

# Who Was the Frenchman of Frenchman's Creek?

By WALTER P. FULLER

Alfred Lechevalier, taxidermist of note of Montreal, Canada; wholesale slaughterer of Florida plume birds for two bloody decades, escaped just condemnation of an awakened citizenry for four fifths of a century because nobody bothered to translate a document written entirely in French but recorded in the public records of Hillsborough County. Adding to mystery surrounding the man was the fact that a shrewd or ignorant Spanish lady of Key West failed to record a couple of deeds in those same records for some 35 years. Her failure in fact, stretched the wall of silence out for more than a century.

The mystery started exactly on March 9, 1843 when Antonio Maximo Hernandez signed in Tampa an application under the Armed Occupation Act of August 4, 1842 for a fractional quarter of a section of land that now houses Florida Presbyterian College in St. Petersburg. The application was filed the next day in Newnansville and given the number 303. The south border of the college land is a broad and deep creek, only 1,700 feet long, and named Frenchman's Creek—after said Alfred Lechevalier, of course.

Dominga Hernandez, widow of Antonio Maximo, compounded the mystery by not recording until January 4, 1887 the patent deed she got October 1, 1852 from President Millard Fillmore, by which time she had become Dominga (sometimes spelled Domingo) Gomez. Whether this were guile, ignorance or just plain resentment and suspicion of the United States of America will probably never be known. But one thing is sure; until the deed was recorded she paid no taxes, and guile or no, she avoided taxes for 35 years. Not that they amounted to much in those simple days.

Further confusion was added because the March 10, 1843 application eventually proved to be for Government Lot 2 in the Southeast Quarter of Section 10, Township 32 South, Range 16 East and was supposed to contain 136.25 acres, whereas the President Fillmore deed for no apparent reason added the East Half of the Northeast Quarter (being 80 acres).

Which brings into play the Great Gale of September 23-25, 1848 and the remarks of George Watson, U. S. Government Surveyor in his field notes of May, 1848 as he made the original survey which was "By request of Maximo Hernandez, settler under the Armed Occupation Act I assign him the SE quarter of 10-32-16 (Fractional). He notes, which has no bearing on the matter, that John W. Parrish and Hiram Parrish were his chainmen and Herman Miller his Marker. (Watson said "SE quarter" and not "Govt Lot 2".) The Parrish brothers and Miller had first worked for Watson in their home county of Manatee, whose rich farm lands were surveyed before the arid sands of Pinellas.

A day or so later Watson refers to Indian Key which later became known as Bird Key.

None of which would have been so hopelessly confusing or of any particular moment had it not been for the fact that nobody bothered until 1966 to get translated Deed F, Page 278, written entirely in French, signed in Montreal, Canada October 28, 1880 by A. Lechevalier, L. L. Maillet and L. Bedard, filed November 10, 1880 and recorded March 16, 1881 in Tampa (Hillsborough County). Eighty-six years of utterly unbelievable non-curiosity on the part of scores, maybe hundreds of people!

But it was confusing that Dominga's deed to Lechevalier was not recorded either. It never was. And where in this tangled skein fitted the deed dated April 21, 1886 from Dominga Gomez, who by now had moved to Key West, to Claude Van Bibber, son of W. Chew Van Bibber, William Whitridge, William C. Chase and A. F. Dulin, doctors, all of Baltimore, Md. (recorded deed Book O, Page 495, Hillsborough), and what did Dr. W. Chew Van Bibber have to do with it? The Van Bibber who at the National Convention of the American Medical Association at New Orleans on April 29, 1885 declared Maximo Point the healthiest spot on earth—and then had his son and associates cannily buy the Point?

A pretty big mystery for a little old creek called Frenchman's Creek; only some 1700 feet long and starting a few feet west of Maximo Road (31st Street South, St. Petersburg), and starting full grown from a spray of several springs to run deep and wide southwest to Boca Ciega Bay some 500 feet north of Indian Key. The city-owned Maximo Park, beautiful with heavy growth of oaks and cedars and palms, atop a huge Indian Mound (no pines—pines don't grow on Indian kitchen middens) lies on the south bank and Florida Presbyterian College on the north bank (and traffic thunders all day and night across it at 34th Street (U. S. 19 or State 55, take your choice).

