Napoleon’s Purgatory
The Unseen Humanity of the “Corsican Ogre” in Fatal Exile

Thomas M. Barden

Introduction by
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This book is dedicated to the memory of Betsy Balcombe, whose youthful, caring, and loving heart helped to ease the pain and sorrow of a great man who not only lost his Empire, but also his wife, son, mother, and family. May she always have known that he cherished her company, games, mischievous smile, and her innocent and non-judgmental heart. For it was Betsy who was mainly responsible for revealing the human side to Napoleon Bonaparte.
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Illustrations

Many of the illustrations used in *Napoleon’s Purgatory* have long been in the public domain due to their age. Others come from the author’s personal collection unless otherwise noted. The photographs in and around Longwood (10-14) are courtesy of Margaret Rodenberg, www.findingnapoleon.com.

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Introduction

‘What a novel my life has been,’ Napoleon famously said while in exile on St. Helena. Truer words were never spoken. When Napoleon stood astride Europe like a colossus, who could have guessed how it would all end. But like any novel, it is the end of the story that reveals much about major characters and, in some ways, comes to define the protagonist. Such is the case with Napoleon Bonaparte.

The story of the end of Napoleon’s career, his exile to the remote island of St. Helena and his death there is one of his fascinating life’s most interesting sagas. It is a story of pathos, politics, intrigue and, sometimes, fun.

It is also the story of three, perhaps four, islands.

The story really begins on the island of Elba, a few miles off the coast of Italy in the Mediterranean. There, in 1814, Napoleon was sent into exile as Emperor of that island. He ruled it peacefully, making substantial improvements, and living a comfortable life, often with family around him. But political intrigue in the capitals of the allied forces who defeated him led him to fear for his life. In a bold gamble, he returned to France and once again became Emperor of the French. But those same allies would have nothing of it, and they began to move their armies against the man they now declared an international outlaw. In yet another bold gamble, Napoleon moved north to face the British and Prussian forces, with Waterloo as the result.

Napoleon understood that his time was up, and was determined to either retire in style in England (as other deposed monarchs had done) or—and this was his decided preference—move to the United States, where much of his family could join him. But he delayed too long in Paris, delayed again on his trip south to Rochefort, and delayed there as well. He stayed on his second island of this story, the Ile d’Aix. A British blockade prevented his escape to the United States, so he surrendered to Captain Maitland of the Bellerophon, expecting to be allowed to retire comfortably in England. He was taken to Plymouth Sound (thus England being the possible fourth island, though he never set foot on it). After two weeks, Napoleon and his entourage were transferred to the Northumberland, which took him, over his furious objections, to his last island, St. Helena.
There are many first-hand sources of information on Napoleon’s time on St. Helena, a time spent in large part trying to establish and shape his legacy. Some of them are quite reliable, others less so, but all contribute to a better understanding of Napoleon the man, the main purpose of this book.

Upon arrival to Jamestown, St. Helena, Napoleon quickly desired to live outside the city and its curious eyes. His future home, Longwood, was not yet ready. But he had a very pleasant visit to the home of William Balcombe, who offered Napoleon his pavilion known as The Briars. The setting of the Briars was, in the words of Balcombe’s daughter Betsy, ‘a perfect little paradise—an Eden blooming in the midst of desolation.’ He moved in on 18 October, and would stay for about two months. William Balcombe was superintendent of public sales for the East India Company.

The entire family was nice, but the star, at least for Napoleon, was fourteen-year-old Betsy. The two of them hit it off extremely well. She was young enough not to cause a scandal (though some have tried), and her easy-going nature gave her excellent access to Napoleon, even over the objections of some of his staff. He became something of a kindly uncle, constantly teasing her. In his eyes, she could do no wrong and was a very welcome relief from the otherwise rather dreary existence facing him. The two would have long talks about Napoleon’s life, and she got insight that few others could match.

A falling out with the island’s governor, Sir Hudson Lowe, led to the Balcombe’s departure from the island in 1818. Some years later, she published a memoir of her time with Napoleon on St. Helena. It is one of the most poignant—and important—of the St. Helena memoirs.

As important as Betsy’s memoirs are, there are plenty of other people who wrote of their time on the island and their observations of Napoleon, as well as his dictation of his own memoirs. Here are some of the more important.

