

# BOYINGTON OAK



# BOYINGTON OAK:

## A GRAVE INJUSTICE

MARY S. PALMER

EDITED BY SHANNON S. BROWN



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*Boyington Oak: A Grave Injustice*

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# DEDICATION

**T**o all who are charged with dispensing justice. May they temper it with mercy.



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# FOREWORD

The legendary true story surrounding the brutal murder of Nathaniel Frost in 1834 near the Church Street Graveyard in Mobile remains an intriguing Southern mystery nearly 200 years later. Nineteen-year-old Charles R. S. Boyington, hanged for the crime of killing his friend and roommate, was buried in the same graveyard where the murder was committed.

I first read about the case while researching and writing an introduction for Mary S. Palmer and Dr. Elizabeth Coffman's book entitled *MemoraMOBILEia: Alabama Gulf Coast Potpourri* (1993).

I had only lived in Mobile a few years, so I had much to learn about the history of the city and its storied past. I spent many hours reading about it in the local history section of Mobile's library and archives. In my research, I came across information about the Boyington Oak and my interest was piqued by the legend of Boyington proclaiming from the scaffold that a live oak would grow from his gravesite to prove his innocence.

The Boyington legend reminded me of a Shakespearean or Greek tragedy with its elements of loyal friendship, betrayal, romance, murder, spiritual and legal battles. It is also a story of unfulfilled love that Boyington had for Rose, a French baron's daughter. Plus, Baron de Fleur disapproved of their relationship and tried to put a stop to it. But the two lovers ignored his objections and only death separated them. Boyington had great promise of success with his intelligence, musical, and writing talents, but his life was cut short before he was out of his teens.

I kept my notes and research for more than 20 years. I even discussed co-authoring a book about the case with my author friend, Mary S. Palmer. Only one book had been written on the subject, and I believed it deserved another. But, as an inveterate procrastinator, I never wrote it. I knew Mary, who had already published 14 books, was the writer for the job.

*Boyington Oak: A Grave Injustice* is different from other works of creative nonfiction because of three things. The conviction was based solely on circumstantial evidence. Two jurors did not qualify, but neither was stricken. One was convinced Boyington was guilty before the trial; the other was a

*Boyington Oak*

British citizen. Also, Boyington claimed an oak tree would grow from his gravesite to prove his innocence. It did.

Years after the crime, interest in the case was revitalized when information revealed led to speculation that an innocent man may have been hanged, an intriguing suggestion of a possible miscarriage of justice for Charles R. S. Boyington. These factors, backed by extensive research, make it unique, timely and timeless, and a fascinating read, appealing to a universal audience.

Maureen Maclay

# INTRODUCTION

*For My Tomb  
Though cold be the earth and stone  
Placed over of me what remains;  
But there is but one true thought  
The earth and stone here has no stains.  
The sleep here may be long  
And only peace to while the hours;  
My life was as a song,  
I am not here but among the flowers.*

May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1834, Mobile  
ROBERT<sup>1</sup>

**I**n November 1833, Charles R.S. Boyington, aka Charles Robert Stuart Boyington, paid his passage from New Haven, Connecticut, to Mobile, Alabama, working as a sailor on the ship *Cahaba*. Having already served his apprenticeship, he qualified as a journeyman printer, and he traveled South to seek work, claiming to be twenty-three-years-old. Although he had no problem getting a job at Pollard and Dade Printing Company, due to decreased business and other issues, he was soon laid off.

Somehow, Boyington managed to survive. He shared a room with another printer, Nathaniel Frost, in Captain George's Boarding House. Frost suffered from consumption, but whenever he was able, Boyington encouraged his friend to take long walks with him. Their camaraderie on these excursions seemed to raise the sick man's spirits. It also solidified a strong bond of friendship.

Some people noticed how attentive Boyington was to Frost and made comments regarding his *kind and caring* attitude. They interpreted his actions as altruistic. Others questioned Boyington's intentions. Frost was still employed. Was he paying for Boyington's help? Despite speculations, nobody knew the answer.

## *Boyington Oak*

Charles Boyington met Rose de Fleur at a ball. After a short courtship, they fell in love. Perhaps she knew of the troubles between Charles and his friend Nathaniel Frost; if so, she took that knowledge to her grave. Also, when Frost was murdered, and Boyington was tried for the crime, if Rose had information about what happened, she didn't admit that either. However, even after his death, she remained loyal to her lover, frequently placing flowers on his grave in the shadow of the oak he had vowed would grow on the site to prove his innocence.