And then there is stout old John Bethell, British descended, turtler, ship builder, early settler on Big Bayou, who despised Lechevalier because he slaughtered birds for plumes instead of food. John was raised in a school of survival not finery. But Alfred's bloody greed enraged him.

So perhaps all this is worth unravelling.

Antonio Maximo Hernandez was one of that surprisingly large number of Spaniards, Indians and Negroes who beginning as early as 1797 lived on the Gulf Coast of Peninsular Florida notably the shores of Sarasota Bay, at Shaw's Point on the north bank of the Manatee River, Spanish Town on the West bank of the Hillsborough River at Tampa; from April, to early November each year when the fishing ranchos were not operating. The Ranchos operated from November through April. Houses were mostly palmetto thatch. But the owners had good gardens and considerable fruit trees, notably mangoes, limes, oranges, guavas and pineapples.

A Rancho was a peculiar Cuban-Spanish institution that was the great civilizing force of the lower Gulf Coast of Florida and the most dependable way to make a living for perhaps two centuries of Spanish rule of Florida. So strong an institution was the Rancho that it survived the Florida take over by the United States Government from Spain in 1822 and was ended only by the Great Gale of September 23-25, 1848.

There was great demand for fish in Cuba. Most of the people lived on the north coast but the water was too deep on that side for good or dependable fishing as all fans of "The Old Man and the Sea" know. The south coast was shallow, there were few people, few fish, no ice, no transportation. So the poor of Cuba depended on the Florida Gulf Coast for their meat—mostly mullet.

The government of Cuba had a rigid control of the Ranchos because of its monopoly of salt. Only a licensed Rancho operator could buy the huge quantity of salt needed for a mullet operation. (There was no ice and smoked mullet keep very poorly.)

There were about six ranchos operating on the coast. They were huge operations, with sometimes 200 people working at the site during the fishing season; a weird mixture of Spanish and Seminole Indians, Negroes and Spaniards; living in amiable marital integration.

William Bunce, after whom Bunces Pass is named, the only United States citizen ever to head a Rancho, had one first at Shaw's Point on the

south bank of the Manatee in 1834 and Maximo almost surely worked there as well as Sarasota. Bunce moved to Cabbage Key in 1835 (now part of Tierra Verde) because of trouble with the Seminoles and was operating there when he died about 1840. Maximo apparently moved about when Bunce did and set up for himself at the Point. What factual data exists to establish these facts is found in the testimony in homestead application hearings before U. S. land agency officials. But wary of the U. S. Government as represented by the soldiery at Fort Brooke; with economic allegiance to Havana, their home base as well as the market for their salt and smoked mullet and fish roe, the vital essentials of their livelihood; the squatters on the shores of Sarasota Bay failed to file for their U. S. homestead claims under the 1824 law after the United States took over Florida in 1822 until the right by law had expired.

Their claims in the form of numerous affidavits sound honest and factual. These documents were compiled by the Federal Writers Project in the Nineteen Thirties in five typewritten tomes, copies being in the possession of this writer. Antonio Maximo Hernandez signed one such affidavit in 1828. In it he mentioned residence under date of 1812. He worked for Wm. Bunce at Shaw's Point in 1835. When the Seminoles backed into the Tampa Bay area at the start of the Seminole War Bunce went to Palm Island (Tierra Verde) and Antonio Maximo to "the site of an old fishery" at what became known as time passed as Maximo Point. The following data is taken from Volume I, Federal Writers Project, recording rejected claims and is to help solve the question of when and where and why in the Lechevalier story.

"Jose Maria Caldez claims 640 acres under the donation act of 1824 on the north side of Oyster River (Whittaker Bayou, near Sarasota) nine miles from Tampa Bay area where he has been a settler since 1814."

"Maximo Hernandez, illiterate, swears June 2, 1828 before Owen Marsh that he has known Caldez and his farm since 1814."

"Domingo Alvarez, illiterate, swears before Edward Dixon that he knows Maximo Hernandez and also knows of his farm at Angola (Sarasota)."

"Macamos Ernandez, illiterate, deposes before R. D. C. Collins in 1828 that he is over 21 years of age and is the head of a family; that he has lived on and cultivated the land at Sarasota Bay since about 1812. He claims no other land." (Collins was not a very good linguist to spell Antonio Maximo as poorly as he did.)

“Antonio Gomez claims 640 acres since 1812.”

“Jose Maria Dania swears he has known Antonio Gomez ten years and that he has a wife and five children, has cultivated his land since 1819 and planted several lime and mango trees.”

