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By HAMPTON DUNN



NAPOLEON'S AIDE SETTLE 'GOD'S OWN RESTING PLACE'

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SAFETY HARBOR --- Dr. Odet Phillipi was the first white settler and grandfather of the first white child born in this region. His grave site overlooks Tampa Bay, which was known as Espiritu Santo Bay in 1823.

Dr. Phillipi was directed here by a pirate he had befriended and who said of Tampa Bay: "If there is a God, surely this is His resting place. There is but one bay to compare with it, Naples..."

Count Phillipi was a great nephew of Louis XVII and friend of Napoleon Bonaparte, who appointed him chief surgeon of the French armed forces. The British captured and imprisoned him and then later freed him after his heroic action in a yellow fever epidemic. He made his way to South Carolina and joined the French Huguenots.

He pulled stakes there in 1819, wound up in the Indian River region of Florida and was credited with originating the now famous Indian River citrus. Fearing an Indian uprising, he fled four years later. On the voyage his ship was intercepted by the pirates, who gave him the "Chamber of Commerce pitch" on Tampa Bay.

Dr. Phillipi cultivated a 100-acre grove, which was destroyed in 1848 by a hurricane and tidal wave. During the Civil War, he and his family moved to Hernando County. After the war he returned to his old hammock and plantation called St. Helena.

In his sunset years he sat by the waters he loved and reflected on the past and Napoleon. He would say: "This is God's own country, and this water His medicine, stirred by His hand, and deposited on this shore to heal man's suffering." He died in 1869.