The Boyington Oak case has held widespread interest of all who have heard of it throughout its long history. The laxity in following the law had its impact. The way grand jurors were selected in Alabama changed because a non-citizen was on Boyington's jury. The story became a legend that reached far beyond Mobile. Still, a matter frequently discussed, it maintains its essential place as folklore in the annals of time.

Boyington was convicted solely on circumstantial evidence and hanged. Yet, capital punishment remains a controversial ethical issue. Some theologians insist that a pro-life stance is inconsistent with a belief in the death penalty. Both then and now, many people have reservations about capital punishment, which disqualifies them from serving on juries. A more significant debate is that perfect justice requires perfect mercy to prevent innocent people from being condemned to death.

Boyington maintained his innocence with his final words, and the oak tree he vowed would grow from his heart to prove it sprang up on the spot. It still stands, and Boy Scout Troops have featured it in walking tours, and it has been on the Mobile Tree Trail. Is the spirit of Charles R.S. Boyington lurking there? Almost two hundred years later, his secrets lay interred with his bones.

\* \* \*

February 2019

In the area outside the wall of the Church Street Graveyard, I placed a pink rose at the foot of an ancient oak, beneath its gnarly branches twisted by hurricanes for which Mobile, Alabama is so famous. Time has taken its toll since the acorn first sprouted in 1835 and made roots that broke through the soil on the gravesite of Charles R.S. Boyington. Did its growth fulfill his promise and prove he was innocent of the murder of his friend, Nathaniel Frost?

I gazed at the still strong tree trunk, grown tall, with huge branches and hundreds of roots reaching out in all directions. The sturdy live oak made

## *Introduction*

me wonder. Acorns on the ground reminded me that many oaks volunteered on this site. Hurricanes felled quite a few of them. But was it fate, or coincidence, that this one survived for a hundred and eighty-four years on the exact spot of the convicted murderer's grave in a potter's field?

Glancing at the A.M.E. Methodist Church across the street, I cast my eyes to heaven and asked, "Dear God, can you give me the answer? Was Boyington innocent?" Only a slight breeze sweeping through the trees replied, and I could not decipher what the sound meant.

I pulled Boyington's poem *For My Tomb* out of my pocket and read it for the tenth time. I understood the emotion and appreciated the imagery, but still sought the symbolism's significance and the secrets hidden within, hoping to unearth them and reveal them to the world.



Guilty

to be hanged by the neck until dead

February 20, 1835





# ONE

## ARRIVING IN MOBILE

**N**ovember 1833

“You catch on quick. You ought to keep going to sea and move up through the ranks. I could train you to be an engineer,” the ship’s captain told the young man swabbing the deck. “I figured you for an outdoorsman. Why the hell do you want to get stuck in a job as a printer in a little town like Mobile, Alabama?”

Charles R.S. Boyington didn’t respond immediately. He didn’t want to admit he was looking for a lawless town. That’s why Charles decided to immigrate to Mobile after having a problem with the law as a teenager.<sup>1</sup> But that wasn’t the only reason he left his hometown of Litchfield, Connecticut. In a city whose population was less than 3,200, with a decent job, his skill at gambling, and the right connections, he could establish himself and become an entrepreneur, a community leader.

He replied, “I’ve heard this town is lively. First, I’ll have some fun; then, maybe I’ll find a wife and settle down.”

Captain Arnold put a hand on his hip, “You don’t even have a job. Besides, you look like the type to seek adventure.”

Charles leaned on his mop. “This *is* my adventure. Ever since printers unionized in 1778 in New York City, even though it didn’t last long, we earned respect. Printers are in big demand nowadays. It took a while to learn the trade, and I plan to use my experience.”

The captain scratched his bald head. “Okay, it’s your life, Son.” He walked away.

After serving his apprenticeship in New Haven, Connecticut, citing his age as twenty-three-years-old, Charles, certified as a journeyman printer, boarded the ship *Cahaba*. This dark-haired youth with a complexion to match leaned his five-foot-nine-inch frame over the rail and looked out at the water through his small grey eyes.<sup>2</sup> The conversation made him think. A long way from his home and his beloved mother, the adventurer had paid

his passage by working as a sailor for Captain Arnold. Cast aside were his brushes with the law, especially the charge of horse stealing in New Haven. Because he was a youth, he'd had minimal consequences for that. Now he was on his way to a bright future in a new area.<sup>3</sup>

He had some help. Reconciled to the fact that Charles wouldn't stay on as a sailor, the captain took an interest in the affable youth and when the ship docked in Mobile, he obtained work for Charles with the printing company Pollard and Dade.<sup>4</sup>

Charles soon made friends with a co-worker. The two New Englanders, Charles Boyington and Nathaniel Frost, had backgrounds in common. Both were printers, and both were from Connecticut, and they'd soon become roommates.

