yard, steam boats, and other enterprises. He was liberal, loyal to his friends, and kind to his slaves. But he could be vindictive. For a fancied grievance, now this is interesting, he established a landing several miles above Greenwood, at the junction of the Yalabusha and Tallahatchie. He named it Point Leflore. He spent \$75,000, which was a lot of money in those days, a lot of money today took, to build a model road. The first of its kind in Mississippi, among the first in America. He did this to divert trade from Greenwood because of the grievance. The fancied grievance which led him to establish Point Leflore was due to the fact that when he came to Greenwood (which was William's Landing at that time) in the interest of his cotton that he had stored in Greenwood for shipment to New Orleans, he found his cotton unprotected from the weather. He told Mr. Williams if that was the way he cared for his cotton, then he would build a place where he could protect everybody's cotton. And he did.

Greenwood Leflore had great physical courage. He had to be, to be a Choctaw Chief. He was a wise counselor and had unusual executive ability. A great deal of this, of course, came from his French father, who was a very able business man. He had intense love for the beautiful, both art and nature. In a government grant for a home site in 1854, about eight miles from Greenwood, he built a home, probably the finest residence in the state at that time. There was enough French in Greenwood Leflore to make him an admirer of Napoleon. Napoleon's unhappy Josephine was divorced and went away to live in the beautiful French palace Malmaison. Simply for her, he named his own mansion Malmaison.

The mansion was furnished in a special order executed in Paris. The Dutchess of Orleans saw the furniture when it was finished and attempted to purchase it. Unable to do so, she had it duplicated.

Malmaison, set on a 4-acre lawn sodded in Bermuda grass with oak, sugar maple, and holly trees, was the largest dwelling house ever erected in Carroll County. There were 15 rooms, eight of which were 20 x 25 x 15. The architect and builder of

Malmaison was James Clark, who married Greenwood Leflore's daughter Rebecca. The main part of the house was square, with halls 50 x 20 running north and south, and with 6-foot wide double doors opening onto four porticos. The northwest side had an "ell" containing the 60-foot dining room and butler's pantry. The upper floor plan was the same, but with surrounding balconies. Eleven rooms had black Italian marble mantels. All inside doors were 10 feet high and three feet wide, the sills being of cypress, cut and placed off the ground for one year to season. All the lumber for the home was seasoned before use. Wood work was of hard pine and cypress. The magnificent parlor had the very finest furnishings made especially to order, in the Louis XV style, including forty pieces of gold leaf over French hickory, very light but hard wood. The hanging tapestries were masterpieces of art. Especially outstanding were four hand painted shades made of linen depicting the four palaces of Napoleon and Josephine: Versailles, Malmaison, St. Cloud, and Fontainebleau. There were two 6' x 9' x 4' gold leaf mirrors on the parlor walls, and ones even larger. There is one the Malmaison room at Cottonlandia. The furniture in the parlor alone cost \$10,000. Today they would be priceless.

Greenwood Leflore's bedroom had carpet from the frame house they had built in 1835. The room was in shades of blue. It also had blue wall paper. The bed was rich mahogany with great beautifully carved posts and an overhead canopy lined with heavy delft blue satin. A deep fringed border of the same shade of blue edged the canopy. The room also contained his chair and leather trunk. The description of his own bed as having been heavily and beautifully carved does not match the one that is in the Museum.

The down stairs dining room wing was used for dinner parties and the upstairs for dancing. The glassware and china was imported from France by the gross. The silver had a wild rose pattern and was elaborately monogrammed. It was also ordered by the gross. Only the rarest of china, cut glass, and gold and silver services were used to entertain as many as 200 guests.

A Greenwood lady visiting Malmaison remembers that the dining room table was set for a luncheon for 90 guests and that each silver place setting was different. She also remembered an unusual three-piece individual china setting of a cup, regular saucer, and a special smaller but wider-rimmed saucer in which the coffee was poured to cool.

Two Two-story buildings housed gentlemen guests at times of entertainmet. Servants quarters were north of the house. There were two cisterns, a smoke house, and an outside kitchen connected by a 5-foot covered gallery. Great stables were some distance away. There were two carriage houses on the grounds, one holding the beautiful black carriage with solid sterling trimmings and cut glass lamps, silk damask upholstery fastened with ivory tacks in which Greenwood Leflore journeyed to Washington. This carriage is presently housed at French Camp, Mississippi, where Greenwood's father settled.