“Andrew Gonzalez claims to have lived at Sarasota since 1798 and to have planted lime and orange trees and raised ten acres of corn in 1819.”

“Antonio Pania claims 640 acres on Key Puebla, about eight miles north of Charlotte Harbor.”

“Maximo Henandez deposes on June 28, 1828 that he has known Antonio Pania about 15 years and that he has occupied the land about 12 years.”

It is reasonable to assume that when Maximo first knew Antonio Pania some 12 to 15 years prior to 1828, let's say 1812, he was a late teen ager or barely 21 but adult enough to be a commercial fisherman and that when he filed homestead claim No. 303 under the Armed Occupation Act of August 4, 1842, on March 10, 1843 he was probably 45 years old or a little older.

Let the story now take up again the hurricane of September 23-25, 1848 for that September hurricane of 1848 finished off Hernandez's Rancho. It was the most destructive storm ever to hit the Tampa Bay area. Its climax was on September 25, a Sunday. The storm had swept up the Florida West coast parallel to the coast and a few miles off shore. At exactly a fatal time it veered northeast and at a slow circular wind speed of about 85 miles an hour but an unusual forward speed of about 20 miles an hour came straight up Tampa Bay. It drove a huge water surge with it. It then veered again toward the west to give a full frontal attack on the western prong, Old Tampa Bay. The in surge began about 10 in the morning. By 4 P.M. the after part of the vicious circle had pushed the water out. In that six hours the water rose 13.5 feet at Tampa and presumably still higher on the West shore of Old Tampa Bay. Tannehill, perhaps the best authority on hurricanes, explains why a surge rises higher on the west side of a constricted water area than on the east shore. The more conservative Jacksonville Army engineers' office sets the water rise that day at 11.9 feet. In any event the water utterly destroyed the Hernandez Rancho. The Indian Mound on the south bank of Frenchman's creek is some 20 feet above sea level. The people of the Rancho, it is presumed, took refuge there. But Antonio had died the month before and had left his widow Dominga in charge.

If a person has ever been exposed to the full brunt of a major hurricane his imagination can flare into pretty gaudy pyrotechnics contemplating this situation. (This writer has been exposed to six such.) And, surely, that person will end up with a very deep admiration for Dominga Hernandez. Antonio, the husband, had died on August 15, 1848, only a bit more than a month before the great storm. Furthermore Dominga had given birth the year before to a son. Then charged with principal responsibility for the lives and safety of probably several score of persons she witnessed the fearful and total destruction of property that represented a lifetime of hard and dangerous toil on the part of the pair.

Accuracy of the facts as to death of the husband, the existence of the infant son, and details as to the "great gale" are gleaned from various official documents reposing in the national archives in Washington. The principal document is an affidavit signed by Dominga Hernandez January 25, 1849 before Hugh Archer, land agent for the U. S. Treasury in the course of seeking a deed to the land. Dominga says "The lands are surveyed but the claimant is unable to identify the lands having lost her papers in the Gale," that the original permit was No. 303 and issued March 25, 1843 by Samuel Russell, registrar of the land office at Newnanville, and that Maximo occupied the land from that date "until the 15th day of August, 1848 when he departed this life intestate"—having died as above set forth leaving a widow Dominga Hernandez and one child, Antonio, one year old, and that the widow claims a patent.

This affidavit was supported by another signed the same day by John M. Palmer at Tampa. Palmer was a prominent attorney of that then small village; his son Tom Palmer eventually becoming a famed attorney, also a citizen of Tampa and for many years the owner of what is now Philippe Park.

Archer reported on March 12, 1849 he believed Dominga and that she should get the land. The bureaucrats let the matter lie until 1852 when under prodding from Thomas P. Kennedy at Tampa on January 15, 1852 James Gettitz, land agent at Tampa, granted her another Homestead application numbered 386 and under that at long last she got her deed from President Fillmore.

Kennedy was quite eloquent. He said:

"There is residing at this place an old Spanish Lady the relic of one Maximore [sic] Hernandez. The widow is old and in very indigent circumstances."

One experiences a mixture of amusement and amazement to learn that this "old Spanish Lady" shortly thereafter married one Gomez, in due course mothered three children for him and some 30 years later sold the land; not once but twice. Quite a remarkable "old lady." An astonishment it is too to learn that because of that infant son and his descendants and the vagaries of history and life two sisters and a brother, grandchildren of the original Antonio today live in Tarpon Springs, the direct descendants of the first legal owner of land in Pinellas County. Quite a record!