Before then, Boyington had cultivated the friendship of another printer, George Williamson. He moved to Captain George's Boarding House on Royal Street to take care of George. It seems Charles Boyington had a penchant for caring for others. It is also evident that he got something in return, as was the case later with Nathaniel Frost, an introvert welcoming companionship at any price.<sup>5</sup>

Charles had no problem integrating into Southern society. When he heard about an upcoming gala ball, he envisioned an opportunity. Savvy beyond his years in the ways of the world, he hustled over to the Red Light District in downtown Mobile, brushing past two scantily-clad women who ogled him as he made his way to a back room where a poker game was taking place.

"I'm Charles Boyington, and I'm new in town. Mind if I join in?" he asked a bearded gentleman twice his age.

"How did you hear about the game?" the man, who smelled of tobacco, demanded.

Charles stuck his thumb over his shoulder. "Little blonde cutie I met at the bar the other night told me."

"Okay. But don't you go around spreading the word about this game, y'hear? It's private. But we can use a fourth tonight. Have a seat," The man puffed cigar smoke. "Be happy to take your money. Name's Tommy John." He did not offer to shake hands; he pointed to his left: "That's Frog and George." Then he dealt the cards, one face down and four up.

"Nice to meet you fellows." When George barely nodded, Charles got the message. He didn't mention that he already knew George Williamson, or that George was the one who told him about the game. It was best not to tip his hand.

Then Frog spoke up. "Hey, ain't you that printer lives at Captain George's Boarding House?"

"Yes, I am."

## *Arriving in Mobile*

Frog turned to George. "You lived there, too, didn't you? Wadn't that while you had the flu, or pneumonia, or somethin'? You didn't play with us for a month. And you're a printer, too. Seems like I heard you say somethin' about a friend taking care o' you."

The hand was tipped, and George had to explain. "Right. You have a good memory, Frog. You got me. Charles helped me when I was sick. *I'm* the one who told him about our game. I wasn't going to say anything till I saw how things went." He chuckled as he pointed to Charles. "He may look young and inexperienced, but don't let that fool you. He's a sharp player. I didn't say anything because I don't want you fellows mad at me if he wins."

"Naw," Tommy John piped up. "Win or lose, we're good sports."

When they had played four rounds, and Charles won the next hand with a pair of fives, Frog didn't prove to be such a good sport. He gathered his cards and threw them down in front of him. "I'm out!" he yelled in his raspy voice. "You ain't takin' no more of my money."

"See ya next week, Frog," Tommy John said.

"Maybe not." Frog slung on his coat and headed for the door.

"Yeah, you'll be right here." Tommy John guffawed as the door slammed behind Frog.

Half an hour later, his laughter subsided. At the end of the last hand, no one at the table was smiling. Except Charles. He collected his winnings with a broad grin. "By the way," he said to his seatmate, "I hear there's a big event, a ball at a local hotel or something, coming up soon. Since I'm new in town, I'd like to meet some, uh, refined young ladies. Could you arrange for me to be invited?"

"Har, har, har!" Tommy John gave Charles a hefty slap on the back. "Son, you got a lotta nerve. First you take my money, then you ask for a favor." He threw up his hands. "But what the hell. I'll see to it."

The next week a neatly addressed envelope bearing a formal invitation to the dance at the Alabama Hotel on the corner of Saint Francis and Royal Streets was delivered to the young printer at Captain George's Boarding House. With a bit of finagling, Charles had taken his first step toward acceptance into Mobile society.

To attend, he had to have proper attire. Using his poker winnings along with some financial assistance from Nathaniel, he managed to purchase the necessary formal wear. A social climber, he knew this was the way to meet the "best" people. Since Mobile society was fluid, obtaining an invitation to these dances sponsored by prominent families was not difficult.<sup>6</sup>

As Charles prepared to leave the boarding house for the Alabama Hotel that evening, he patted some witch hazel on his cheeks, took one last glance in a hand-held mirror, and adjusted his collar.