As Thomas Barden rightfully points out, probably the best of the rest is Napoleon’s personal valet, Louis Marchand. He was with Napoleon during some of his most private moments, and was known for his absolute loyalty to his Emperor. His ties to the Emperor were substantial. His mother served as a nurse to Napoleon’s son, generally known as the King of Rome. He was the executioner of Napoleon’s will and was present at the exhumation of Napoleon’s body in 1840. In 1869, Napoleon III made him a count.
Napoleon had a number of doctors while on St. Helena. His last was Dr. Francesco Antommarchi. He was practicing in Corsica when word came that Sir Hudson Lowe was anxious for Napoleon to have a doctor of his choice. Napoleon’s uncle, Cardinal Fesch, and his mother, Letezia, chose Antommarchi to be that doctor. He was there from September of 1819 until Napoleon’s death in 1821. Napoleon had little use for him. He conducted the post-mortem exam, but refused to sign the official report that indicated stomach cancer as the cause of death. In 1825, he published his memoirs of his time on St. Helena, *Last Moments of Napoleon*.

Another doctor who saw Napoleon was Dr. Archibald Arnott, one of several British doctors. The two of them had a very good relationship. Indeed, Napoleon gave him an endowment and a gold snuff-box. He also participated in the post-mortem exam. In 1822 he wrote *An Account of the Last Illness of Napoleon*, whose conclusions upset Sir Hudson Lowe.

Marie Joseph Emmanuel Auguste Dieudonné, comte de Las Cases is one of the most known of those who wrote of their time on St. Helena. Las Cases served Napoleon in a variety of capacities. He accompanied Napoleon to St. Helena and spent much of his time taking dictation from Napoleon. He was not very popular with the others there and eventually seems to have arranged to be exiled from the island. He wrote several accounts of his time there, most notably *Memorial de Sainte Hélène*. His books were best sellers.

Charles Tristan, Comte de Montholon was a generally undistinguished general who had been an aide-de-camp to several superior generals and later as an Imperial Chamberlain. He was an aide to Napoleon at Waterloo, and he and his wife went with Napoleon to St. Helena. He also became quite close to Napoleon. Some say too close, as he is often a suspect of those who feel Napoleon may have been poisoned. After Napoleon’s death, Montholon wrote his memoirs, *Memoirs of the History of France During the Reign of Napoleon, Dictated by the Emperor at Saint Helena to the Generals Who Shared His Captivity; and Published from the Original Manuscripts Corrected by Himself*. While useful, some historians downplay its accuracy.

Dr. Barry Edward O’Meara was a last minute selection to accompany Napoleon when his personal doctor declined to go into exile with him. He also became too close to Napoleon to suit Lowe and was replaced in July of 1818. He took countless notes on everything

There are numerous other people who have written about their time on St. Helena, and Thomas Barden includes a nice selection of them in his telling of the tale.

Napoleon’s time on St. Helena provides a fascinating look into the nature of Napoleon, and Barden gives us excellent insight into that nature. He completes Napoleon’s ‘novel’ very nicely.

J. David Markham  
President of the International Napoleonic Society
“Now thanks to my misfortunes, one can see me naked as I am.”

Napoleon
Preface

For more than two centuries, historians have devoted their entire careers to constructing a comprehensive history of the life and reign of Napoleon Bonaparte. Hundreds of works have been published focused on the same significant and well-documented periods of his life: his military conquests, coup d'etat, reign as Emperor, decline after the Russian debacle, and most of all, his climatic defeat and ruin on the battlefield of Waterloo. In each work, these historians labored with the utmost intensity to discover that one unique aspect of his character that might place their evaluations and analysis above the others.

Volumes have been published analyzing his military tactics and his diplomatic strategy against enemies, potential enemies, and even friends. Even more works have been published documenting his legislative agenda and governance. However, a considerable number of historians choose to end their historical assessments with his defeat at Waterloo. Once exhausting this topic, and observing that Napoleon's days were numbered in Europe, these writers bring closure to their works with a few brief pages pertaining to his final and permanent exile to the island of St. Helena. There are only a few prominent historians who have dedicated extensive examinations into Napoleon's time there.

