

ASYLUM FOR A QUEEN ~~AS~~

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

Charter from a king--that's Pennsylvania! But refuge for a Queen? That's a Pennsylvania that might have been! And the story of that refuge that almost happened is at Asylum, a settlement founded in what is now Bradford County, by French refugees. It was to have been a residence for Marie Antionette of France. Plans were even made for her reception, but she was doomed to death before she could escape Robespierre and the other lady of revolution, "Madame Guillotine". Of course, before and during the Revolution, many Frenchmen, some of the royal house fled their land to come to the New World. Many came to America, and so great was the number of refugees it was deemed necessary to make provision for their settlement as a colony. Two of the most notable were the Viscount Noailles and the Marquis Talon; the former, a brother-in-law of Lafayette. Noailles was one of the French who accepted the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. Talon was one of the most influential men in France. With the help of Philadelphians, who gave them great sympathy, they secured 2400 acres and much wild land. And they sold these parcels with liberal terms to the settlers. Their houses were built of hewn logs, and were two stories high, roofed with pine shingles, and all houses had a good cellar. To native Americans, their houses looked like palaces. The French were used to good living and built well. The house that Talon built was the most pretentious, and it is said to have been the largest log-house ever built in America. It was

known as the great house--or "Le Grande Maison", and some historians say this was the palace which was to have housed Marie Antionette. It stood until 1846, when it was torn down. The French actually managed well in the short ten years of their stay at Asylum. They built a horsepower grist mill, several stores, a tavern, a church, and a theatre. They set up a bakery and a brewery. A post was established with Philadelphia. Most of these emigrants had been wealthy, and although ignorant of farming, they endured forest privations in that wild country, setting their neighbors an example by building better houses and roads, better gardens and orchards, but particularly with their courteous manners. When the news reached Asylum that Napoleon Bonaparte had extended pardon to all, they disposed of their property and left. As communities go before the 1800's it was a lovely place--Asylum. It was visited by Louise Philippe, a future King of France. Tallyrand, the chief of State in 1814 at the Congress of Vienna, also visited there in his American travels. All were welcomed--today Asylum exists only in memory--and in the preservation by the Pennsylvania Historical Society. Although Queen Marie Antoinette never made it--another lady did--a Mrs. Blennerhassett, a most charming visitor is listed--she was the woman who figured in Aaron Burr's conspiracy later on--and was to have been the Queen of his domain. She never made it either!

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.