

[A short and correct account of the life of James Henry Lambier ... the American giant.] / [James Henry Lambier].

Contributors

Lambier, James Henry, 1783-

Publication/Creation

[London] : [publisher not identified], [1825?]

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/nn59truh>

License and attribution

This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.



Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

32029/P



SHORT AND CORRECT ACCOUNT
OF
THE LIFE
OF
JAMES HENRY LAMBIER,

Late Captain in the French Imperial Mameluke Horse
Guards, and now Travelling this Kingdom
under the Denomination of

THE AMERICAN GIANT.

LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN,

ALLOW me the honour to inform you, that I
am the offspring of an ancient Scottish family;
my forefathers, of the name of Campbell, were
originally inhabitants of the Highlands, in Ar-
gyleshire, until the troublesome times in 1745,
when they became exiles of Scotland, and emi-
grated to America; when they took the name of
Lambirth, to inherit a large property in the West
India Islands, left to my grandfather, by the will
of a distant relative; (by which name in French

I am now known, Napoleon having named me Lambier, in my commission as a Captain in the Mameluke Horse Guards.) My parents were by no means of an unusual height or size ; my father, five feet eight inches, my mother, five feet seven. They had a numerous family, twenty-one children ; fourteen sons and seven daughters. I am a native of the city of Boston, of the Massachusetts State, a twin by birth ; born the 29th day of June, 1783 : now in stature upwards of seven feet, and nearly thirty stones in weight. My twin sister is also six feet, four inches and a half, in height, and stout in porportion. In the year 1802, I accompanied my father, who was a merchant in the city of Boston, to Cape Francois, in the Island of St. Domingo, in the West Indies ; in order, if possible, to recover his landed property, which had, for a number of years, been forfeited, by order of the chief of the brigands. Through the medium of friendly intercession with Marshall Le Clerc, who, at that time landed with an army from France, to force the Colony to submit to the French Government, my father gained possession of his plantations, and then entered into a contract with the Marshall for the provision of the French army, serving in the Island of St. Domingo.

From the repeated visits of my Father to Le Clerc, and myself having the honour of attending him in these visits, I became acquainted with Madam Le Clerc, sister to the great Napoleon, who was at that time First Consul, and afterwards Emperor of the French nation. This lady

in compliment to my father, as well as from my extraordinary height as a youth, presented me with a Captain's commission in the Mameluke Horse Guards, a regiment raised by Napoleon, while Commander-in-Chief of the French Army in Egypt. By the intercession of Madame Le Clerc, with Napoleon, I had permission to continue at school, and afterwards to proceed to Europe, to pursue my studies as a medical doctor; having studied physic four years in the college of San duc Argu de lu Vigo, in Madrid, the capital of Spain: and being so far infatuated with the idea of a soldier's life, contrary to the good and honourable intentions of my father and family, (who were Quakers) at an early period I quitted my studies, and joined the French Imperial army, when, to my surprise, although agreeably to an invariable regulation of the Emperor Napoleon, I was instantaneously detached to the 16th regiment of Polish Lancers, and sent with Conscripts from France to the Peninsula, in order to make myself conversant with the nature of a campaign, as well as otherwise with all the different military evolutions considered by the Emperor as essential to every officer to understand, before he could be permitted to join the Imperial Mameluke Horse Guards. I had therefore an opportunity of experiencing a great deal of real and serious service, while serving with the Imperial army in the kingdoms of Spain and Portugal, and have often bled in the field of Battle, as well as encountered every other difficulty incidental to a Soldier's life. I was present at the battle of Talavera de la Rey-

ner, Albuera, Salamanca, Highlandra, Villa Franca, and the Heights of Busaco, Badajos, and Ciudad Rodrigo, at the time of the sieges; also at the renowned and ever memorable battle of Waterloo, where I had the honour of being personally with the Emperor Napoleon, on the 16, 17, and 18th of June; my regiment having received orders to join the other Cuirassiers, in order to cover the retreat of our infantry, which were, about eight o'clock, retreating in all directions. About half-past 8 o'clock the same evening, having a severe rencontre with a detachment of Enniskillen and Scotch Grey Dragoons, I received a severe sabre wound on the right side of my head; from the loss of blood and faintness, I lay some hours on the field of battle; but, by the friendly aid of a noble British officer (a brother freemason) I was enabled to join my regiment, which without loss of time, proceeded on to Paris, and afterwards escorted the unfortunate Napoleon to Rochford, where he embarked on board His Britannic Majesty's ship, Bellerophon, commanded by Capt. Maitland. My regiment returned to Paris, when we were instantly disbanded by order of the late king, Louis XVIII, in consequence of the officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers, having taken the oath of allegiance to Napoleon, his heirs, and successors, never to serve under any other monarch that might reign over the French empire.