But back to the great storm. It spread its destruction along a 60 mile stretch of the Gulf Coast. It cut Casey's pass at Venice. It swept away Passage Key lying between Anna Maria and Egmont Key at the Southwest mouth of Tampa Bay. It buried Egmont Key under 9 feet of water, and so badly twisted and wracked the new lighthouse, which had been but just finished in May, 1848, that it had to be torn down and rebuilt. It cut Mullet Key to ribbons of land, about as it exists today. It cut Johns Pass. It destroyed Jim Stevenson's new orange grove on the bluff overlooking Stevenson's creek, which is the line between Clearwater and Dunedin. It sheared off a part of the giant Indian Mound at Philippe Park. It destroyed Fort Brooke at Tampa—it never was rebuilt—and flooded every store on Franklin Street in Tampa. It washed away a large part of the high pine land on Old Tampa Bay where the Fuller farm is now. It drowned tens of thousands of cattle. And it ran Dominga out of Pinellas but not out of the land business. On April 25, 1886 she signed a deed in the County of Monroe (presumably at Key West) to William Whitridge, Claude Van Bibber, William C. Chase and A. F. Dulin, all of the City of Baltimore, Maryland. The deed was recorded in Deed Book O, Page 495. The deed was acknowledged by Peter O. Knight, Clerk of the Circuit Court. While Dominga (this time the name is spelled with an "a") signed as Dominga Henandez (with an X. She also was illiterate). Peter meticulously said, in his acknowledgment, "Dominga Gomez formerly Dominga Hernandez." Mr. Knight soon thereafter moved to Tampa and at the time of his death was the greatest financial, civic and political figure in Tampa and the Tampa Bay area. He was head of the Tampa Electric Company, ran many other enterprises.

The deed conveyed the East half of the Northeast quarter and Government Lot 2, both of Section 10, Township 32 South, Range 16 East, and claimed to contain the original 136.25 acres. As the east half of the Northeast quarter contained approximately 80 acres, apparently more than half of Maximo Hernandez's land was swept away by the 1848 hurricane.

Dominga obviously had previously conveyed the same land to Alfred Lechevalier in the fall of 1880 but he never recorded his deed. Had he not had a deed, however, it is a safe assumption that a cautious man of money and the law in Montreal, Canada, one S. S. (L. L.) Maillet would not have on the afternoon of October 27, 1880 loaned Lechevalier \$1,800 for 18 months at 18 per cent interest. However he apparently was not too strongly impressed with the value of the 136.25 (the mortgage conservatively figures 120 acres) acres of beautiful waterfront property because he required Alfred to also include under the mortgage "A business consisting of birds, stuffed animals etc. situated in Montreal."

If Lechevalier eventually paid the mortgage the public record fails to reveal that fact. No satisfaction was ever recorded. The mortgage was filed March 16, 1881 in record Book E, Page 278.

The mortgage was written entirely in French. That was the document of mystery that revealed the whole story. In 1966 Professor Robert O. Davison of St. Petersburg Junior College translated the mysterious document. It came out in English like this:

#### DEED

Before Mr. Louis Bédard, undersigned, Notary Public for the Province of Québec, residing in the City of Montreal

There appeared:

Mr. Alfred Lechevalier, naturalist, residing in the City of Montreal

Mr. a. Who has by these presents recognized and attested to have  
Lechevalier rendered, ceded and transported with warranty from all liens to  
to L. L. (S. S.) Maillet, esquire, lawyer of the City of Montreal  
S. S. (L. L.) present and accepting possession for himself and his representa-  
Maillet tives in the future. Be it known:

#1. A lot of land being the half East of the Quarter North-East and the lot #no. 2 (2) in the Section ten (10) in the Township thirty-two (32) South, of the range sixteen (16) East, containing one hundred thirty-six and twenty-five hundredths acres being included in the boundaries marked three hundred and three (303) situated in the County of Hillsborough in the State of Florida, in North America, according to the official part of the



survey of the said lands filed in the General Office of Lands by the General Surveyor, together with all the rights and privileges and all that pertaining in any way what-so-ever to the range.