"I hope to meet the belle of the ball tonight, Nathaniel," he told his friend as he turned away from the stench of pillows soaked with phlegm.

Propped up in bed, Nathaniel glanced up from the book he was reading. "With that stylish black jacket and your charm, I have no doubt you'll soon get a wife."

Boyington's smile exposed a set of straight, white teeth. He tipped his top hat to his roommate. All he was missing to be completely in style was a walking cane, but he trusted he'd have a fine one in short order—with a few more winning hands of poker at the backroom casino.

Frost closed his book. "You're attending the fancy ball, and I'm stuck in this boarding house coughing my head off. No matter, it's the way of the world. Just dandy." Frost turned on his side, faced the faded yellow wallpaper and muttered, "Have a good time."

Outside, the December air was chilly, so Charles buttoned his coat. He passed green lawns and bright pink azaleas blooming early because of the mild winter. He marveled at the old live oak trees with massive trunks and broad branches spanning out in all directions, fully draped with delicate, wispy streamers of olive-colored Spanish moss.

Reminiscing about his family in Connecticut, he pictured them huddled around the fireplace wearing winter clothing at their Litchfield home after a hearty meal cooked by his mother. Soon, snow would blanket the fields and hillsides of his childhood while he worked to establish himself in this semi-tropical climate, worlds away and surrounded by unfamiliar wonderment. He'd survive and thrive. Mobile's lawlessness allowed him to gamble and earn money, enabling him to buy the proper clothing to participate in its culture.

The intense feeling of nostalgia that ran through him dissipated as it collided with the rush and excitement of attending the ball in this bustling city, a city of new beginnings for him.

Along the way, couples out for an evening stroll nodded and said, "Hello," and Boyington felt glad to be alive. He straightened his naturally erect posture and strutted along.

The hotel exuded laughter and music as Boyington made his way to the ballroom through the crowded lobby of well-dressed couples greeting each other with hugs and handshakes.

The mood of high spirits was contagious, but he saw not one familiar face. He knew he was an outsider but smiled with the unflappable spirited ease and energy of youth, confident and undaunted.

Once inside the ballroom, he surveyed the scene and sucked in his breath. He'd never seen such an elegant and opulent space. In the Puritan culture of Connecticut, Christmas wasn't celebrated. It was frowned upon. Here, the theme of the season showed everywhere. In December 1833,

the ballroom was filled with Christmas decorations. Stockings hung from mantels covered with pinecones and greenery. A ceiling-height tree in one corner was full of fruit and lit candles. A tree made of magnolia branches decorated another corner. Mistletoe hung from chandeliers. Pinecones were interspaced between greenery on tables amidst sterling silver plates of hors d'oeuvres of every variety. These were being devoured, followed by Champagne offered by male and female Negro servers, clad in black and white, who seemed to be everywhere with trays full of crystal glasses.

Charles was thankful his mother had acquired printed dance manuals; from them, he'd learned to master popular techniques. He'd need to remember the steps to the Virginia Reel and the waltz to impress the southern belles.

At this ball, Boyington planned to insert himself into Mobile society. The music faded to a stop, and the dance floor cleared. He looked around and spotted a young lady who immediately caught his attention. She stood in a corner beside an older woman who was adjusting the ruffled collar of the younger girl's off the shoulder gown, pulling it up a bit. The center of his attention exuded grace as she chatted with friends, and her beauty enthralled him; it was enhanced by the winter rose atop her crown of chestnut brown curls. Her bespangled ivory silk dress with an empire waist and trimmed in blue imported lace accentuated her slim figure.<sup>7</sup>

When Charles approached, he almost stepped on the hem of the young lady's skirt. He made a deep bow, drawing the tail of his richly decorated evening coat above his knees. "I am sorry. May I introduce myself? I am Charles R.S. Boyington." He knew the rules of etiquette required a formal introduction, but he bypassed them. "If your dance card isn't full, may I have the pleasure of this dance?"

"Why..."

The lady with her interrupted. "I am Mademoiselle Marie Lydia Justin, Miss Rose de Fleur's chaperone."<sup>8</sup> She cast her eyes upon his attire, first focusing on his lacy shirt, then sizing him up and down. She tapped her finger on her lips. "Are you new to our city, Sir?"

Charles nodded. "I am, Ma'am. Charles Boyington, at your service." Without further ado, he took Miss de Fleur's hand and escorted her to the floor where he showed his expertise at the waltz the orchestra played. He led and his partner followed, keeping in perfect step.