But why is it that many Napoleonic historians view Waterloo as the last important phase of Napoleon’s historical life? Is that where his history ends? Did Napoleon Bonaparte merely sail to St. Helena and drift off into the sunset or fall from the face of the earth? Is that recording true history? Does one’s removal from the world's stage as a major player in world politics, governance, and war cause events, time, and history to cease? Certainly not. Napoleon was feared even in death. The casket and choice of his final resting place could have brought Europe to war again. His name, legend, and character were enough to bring even members of the Old Guard Of Napoleon's Army to their feet.¹ There was a lingering fear and prospect that Napoleon would rise like a phoenix from the ashes to once again ravage a now ‘peaceful’ Europe. The Emperor's successful flight and return to power from his first exile on the island of Elba in 1814 is a perfect example.²
But why should these six years of exile be included into his history in such an expanded detail? What do they contribute to the overall interpretation of the life and career of Napoleon Bonaparte? How does this exile to the island of St. Helena fit into the history of not only this influential figure but into European history as well?

First, and foremost, it completes the history of Napoleon Bonaparte. By including details of his years in exile into the works of Napoleonic studies, a historian puts forth a work that actually spans all the years of his life. Though it is correct to state that Napoleon's rise to power, his role as General and Emperor, and his fall at Waterloo seems to be more appealing to readers of history, military strategists, and enthusiasts than his final years and death, St. Helena represents the 'last hurrah' or closing chapter of his life. The memoirs and journals of those in the Emperor's entourage and others close to him on the island contain countless personal reflections about his past victories and defeats, his successes and failures, and opinions about the future history of France, Europe, and most importantly, his legacy. To leave out a section of an individual's life, particularly his own reflection on it, which is so important in history, is like leaving out the last piece of a puzzle or a final link in a chain; one does not see the complete picture. As in the case of Napoleon, by leaving out the history of his last exile readers and scholars do not see the complete person. They cannot fully grasp the magnitude and influence of Napoleon Bonaparte without examining his entire life.

Secondly, Napoleon had one luxury that most leaders in world history lacked: he survived the fall from power. Leaders of nations both before and after Napoleon often had their rule extinguished by the sharpness of a blade, the piercing of a bullet, the brutality of a revolution, or by their own hand on their own terms, Julius Caesar or Czar Nicholas being prime examples. These rulers’ authority ended when their lives did. For those rulers who died of natural causes during their reign, it was virtually impossible to honestly reflect on past actions during their reign and admit failures, mistakes, and defeats, without leading their subjects to question the legitimacy, abilities, and power of their leader.

Honesty is born from the realization that one has nothing to lose. Consequences of a ruler’s actions have already taken place through the act of falling from power. In all reality, at that point, there is nothing left to lose through reflection. What Napoleon realized in exile was that through his reflections, he had everything to gain. He
was able to seize upon this fact. Napoleon was in his mid-forties upon arriving at St. Helena and could possibly have lived for another twenty years. European history may have been quite different if he had.

Through reflections recorded by those who shared his exile, there are descriptions of Napoleon giving numerous discourses regarding his career. He provides detailed and personal reflections upon past triumphs and defeats. The journal entries also record the Emperor assessing what he could have or should have done to win lost battles or continued his hold over the lands and leaders of the European continent. Though for the first few years of exile, Napoleon believed he would be invited back to Europe, he eventually realized that this goal was not realistic. Therefore, if Napoleon were to die on St. Helena, he had one last battle to win: lay the blame of his death on the English and ensure that his blood stained their coat.

Because Napoleon had reached this point in his life, and his future was uncertain, it was only natural for him to look to the past. It was a time for the Emperor to reexamine his past successes and defeats, to provide answers where there were questions, to answer criticisms with reasons, to dispel myths with facts, and to defend and mold a legacy shaped by the very hands of Napoleon himself.

Napoleon was quite aware that all who came close to him, whether French or English, would record everything they witnessed and heard for posterity. He capitalized on this human weakness and used them to his advantage to not only craft his legacy but to influence public opinion in Europe and the rest of the world. He did not guard his speech. He did not keep himself or his words hidden from those around him. Though his temper would flare and his depression became obvious, his destiny would lay in the words of those around him, and his true judge would be history.