Many of the building were burned during the Civil War. Malmaison was fired many times. The final burning in 1942 completely destroyed it. The Government had tried at one time to purchase Malmaison as a shrine, but the family would not sell it.

Greenwood Leflore died in 1865 and was buried in the family burial plot. His last wish was that his shroud be the American Flag, and complying with his request, his grand-daughters held the flag above him as he was dying. He was buried in its folds. A beautiful monument of white marble, marking his last resting place, bears this inscription:

Greenwood Leflore

Born: June 3, 1800.

Died: August 21, 1865

The last Chief of the Choctaws east of the Mississippi.

Greenwood Leflore's descendants are numbered among many of the most prominent families of Greenwood, the State of Mississippi, and other states.

Greenwood, one of the oldest towns in Mississippi, and Leflore County, of which is the County Seat, derived their names from Greenwood Leflore, the greatest Chief of the Choctaw Indians.

Twenty years following the death of Greenwood Leflore 1865, Williams Landing was named Greenwood in honor of the great Chief. Greenwood is the county seat of Leflore County.

It is entirely conceivable during the years 1854 until Malmaison's burning in 1942 that some of the furniture in the rooms would be changed, given to relatives, or perhaps even replaced by newer styles. In COTTONLANDIA'S Malmaison Room are one of the great gold leaf mirrors which one adorned the parlor walls of Malmaison, a very heavy solid mahogany canopied bed, a child's bed, several dressers, a plantation desk, trunk, and armoire, and a portrait of Rebecca Cravat Lflore, Greenwood's youngest daughter, shows her at about 10 years of age.

For those who remember and visited Malmaison; the sudden demise of a place enriched with the history and heritage of a man, a people, and a way of life for almost a hundred years carries a sting and a torch of never ending rapture. As the only living persons Mrs. W.B. Bandy Jr. of Greenwood, the former Isabel McDougal of Greenwood who was at Malmaison the night it was destroyed by fire in 1942 described it. They heard a noise around 7:30 p.m. At first they thought it was burglars but finally discovered that the third floor was burning and that the fire was fastly descending. They all ran out of the house and sought for help but "it was too far gone." It was awful seeing it burn. It was so very beautiful. I remember Greenwood Leflore's carriage being pulled to safety with the burning house in the background. It reminded me of the scene from "Gone With the Wind" when Atlanta was burning and Rhett Butler and Scarlet O'Hara were trying to leave the city.

"The cause of the fire which ended the pomp, splendor, and mystique surrounding Greenwood Leflore and his Malmaison has never been established.

Mrs. Gladys Williamson

Peggy H. McCormick

Book A

Register of Wills, Carroll County Mississippi

Pages 473, 474, 475

Greenwood Leflore, Last Will

I, Greenwood Leflore, of the county of Carroll and State of Mississippi in view of the uncertainty of life, and the infirmities of age, but of sound and disposing mind and memory, do make and publish this my last will and testament, hereby revoking all wills hencefore at any time by me made.

1st It is my will that my executors herin-after named shall pay all my just debts.

2ed I devise and bequeath to my beloved wife Priscilla, my tract of land on which I now reside, and all the land I own in township 19. Range 3 east. and all the negroes belonging to the "home place" (Except such as herin after specifically bequeath) all the stock, crop, furnitue and everything on and belonging to said place, to her heirs forever.

3ed The deed of gift hereto fore executed to my son John D. and my daughter Rebbeca Harris, I hereby ratify and confirm.

4th . In order to raise funds for the payment of my debts and for other purposes herin after expressed it is my will that my plantation known as the "Big Sandy Place" with all the negroes stock etc on it be kept up and conducted by my executors for ten years.

5th At the expiration of said ten years, it is my will that all the negroes on and, belonging to the "Big Sand Place" shall be divided into equal parts one part or one half of which negroes, I give and bequeath to my two grandsons, Greenwood L, and John B. Halsey at the end of said ten years I further give and devise to my said two grandsons the tract of land known as the "Big Sand Place" including all the lands in Township 19, Range 2 East North of a new road, Cut out by J. C. Harris with all the stock farming utensils, the crop theron (except the crop of cotton) and all the appertainances thereinto belonging and in the event that either of my said grand sons should die with out issue, then it is my will, and I hereby devise that the land and negroes herin devised and bequeathed to him, shall go to the surviving, then it is my will that the land and negroes herein devised and bequeathed to them, together will all the request herein after made to them, revert to my son John D. and my daughter Rebecca Harris, equally to be divided between them

6th I give and bequeath to my son John D. in trust for my daughter Jane, the sum of five hundred dollars, annually for ten years to be appropriated by him to her support and maintenance, and at the end of ten years and upon the division of the negroes, on the "Big Sand Place" before mentioned, out of the half of said

negroes (three boys, and three girls from 12 to 20 years of age each) to my son John D. in trust for my daughter Jane to be managed by him as he may think best for her support and maintenance during her life, and at her death, I give the said negroes and their increase to my son John D. forever.