Between the first and second dance, Charles took his partner to the punch table and then over to a quiet corner. "Christmas is wonderful here in Mobile," he told her. "You celebrate much more than we do up North." He took her hand. "Would you do me the honor of allowing me to recite a Christmas poem to you? I came across it recently. It was published anonymously

because the professor who wrote it considered it unscholarly, and he didn't want his name—Clement Clark Moore—associated with it." He cracked a crooked smile. "But his friend took it to the *Troy Sentinel*, and they published it December 23, 1823."<sup>9</sup>

He took a deep breath. "It's called, *A Visit from Saint Nicholas*:

*'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, in hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.*" The band played, and the music drowned out his voice.

Rose clapped. "What a lovely poem, Mr. Boyington. I am a child at heart." She put her empty cup on a table. "Oh, the music's started again." They returned to the dance floor, where he reveled in the delicate scent of a winter-blooming gardenia in Rose's hair.

After the Virginia Reel, during a waltz, Charles found out a few things about his new acquaintance. He learned her father was a Napoleonic refugee and that she was nineteen years old. Her beautiful azure eyes and warm smile mesmerized him. He knew he had met the love of his life.

To impress her with his musical talent, he asked the orchestra leader to allow him on stage, and he joined them in playing the lute. His performance produced the desired result; Rose clapped for a full minute. Then they joined the crowd gathered around the piano and sang three verses of *The Snow Bird's Song*:

*Oh, the Snow Bird! Oh, the Snow Bird!  
It's crowned with flakes of snow;  
It flits here, it flits there,  
And every where you go!*

*It sings of love! It sings of love!  
Then press your heart to mine;  
My darling! My darling!  
My love in you I find!*

*Oh, the Snow Bird! Oh, the Snow Bird!  
His heart is true and kind;  
He whispered in my ear and said,  
"We must our hearts combine!"*

Charles squeezed Rose's hand. "Ah, my dear Miss de Fleur; you have a beautiful voice. I've never heard anything so lovely." He looked into her eyes while she fluttered her eyelashes at him.

*Arriving in Mobile*

To follow protocol and avoid being too aggressive, after four dances, he returned Miss de Fleur to her chaperone. With thanks and "I hope to see you again soon," he excused himself and departed with a bow.

As he crossed the ballroom floor, Charles glanced around, looking for the man who'd provided him with the invitation to thank him, but he didn't see Tommy John anywhere. Elated at his encounter with the lovely young lady, he didn't carry out his intention to meld into Mobile society that night. Instead, he headed for home to bask in his happy mood.

Ignoring his snoring roommate, Charles slipped into his nightgown. Before retiring, he sat on the edge of his bed and took out the best handmade writing paper available.<sup>10</sup> By the light of a flickering candle which also helped diffuse the room's unpleasant scents, he wrote the first verse of a poem;

TO A BUTTERFLY AT CHRISTMAS

*Oh, care-free creature,  
Flitting here and flitting there;  
You should be tucked in  
From this chilly air.<sup>11</sup>*

But he fell asleep and didn't finish it. The next day he sent Rose a letter in his clear handwriting, without flourishes:

*Dear Mademoiselle Rose,*

*We met last night for the first time, and I cannot express to you what pleasure this meeting gave me. I cannot recall an evening spent so joyously. Everyone at the ball seemed so courteous and friendly to me. Even as I slept like an angel, you came to me in my dream. I can hear now the rustle of your silk dress, as like an agile gazelle your graceful step pranced o'er the ballroom floor until I felt like I was on the greenward [sic] surrounding Titania's flowery throne; and I like Oberon, bowed to your every wish and crowned your brow with rosebuds. Yes, yes, you were beautiful, and I can say as Shakespeare did in *The Taming of the Shrew*,*

*"She's not forward, but modest as the dove:  
She's not hot, but temperate as the morn'.  
She's beautiful, and therefore to be wooed;  
She is a woman, therefore to be won."*

*Your sweet song of the snow birds, in your clear, sweet soprano voice, reminded me of the long snows back home in Connecticut and the gay [carefree] young folks as they slid o'er the ice in eve'n time, and the sleigh bells tingling their merry sounds along the country roads, echoing and re-echoing through the woods. The song brought into my heart memories I left behind. But I have met you, and happiness is now again with me.*