In all of the journals and memoirs that came from those six years of exile on St. Helena, Napoleon reflected upon numerous events and actions in his life that so many Napoleonic historians have examined, analyzed, and interpreted throughout their works. In these journals and memoirs, the Emperor dispelled the myth that he ordered the execution of his own soldiers who were stricken with the plague. He admitted his mistakes in the Russian Campaign. He explained his planning of the coup d’état. He described his eternal love for his first wife, the Empress Josephine. He provided impressions of the leaders of Europe. Perhaps most importantly of all, he addressed his mistakes and reassessed the battle of Waterloo.
The selection of St. Helena as Napoleon’s final place of exile itself provides another reason why his exile should be examined more closely and added to the analysis of his life. The choice of this island reveals a great deal about how he was viewed and feared in Europe and the lack of trust that the leaders of the continent had in believing the Emperor would remain in exile. His first exile on the island of Elba, just a few hundred miles from France, proved to be ineffective considering he escaped after being there barely one year. The effects of his return were catastrophic in these leaders’ minds. Napoleon could not be trusted to remain in exile. His supporters must not be able to rescue or aid him in another escape.

The European powers also had to be quite careful in the handling and treatment of their new prisoner. Napoleon’s charismatic character gave him the power to win over people in just one conversation, so it was important to keep him isolated from all but a few of his French companions. Winning the minds of some British citizens could place them in a situation where he could convince them to help him in an attempted escape.

Executing Napoleon would have been dangerous and quite possibly have sparked another bloody revolution with the possibility of spilling into neighboring countries. Keeping him alive would at least prevent a French revolt against the Allies who occupied the fallen nation. To mistreat him in exile would have been to risk the loss in the battle for public opinion and create a martyr. The worshipping of a ‘tortured’ or ‘sacrificed’ martyr could be almost as dangerous to England and the rest of Europe, if not more, than a swift execution of the prisoner. Exile would have to be the solution to put a permanent end to the ambitions of Napoleon Bonaparte: an exile that was far enough away to ensure that Europe would never have to worry about him again.

The island of St. Helena was remote, over one thousand miles away from the nearest continent, surrounded by ravaging ocean water, and easily guarded by naval ships due to its mountainous structure. A rescue was virtually impossible for there was only one port on St. Helena where a ship could anchor. An escape would also be impossible for the same reasons. News of anything in Europe would reach the island at least two months after the event had happened. To an Emperor accustomed to the rigors of battle and with a mind that constantly turned and processed information, St. Helena was a humdrum; a virtual Hell on Earth for him. This is
precisely what the European powers wanted: punishment without the obviousness of brutality.

There is no doubt of the historical importance of Napoleon’s exile to St. Helena. Besides the invaluable personal reflections and dialogue, and with the Imperial and militaristic aspects aside, who was the Napoleon that was now faced with the end of his career and very possibly his life? A man who ruled over much of Europe was being sent to a tiny island off the western coast of Africa. With nothing left to conquer and nothing left to rule, what did Napoleon do on St. Helena for almost six years?

When one examines the journals and memoirs of those who shared the exile with Napoleon, they find that each opens a different portal into the complex and sophisticated mind of the fallen Emperor. However, a deeper look into the words in these memoirs reveals a completely different side of the Emperor that was overshadowed by his military genius, his Imperial presence and had remained hidden.

When the conquest has been taken away from the conqueror, what is a general to do? When might and power are no longer within his grasp, what is a man of prominence to do to bide his time? When the empire is removed from the Emperor, who does he become? Napoleon Bonaparte had everything taken away from him upon his exile to St. Helena, including his wife and son. When everything that constitutes such an Imperial and militaristic individual is lost, there is only one thing left for him to become: human.

During the six-year exile that Napoleon spent on the island of St. Helena, his character and presence as an Emperor and master of the art of war remained with him until the day life left his body. But at the same time, his ‘human’ side began to show itself more and more. What began to emerge out of the rubble of defeat were the emotions of a father, a husband, a grandfather, a friend, a ‘playmate,’ and sadly enough, a prisoner.

Through the detailed memoirs of the members of the Emperor’s suite who shared his exile and other English individuals on the island, this human side to Napoleon was revealed for the reader to observe. From his shaving and eating habits to his laughter and love of children, practically everything the man did and said on the island was recorded in their journals. Besides reliving the past, these works put forth descriptions concerning Napoleon as a human being.
In describing the ‘human side’ to Napoleon Bonaparte, their observations record not only the warm, caring, loving, and gentle aspects of his personality, but also his temperament, frustrations, anger, and most of all, his agonizing struggle to cling to life as it slipped through his fingertips. This formidable man long sustained through control and command was now faced with two forces he could not govern; time and death.