I then returned to my native country, the city of Boston, United States of America, and finding my parents dead, and that by the will of my father

I had been left a coffee-plantation in the parish of St. Andrew, in the Blue Mountains, in the Island of Jamaica, to there proceeded, and took up my abode, with the idea of living the life of a planter; but I had not been at the plantation more than nine months, when I found the life of a planter and that of an officer of the French Imperial Horse Guards, were not equally agreeable with my inclinations; I therefore sought society, and unfortunately, too soon got introduced into the company of those, who like myself, had more money than sense or economy, to enable them to take care of it. In an unguarded moment, I lost by cards, £6000, and in order to liquidate this debt, (*a debt of honour as it is called,*) was, by the advice of the friends of my deceased parents, obliged to make over the produce of my property for a term of years.

I then embarked on board of the ship Briton, Captain M^rIntosh, from Port Antonio, north side of Jamaica, for London, having previously got my friends to procure for me letters of introduction to noblemen, to intercede with his Royal Highness the Duke of York, for a commission in the British Horse Guards. Arrived in London, on the 1st of August, 1819, I put up at the Salopian coffee-house, in the Strand, where I remained some days, when, by good fortune, I was taken to the Horse Guards, and personally introduced to His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief, who gave me to understand that in consequence of my being an American by birth, and an officer of rank in the French service in time

of war, together with the difficulties of the times, and the number of British officers who were on half-pay and the peace establishment, His Royal Highness could not in justice to his own feelings, recommend me to his Majesty for a commission. Being thus disappointed, and my pecuniary circumstances very low, I was at a total loss how or in what manner to act for my future support in life, not having a friend in England; I therefore immediately went to Brighton, and commenced exhibiting myself.

The first two gentlemen who honoured me with a visit were His Royal Highness the Duke of York, accompanied by Colonel G—d—n. His Royal Highness was pleased to express his surprise on seeing me in the line of an exhibition, and, on my giving a full explanation of the cause, and nature of my distressed situation, His Royal Highness was most graciously pleased to extend his benevolence by presenting me with a handsome present, and retired from the caravan.

A few evenings afterwards, Colonel G—d—n entered a second time, and took me with him in his carriage, at 12 o'clock at night, to the pavilion at B——n, for the purpose, as I understood, of visiting a Colonel of the Guards, when I was introduced to a corpulent gentleman, who received me in a most princely style. After an audience of two hours and a half, during which time I was entertained most plentifully with the best port and claret, I considered that any longer stay would be an intrusion, and

requested leave to retire, at the same time requesting to be informed from whom I had the honour of receiving such a princely entertainment, when the corpulent gentleman held forth his hand, as I supposed, to shake hands with me, and at the same time gave me to understand, that, on retiring to the carriage, my request should be complied with, I shook him by the hand, and returned thanks, when I was surprised to find a purse of sovereigns left in my hand; I bowed, and then retired. On gaining the carriage, Col. G—d—n informed me, that the corpulent gentleman was no other than H—s p—t M—y:

I shortly afterwards proceeded to Bath, where I exhibited for several weeks, but being grossly deceived by a servant whom I entrusted to transact my little business, I was plunged in the greatest difficulties, but by the assistance of a gentleman who came from Ireland for the purpose of engaging me as an exhibition to travel with him in that country. I was induced to accept his proposal, and immediately went with him to Dublin, in which city I exhibited some weeks, having the greatest attention paid me by every family of respectability in that city, who honoured me with their visits. I then proceeded through the different towns in the north and south of Ireland, where I also received every mark of respect and attention. In March, 1821, I embarked at Waterford, and on the 25th of the same month, landed safe at Tenby, in South Wales, and immediately commenced my rout for Scotland. On the 3d of July, I exhibited at the fair of Greenock;

and afterwards at Glasgow, Paisley, and Stirling, and proceeded on to Aberdeen, in the north of Scotland, and then returned to Edinburgh, where I remained until the 2d of February, 1822.

In the month of October following, I arrived at the Race Ground, and exhibited in the fair at Newcastle, and have partially exhibited in the different towns through Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, Derby, Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, &c. And have the honour of presenting myself before you.

JAMES HENRY LAMBIER.