#2. The South-West quarter of the North-East quarter of Section ten (10). Township thirty-two (32) range sixteen (16) East containing forty acres and being situated in the County of Hillsborough, in the State of Florida, in North America

#3. A business consisting of birds, stuffed animals, etc. situated in Montreal.

The whole belongs to the said seller at least

For the said real estate and business effects to enjoy, to do with and dispose of by the said purchaser at will, except with privilege of repurchase mentioned hereafter.

This sale is made in addition for and by the price and sum of eighteen hundred piastres (dollars), current money of Canada, which the said seller admits to have had and received from the purchaser for which he gives general and final quittance.

It has been especially understood between the parties that the said seller will have the right within eighteen months from this date to repurchase from the said buyer or from his representatives the inscribed real estate as well as the appurtenances, by reimbursing the said buyer the said sum of eighteen hundred piastres (dollars), plus the interest, costs and expenses and money that the said S. S. (L. L.) Maillet might have payed out in connection with the present purchase; and in case of default by the said seller to exercise his right of repurchase within eighteen months from this date, the said S. S. (L.L.) Maillet will become the non-transferable owner of everything and may not be subject to liens in the possession of said real estate and business by anyone who-so-ever, the said Sire Lechevalier transmitting to him all the rights that he has or may have.

\*domicile in their present home For the execution of these present, the parties have chosen\*

L.B. Done and executed in the City of Montreal, in the office of Mr. Louis Bédard, under the number seven thousand thirty-one of his term, in the year one thousand eight hundred and eighty, the twenty-seventh day of October in the afternoon: And the

parties have signed with the said notary after having read the agreement.

Signed A. Lechevalier  
S. S. (L.L.) Maillet  
L.L. Bédard, N.P.

True copy of the contract drawn up in the office of the undersigned notary, six words deleted, nul and void—a marginal correction

Signed L. Bédard  
N P

Dominga finally filed her 1852 deed on January 4, 1887 in Tampa. She had previously filed it at the office of the Department of the Interior in Washington, D. C. on December 2, 1886. The Hillsborough record is Patent Record Book 1, Page 46. Her re-filing at Newnansville (Florida) in 1852 recites the original Antonio Maximo Hernandez application number 303 and to her a new certificate number 386 was issued adding the 80 additional acres. Her deed runs to "Domingo [sic] Hernandez widow of Maximo Hernandez, deceased. Alex McCormick, assistant Secretary, signs for Millard Fillmore, President. The deed was issued October 1, 1852.

But a local comment on Alfred Lechevalier is the one this writer likes best. It was penned in 1914 by the stout mariner and pioneer of Big Bayou, St. Petersburg, formerly from Key West, before that from the Bahamas, John A. Bethell. Here let me express appreciation to Charlton Tebeau and a brilliant and generous historical student of his who deeply researched the Bethell family for this writer, tracing the family from Bahama occupancy of about 1600 to Pinellas Point. One oddment, without fail the first male child of the family has always been named John A. for three and a half centuries!

Bethell authored a small book titled "History of Pinellas Peninsular." It is replete with human interest, human error, is valuable and reliable to future historians only as to those things Bethell actually saw. Things he "heard" are almost invariably wrong. But he saw Lechevalier and hated him with an almost venomous rage. For John was an honest and humane man. He hunted when he was hungry. Or he killed alligators and panthers and bears because they killed his stock and that of his neighbors. In one hunt in the months of November and December, 1860 he, Miranda and his neighbors and Woods killed 10 bears, caught three and killed eleven wildcats and three panthers.

Here is what he says about Lechevalier:

"The worst scourge that ever came to Pinellas Point was one Chevalier, a Frenchman, from Montreal, Canada, who located just west of Point Maximo for the purpose of killing birds for the plumes, feathers and skins.

I don't know how many birds Chevalier and his ruthless gang slaughtered during the three years he remained on the Point; for he brought a gang with him with a complete outfit for the murderous business. I know it was well into the thousands. Even the harmless pelicans came in for a share of powder and lead. Their wallets were made into tobacco pouches.

Two of Chevalier's agents, Pocket and Tetu, told me that one season they got 11,000 skins and plumes and 30,000 birds' eggs, and with a force of eleven men with blowpipes it was impossible to blow the contents out of more than one-half of these eggs before they were spoiled. Then they had to peck holes in the ends of the balance and spread them out over the face of creation for the ants to do the rest. That was the greatest destruction of the feathered tribe at any time during the three years.