Numerous journal entries by Napoleon’s generals, valets, secretaries, and others around him during his exile reveal his sense of humor, his love for children, his grief and depression over being separated from his wife and son, and even his revelations concerning his deep and eternal love for Josephine. Other entries paint in exquisite detail his anger and frustration at being considered a prisoner by England and, most of all, his hatred for the English Governor of St. Helena, Sir Hudson Lowe.

Why examine this side of Napoleon Bonaparte, especially at the end of his life? What benefit does it have to the study of his career to learn about his characteristics as a mere person? Napoleon was a man who battled to present and maintain an appearance of unwaivering determination, confidence, and success. This human side was never a focal point of the written history of any of his followers, soldiers, generals, or government officials. His reign, battles, victories, and legislation were the pinnacle of his existence. Many historians gravitate to these characteristics of Napoleon’s history out of interest. The human side to Napoleon as explained by his followers on St. Helena is just as interesting if not more so.

Pulling back the curtain of power allows the true persona of Napoleon to be seen in the light of day. Among his entourage in exile, the Emperor was no longer as self-guarded about himself out of concern that a weakness might be revealed publically. On the contrary, he was quite open with them. Emotion and caring are two of the greatest qualities of a person. In exile, Napoleon truly revealed both as part of his genuine character.

There are two memoirs that truly capture the human side of Napoleon Bonaparte while in exile. The first is a memoir by Betsy Balcombe, written during her later years as Mrs. Abell, which provides numerous accounts, stories, and tales of her humorous escapades with the Emperor when she was fourteen years old during his stay at their home on St. Helena and later at his permanent residence, Longwood. A sincere friendship emerged between the two. The playful, caring, and mischievous side of Napoleon was given
full reign in his interactions with the innocent, carefree, and non-judgmental young girl who was not bound by imperial etiquette and military protocol. Betsy witnessed Napoleon in a state in which he threw aside all inhibitions and shared in the joys and laughter of a child.

The memoirs of Louis Marchand are invaluable in that he served as the personal valet to the Emperor. He was with Napoleon during Napoleon’s least guarded moments, sometimes dressing and shaving him or even when cleaning the vomit from his face or changing his soiled bed sheets during the final days before his death. Marchand witnessed Napoleon in moments of loneliness and depression as well as during his bursts of laughter and humor. He listened as the Emperor longed for news of his wife and son, and shared in the despair when he was denied it. The young valet saw Napoleon explode in anger at being treated like a common prisoner and later held the hand of the mere man who was both an Emperor and a father figure as he struggled for each strenuous breath during his last days.

The purpose of this work is to reveal this human side of Napoleon through the words of those who were with him on St. Helena. The goal in much of the following pages is to allow their words to speak to the reader and to permit them to breathe life again into a man who has been dead for more than one hundred and ninety years. Their words let the true person who was Napoleon reveal himself through their memories of him. For one must realize, if Napoleon never wanted this human side to him to be exposed, he would have kept it permanently hidden. He would have ordered the valet or secretary to remove those entries from their diaries. He did not. Therefore, through their words, the true Napoleon emerged.

The following pages are Napoleon Bonaparte; the human being.
PAGES MISSING
FROM THIS FREE SAMPLE
Author’s Note

The research that has gone into this book has been an ongoing labor of love for me over the past 25 years. My interest in this human side of Napoleon began when I was 14-years-old. I had borrowed a book in 1988 from the Penn Yan Public Library entitled, *The Murder of Napoleon*, by authors Ben Weider and David Hapgood. I was completely taken by the historical account of Napoleon’s playful antics with the 14-year-old Betsy Balcombe. I was amazed at this side of the famous man and it led me to want to research more into this topic. I spent the next 25 years working on my research whenever I could. When most of my adolescent friends were playing video games, I was proudly working on what I enjoyed.