7th At the end of said ten years I give and bequeath the remaining negroes belonging to "Big Sand Place" not herin before disposed of to my son John D. and my daughter Rebecca Harris equally to be divided between them.

8th All my land in Township 19, Range east south of the new road cut by J. C. Harris, and herein before mentioned, I give and devise to my daughter Rebecca to her and her heirs forever.

9th All my lands on the Tallahatchie Yalabusha, and Yazoo Rivers, continous to Point Leflore including said Point Township 29, Range East and one eights (1/8) in Township 20 Rnage 2, East I give and devise to my son John D. to him and his heirs forever.

10th I give and bequeath to my son John D. in trust for my grand daughter Martha Davis the sum of Ten thousand dollars the interest upon which sum I hereby direct to be paid her annually, the said pay ments of interest to commence one year after my death.

11th It is my will and I hereby direct that the sum of one thousand be paid over annually, for ten years by my executors to my beloved wife, Priscilla.

12th I give and bequeath to each of my two grand sons, Greenwood L. and John B. Halsey the sum of one thousand dollars to be paid annually for ten years, for their support and education

13th I give and bequeath to Greenwood Watkins the sum of one thousand dollars to be paid over to him when he shall arrive at the age of twenty one years.

14th I give and bequeath to Daniel Jefferson the sum of one thousand dollars to be paid over to him when he shall arrive at the age of twenty one years.

15th I give and bequeath to Edward Yarbrough negro woman Ann and with her present and future increase..

16th I give and bequeath to my grand son Louis Leflore, negro boy Hampton.

17th I give and bequeath to my grand son, Greenwood Leflore negro boy William.

18th I give and bequeath to my grand daughter Florence Harris negro girl Lizzie.

19th I give and bequeath to my grand son Louis Harris negro boy Willis.

20th It is my desire and will that my executors cause to be erected as suitable monument to my memory, and I hereby appropriate to that purpose the sum of ten thousand dollars.

21st All of my lands in Texas whatever that be, my stock in the Valley Railroad and all the residue of my estate, of whatever kind and all monies to come into my estate not herein before disposed of, I devise and bequeath as follows: one third to my son, John D., one third to my daughter Rebecca Harris and one third to my two grand sons Greenwood L. and John B. Halsey.

22ed Having full confidence in my son John D, and My son-in-law James C. Harris, I hereby appoint them executors to this my will and I direct that they not be required to give security for the executors of the same and that they do not claim nor be allowed any commissions as compensations for their services in executing my will.

23ed I give and bequeath to Samuel J. Donley negro girl Hattie and her increases, said girl being one of the negroes belonging to the "Big Sand Place" and now of clause 5th Signed and sealed and published
May the 30 1860

In the presence of

A. H. McCain

Lem e Hart

William A. McCain

his

Greenwood X Leflore
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Editors note: All spelling and phrasing are as in original of this document

I, Greenwood Leflore, of the county of Carroll and State of Mississippi in view of the uncertainty of life, and the infirmities of age, but of sound and disposing mind and memory, do make and publish this my last will and testament, hereby revoking all wills hencefore at any time by me made.

1st It is my will that my executors herein-after named shall pay all my just debts.

SOME OF THE WAYS HE TOOK CARE OF HIS FAMILY IN THIS WILL WENT LIKE THIS:

8th All my land in Township 19, Range 2, east south of the new road cut by J. C. Harris, and herein before mentioned, I give and devise to my daughter Rebecca to her and her heirs forever.

9th All my lands on the Tallahatchie, Yalabusha, and Yazoo Rivers, continuous to Point Leflore including said Point Township 20, Range 1 East and one eights (1/8) in Township 20 Range 2, East I give and devise to my son John D. to him and his heirs forever.

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THIS IS THE WAY IT ENDED:

Signed and Sealed and published

May the 30th 1860

In the presence of

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Greenwood X Leflore
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