Boyington Oak

*I long for the next opportunity to play for you to sing, each strain and note of your song brought thrills into my very soul, and my heart swelled and throbbed as I held your arm and hand in mine as we danced and bowed in the graceful minutes.*

*I am awaiting with impatience the time when I will be permitted to see you again and sit and talk with you in the moonlight, or stroll with you through the pleasant and flowery fields and woods around Mobile. We'll sit and listen to the birds as they flit from bough to bough with sweet song.*

*O, that this pleasure will be soon again, my lovely Rose! And until that moment the waiting will seem a hundred years or more. Until then, sweet Rose, I remain*

Your ardent admirer,  
BOYINGTON<sup>12</sup>

Her reply came swiftly. Her handwriting appeared cramped, and it had some flourishes:

*Dear Mr. Boyington,*

*Your letter was handed to me today by my cousin, Mademoiselle Marie Justin (Lydia), who received it from the postcarrier. Kindly do not post any more letters, send them if you can. I will explain my reasons for this request. You are flattering me; however, I am glad the 'Snow Bird's Song' pleased you; but I am equally charmed with your playing the harpsichord and the lute. Madame Caro [a member of the colonial family of Mobile, Pensacola and New Orleans] played her operatic selections with ease and charm. I am told by Mademoiselle Justin, who has conversed with Captain William George, that you equally perform on the mandolin and harp as you do on the lute. You cannot call to see me until I tell you, as I must confess to you my father is opposed to my receiving company, and has appointed my cousin Mademoiselle Justin as duenna, so when we meet again alone I will appoint the place and let you know by the slave boy. However, my cousin has consented to chaperone several friends for a party to go into the woods on Monday evening to gather nuts and wild flowers, and she has permitted me to ask you to join us, since she will be with us.*

*Do not think ill of what I write in regards to our meeting each other. I will further explain.*

*"Hope is a lover's staff, we walk hence with that,  
And manage it against despairing thought."  
Until we meet again.*

Mobile, Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>, 1833

ROSE<sup>13</sup>

After reading the encouraging quote from Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Boyington promptly replied, "May I address you



'Rosa, my dear,' in my future notes?" He also said he would meet her after Mass and they'd go to her friend Barbara's home where he was invited to dinner. The route would evade Rose's father, if her father happened to attend the Mass, too. It was a big concession for him to attend those services. He admitted that he didn't attend religious services and had never been in a Catholic church. But he would do almost anything to be near Rose.

His thoughts turned to a romantic scene: Mobile would soon have gas streetlights, and the theater would be lit with sperm oil lamps. How nice it would be. But he didn't elaborate on those things to Rose. Instead, he bragged a bit, telling her about buying a new suit from St. John, Price & Co.—a Jackson coat of green and Oxford mixed cloth—pantaloon striped, corded mixed color with light cord, vest Florentine of ivory color dotted with tiny fleur-de-lis designs and blue buttons. He also described his new overcoat, and black imported boots, saying his mother sent him the money to purchase those clothes. He stated that when he wore them, she'd be the first to observe them.<sup>14</sup>

He promised her something, too, an exquisite yellow and black mantilla his friend brought him from the West Indies. "It will be sent with this letter by Messrs. Pollard & Dade's negro delivery boy," he said. "He will put them in the third pew at 2 o'clock."

It ended with a declaration of love: "My heart swells up in throbs of love for thee, sweet Rose, and like a lovely flower I shall see you in my dreams tonight."

Rose acknowledged his letter by giving him permission to call her Rosa, my dear. Then she told him she'd also received the mantilla and only her slave woman Delphine had seen it. Delphine had begged her to put it 'around my shoulders, jes fo' a minute'. Rose said she complied, and then she draped it around her own shoulders, pretending to be Empress Josephine receiving Napoleon on his return from the battlefield.<sup>15</sup> The December 10, 1833 letter was cut short because Mademoiselle Justin was coming.

\* \* \*

Despite their intense attraction to each other, things in Charles's love life did not go smoothly. Although they had not met, Baron de Fleur did not approve of his daughter keeping company with a printer. He let his feelings be known right away. He made every effort to keep them apart, but Rose's chaperone, who was also her cousin, sympathized with the young lovers. When Charles discovered Rose attended Mass each morning at the Catholic Cathedral on Conti Street, he, too, became a regular.

Lydia, a romantic, passed notes between the two during the service. The first Bishop of Mobile, Michael Portier, who said the Mass, either didn't notice or ignored their actions. With Lydia's help, the two managed to