As a young teenager living before the advent of the internet, who was unable to read French and extremely limited on funds to buy antique books, I spent many days and hours during my high school and college years in the library at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York. Their library possessed many of the primary sources that I desperately needed to complete my research. Whether it was after school or after my baseball practice, I would walk down to the archive in the library to continue where I had left off the day before. I am immensely grateful to the librarians from the colleges who helped me over the years.

In college and a few years after graduation, I worked part-time jobs to save up the money to buy the needed books on his exile; many were printed in 1821-1850. Each time I received the new text, I would sit down during any spare moment to take down my written notes. As my professional life took me to serving as a Legislative Assistant in the New York State Senate, I still used my lunch hours and late evenings to continue my goal of completing this work.

When my public high school teaching career began in 1998, I was still able to squeeze in time between creating lesson plans and correcting papers to further my pursuit. At the State University of New York at Oswego, I was able to complete my Master’s thesis on this topic of Napoleon’s human side and achieve my MA in History.

As I married my childhood friend and we began to raise two beautiful children together, I stayed up many late nights after all went to bed to finish my research, all handwritten and completed on numerous legal pads. My hope was to finish a full-length book on the
human side to Napoleon Bonaparte, but I just did not know when I would find the time.

I owe a sincere thank you to Michael Chirco. It was this man who finally encouraged me to sit down and finish the book. Michael Chirco was my Superintendent at Marcus Whitman High School in Rushville, New York where I am presently a high school Social Studies teacher. He and I got to know each other more after I became President of the Teachers’ Association. Though many of our conversations surrounded labor relations, we enjoyed numerous side discussions on history and literature. As a former English teacher, Mike was always interested in the latest historical theories and written works and I thoroughly enjoyed our conversations.

Before Mike retired, he told me once again to ‘finish the book.’ This time he offered to edit the book when it was completed. I could not turn him down and it served as the necessary push I needed. His editing, advice, and friendship I will always be thankful for. Without his encouragement, I would still be sitting by countless boxes of handwritten research with the continued ‘hope’ of completing it in the near future.

I also owe a great deal of gratitude to Dr. David King, retired History professor and Dean of Graduate Studies and Research from the State University of New York at Oswego. As my professor, thesis advisor, mentor, and friend, Dr. King taught me how to write an academic work that was both well documented for historical accuracy and interesting to the reader. I am extremely grateful for his additional advice on my approach to finishing this book.

J. David Markham, historian and President of the International Napoleonic Society, was incredibly helpful in providing me with advice and guidance as I navigated the final stages of the publishing process. It is truly an honor and privilege to have the foremost Napoleonic scholar writing the introduction to this book. I wish to thank him for everything he has done. I am proud to be a member of such a distinguished academic society.

This book would not be where it is today without the support and expertise of Bernadette Serton. Her enthusiasm for the topic, her belief in me, and her support all through this process was invaluable and instrumental in its publication. I value her assistance and especially her friendship.

I also would like to thank my brother, Peter Barden, for his help and encouragement over the years. His final editing and advice...
greatly served in putting the final touches on the work. His eyes and words also helped me in fine-tuning what I have wanted to put forth for so many years on Napoleon Bonaparte.

I owe an enormous amount of gratitude to my wife, Stacey, and our children Tommy and Corinne. They were all so supportive as I spent hundreds of hours late at night in my office pouring over countless pages of research and books filled with sticky notes. All three of them would make their way through the ‘mess’ to get a quick hug or ask a question and they were so careful as to not knock over the pages or kick out the power cord to the computer. The breaks I took to check my children’s homework or to read them a book kept me grounded and reminded me that they are always my main focus in life. As I read, played with them and listened to their giggles, I could easily understand why Napoleon so enjoyed the playfulness and mirth of children.

My parents George and Rita were also very supportive of me over the years as I continued this path. They supported my quest and rarely complained about the amount of books I was amassing in my bedroom. Both of them encouraged me in all of my interests in school and sports but knew that I would always come back to the topic of Napoleon.

I especially want to thank my grandmother, Helen Lou Barden, who is an author in her own right. She wrote two family biographies in her lifetime, is an amazing artist, and raised a beautiful family. She always encouraged me to continue my research and writing and enjoyed reading all that I wrote. Though Alzheimer’s disease has taken her memory and trapped a lifetime of history deep into her mind, her heart remains full of love and I will always be thankful for all she has taught me about history and writing.