Chevalier would not have remained here in the Point had not some of our settlers aided him in his nefarious work, from the fact that the hirelings he brought with him were ignorant of the bird rookeries on the land, and as they knew nothing about boats, could not hunt on the islands. But as some of the settlers enlisted in his hellish cause, then the war of extermination was waged on everything that had hide or feathers.

I was told by one of Chevalier's pilots, or bird butchers, that he piloted some of the gang to a rookery at the head of Long Bayou in nesting time and killed over 1,000 plume birds, and he said that about ten days after, while passing by the rookery, the sight and stench of the dead birds was sickening. The heads and necks of the young birds were hanging out of the nests by the hundreds. They had killed the mother birds and their young had died of sheer starvation. "I am done bird hunting forever," said he. Did he stick to his resolve? Not much! In less than one year he was on the warpath again!"

Why the deed to Claude Van Bibber and his three associates? That was inspired by a speech that Claude's father W. Chew Van Bibber, also a Baltimore doctor, made at the 1885 convention of the American Medical Association on April 29 in the City of New Orleans.

This speech is sacred in St. Petersburg because the burden of the theme was that Pinellas Peninsula was the healthiest spot on earth.

In his speech, Van Bibber quoted at length several people whom he felt were experts on Florida climate. One was William C. Chase "who has traveled extensively over the State with a view of studying its climatology who says 'were I sent abroad to search for a haven for tired men, where new life would come with every sun, and slumber full of sleep with every moon, I would select Point Pinellas, Florida. . . Its Indian mounds show that it was selected by the original inhabitants for a popular settlement.'"

Obviously what happened, the enthusiastic Chase gathered up Messrs. Whitridge and Dulin and Claude Van Bibber, a son of W. Chew Van Bibber, and returned to Point Pinellas, looked up Mrs. Dominga Gomez, who had been Mrs. Dominga Hernandez, and bought Point Pinellas. They believed in their own medicine. And Chase obviously inspired the famous Van Bibber speech to the American Medical Association.

Claude Van Bibber had graduated from the University of Maryland School of Medicine in 1877; he took a vacation and bought a fourth interest in a piece of St. Petersburg land, as his father had advised.

Lechevalier according to Bethell last operated at Pinellas Point in 1889 or 1890 and then departed for the Everglades and the Ten Thousand Islands. At this point Charlton Tebeau picks up the trail in his delightful book "*Man In The Everglades*," and records the truly remarkable man's activities to his death in 1895.

Should one wish a history of Lechevalier prior to his 1887-1890 activities in Pinellas there is much more in Tequesta, Number XXII (1962). Practically the entire volume consists of "the Cruise of the Bonton" by Charles William Pierce and the Ornithology of the cruise by William B. Robertson, Jr., Park Biologist at the Everglades National Park, Homestead, Florida.

The story reveals that Lechevalier in 1885 was living with a Wagner family and that the "old Frenchman" was a taxidermist, collector of bird skins and plumes and hired Pierce to circumnavigate the lower Florida peninsula up to the Ten Thousand Islands. The trip started in April and extended

up the Gulf Coast to Hickory Pass, southwest of Fort Myers and near Punta Rassa.

Mr. Robertson in his notes quotes a Mr. Scott, which places Lechevalier at Maximo Point as early as 1880 and as having built a house, which he occupied for five years. John Bethell and other data indicates that the dating is correct, although the five years may well be a year or so too long.

The Scott comments were as follows:

“A check of the contemporary ornithological literature soon revealed that Chevalier had been known on the Gulf Coast as both plume hunter and collector, and that he had a longer history in southern Florida than had been suspected. The following from Scott is the earliest definite reference to him so far found.

When I previously visited this point\* A. Lechevalier had located on the mainland about three-quarters of a mile away; *here he had built a house and was killing birds* on the island for the feather market. He or his assistants had been there a little over a year, and I am told by persons living here, whom I have every reason to believe, that it took these men five breeding seasons to break up, by killing and frightening the birds away, incomparable breeding resort. Of course there were other plume hunters who aided in the slaughter, but the old Frenchman and his assistants are mainly responsible for the wanton destruction. He regarded this as his particular preserve, and went so far as to order outsiders, who came to kill Herons and other birds, off the ground. The rookery being destroyed, he had now given up his residence here.

(\*Maximo Rookery, located on an island off Pinellas Point in the south end of Boca Ciega Bay. Scott's previous visit occurred in the late winter or early spring of 1880's.)”

This passage identifies Chevalier as perhaps the first large-scale plume hunter to operate on the Gulf Coast. If Scott's information was correct, Chevalier must have left the Tampa Bay area only a few months before the Bonton account places him in Miami. Besides other references to Chevalier at Maximo, Scott's 1887 paper also mentions hearsay accounts of a plume-hunting expedition led by Chevalier to Estero Bay and Charlotte Harbor in 1885 that can only have been the cruise of the Bonton.

Scott's reference to Chevalier in the 1887 paper suggest that the two were not personally acquainted. Scott evidently did not know then that the

blackest figure in his gallery of plume-hunting rogues was also an ornithological collector. Contact with this side of Chevalier's activities seems to date from Scott's acquaintance with H. W. Atkins, whom he met for the first time at Punta Rassa on May 19, 1836.

Time came however when Lechevalier either wore his welcome out with the settlers in the area or decimated the rookeries to a point that other areas were more attractive or the crowding in of new arrivals interfered unduly with his activities and he moved on to the Ten Thousand Islands and the Miami area. The Van Bibber effort to found a great international health institution on Maximo Point also failed to get any response. Domingo Gomez also failed to find any other buyers for her acres on the shores of Boca Ciega Bay and the edge of Frenchman's creek.

The result was that no one had enough interest in the Point to speculate further on the land, the Baltimore doctors abandoned their rash speculation, so the taxes went unpaid and eventually a tax deed speculator acquired title to the land.

Roy Hanna, a compulsive buyer of lands who settled in St. Petersburg about 1900 acquired title. Hanna had enlisted in the army for service in the Spanish-American war of 1898 in Cuba. While stationed at Tampa he became attached to a unit engaged in ferrying water by ship from Mirror Lake in present downtown St. Petersburg to the troops in Tampa. Water in that latter city was very bad; Mirror Lake water was very pure and palatable so the thousands of troops temporarily at Tampa drank St. Petersburg water.

Hanna fell in love with St. Petersburg, settled there when he was mustered out in Tampa. He became a large land owner and a prominent citizen. He loved land, once acquired, could never bring himself to part with it, kept himself in constant financial hot water because of the pressure of taxes. He was also a rock ribbed Republican, a rare species indeed in crackerland in those days. Actually there were many such but few had the fortitude of Hanna in openly admitting an allegiance that was considered pretty damning by the local Democratic patriots. His courage had its rich reward however. Post-masterships being political plums in that day Hanna, as the town's most prominent Republican, was invariably local postmaster whenever a Republican president was in office. A long time community amusement was the fact that whenever a Democrat was president—an even more prominent citizen, St. Petersburg Times' great pioneer editor, William L. Straub, a Democrat,

replaced Hanna as postmaster. Despite the rivalry over this plump political plum Hanna and Straub were warm friends.

Hanna finally lost title to the land on tax deed, the city of St. Petersburg acquired it. When St. Petersburg leaders campaigned to get a new educational institution for the city, Florida Presbyterian College, they had no difficulty getting the Hernandez land donated for the College and it became the major portion of a magnificent site for it. Thus after many vicissitudes the Hernandez homestead became a major part of the college campus. Frenchman's Creek became its south boundary and what was once a primitive fishing rancho became the home for a college. An odd thing indeed that one of the most beautiful tracts of land in the entire city of St. Petersburg would remain unused for well over a hundred years from the commencement of settlement of the area. Thus does the ball bounce.

This much is certain, the Frenchman after whom Frenchman's creek is named was Alfred Lechevalier. It is a black and ugly page he wrote in Florida history. Fortunately public opinion now is on the side of the birds of sea and land and animals and trees and beauty, and heartening gains are being made. For instance there are now more deer in the Everglades than there were 40 years ago. A magnificent stand of the big cypress has been preserved forever. Sea and shore bird life increases. For instance, to the extreme excitement and joy of the Fuller family in the spring of 1968 two dozen pink curlew for an appreciable time joined the swarm of white ones that each year spend a satisfactory spring in the carefully preserved mangrove flats along the shores of Long Branch, that mark the west boundary of the Fuller acres—and mortgage. And long may they fly. Stay away descendants and disciples of Lechevalier. Stay away forever!

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