As odd as this may seem, I also have to thank the ‘Thomas Barden’ of 1990, 1995, 1998, etc. As I began to go back through my research files that I have not looked at in years and had accumulated since I began this at age 14, I discovered that I had left myself various notes in case I ever decided to write a final book on the topic. One note said, “Use this quote before the chapter about his decline.” Another note told me to listen to a particular song when I wrote the chapter about his death. Each note was exactly what I needed at the time I was writing in that particular moment. It literally was like a ‘Back To The Future’ moment where ‘Thomas Barden’ of the past was telling the present ‘Thomas Barden’ what to do. It made me laugh every time I found another note.
In researching and writing this book for over 25 years, I found that I could never have done it without the presence of music. The sounds of notes, the melodies and rhythms, and especially the lyrics have such a way of pulling emotion from a person that really open a pathway to deeper thought. There were 5 songs from two artists that I must have played over and over thousands of times that brought out these emotions in me and made me connect to what I was writing about and the emotions that Napoleon was experiencing throughout his ordeal in exile. Three songs were by Elton John called, *The King Must Die, Madman Across The Water,* and *Have Mercy On The Criminal.* The two other songs were by Peter Gabriel called, *Curtains* and *Across The River.* These songs and their words helped me in my creative thought and enabled me to try and put into words the emotions of a man who has been dead for over 190 years. The world would be lost without the presence of music.

After more than a quarter-century of work, I have put everything I have and know into this book in the hopes of bringing forth this human side of Napoleon Bonaparte as described by the people who were with him in exile on St. Helena. I have grown up from a teenager in 8th grade to a father of two children with the history of Napoleon Bonaparte by my side. My sincerest hope and wish is that my words will serve in adding to his history in a positive way.

Thomas Barden
Penn Yan, New York
August 2015
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Endnotes

1 Napoleon’s veteran soldiers.

2 Elba was the location of Napoleon’s first exile in 1814. Only after a few months and after rumors of assassination attempts and learning through his spy Cipriani that he was soon to be removed from Elba and exiled to St. Helena, he escaped, landed on the Southern coast of France and walked back to Paris. He regained the throne without firing a single shot.

3 Napoleon knew that members of his entourage that followed him to exile like Las Cases, Marchand, and others were keeping journals and would write memoirs and letters detailing Napoleon’s every move and thought. He would joke with Las Cases asking if anything in his journal would be of interest in Europe. Of course, Napoleon would say this with his usual grin.

4 Hamilton-Williams, The Fall of Napoleon, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1994 p. 251. Joseph Fouche was Napoleon’s Minister of Police and was considered as being in control of Paris after the Battle of Waterloo and victory by the Allies. With the urging of the Allies, Fouche sought to put Napoleon on a run for the coast with the hopes he would be captured.


6 Bruce, Evangeline, Napoleon & Josephine: An Improbable Marriage, Scribner Publishing, New York, 1995, p. 103. Napoleon found Josephine’s real name of ‘Rose’ not romantic enough for her beauty, so he therefore decided to call her Josephine instead.


10 St. Denis, Napoleon, p. 141.


Napoleon was so certain of his desire to come to the United States if his reign ended, that he sent a man by the name of Russell Atwater to Upstate, New York to buy him land in January, 1812.

16 Ibid, p. 238.
18 Hortense, Memoirs, Vol. II p. 240, Las Cases, Memoirs, Vol. I, p. 211-213. This young boy grew up to become Comte “Charles” Leon. It was his birth that proved the fertility of Napoleon and the infertility of Josephine.
21 Ibid., p. 243.
22 Ibid., p. 242.
23 Ibid., p. 244.
24 Ibid., p. 244-245.
25 Ibid., p. 247.
27 Ibid., p. 68.
28 Ibid., p. 69.
30 Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 282, 285.
32 Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 283.
34 Ibid., p. 87-88.
37 Las Cases, Memoirs, p. 22-23.
38 Ibid., p. 25.
39 Ibid., p. 24, Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 285.
41 Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 299.
43 Ibid., p. 285.
49 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 309, 312.
50 Ibid., p. 314.
51 Ibid., p. 330.
52 St. Denis, *Napoleon*, p. 158.
54 Ibid., p. 105.
55 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 313, footnote.
58 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 313, footnote.
59 Ibid., p. 314.
61 Sir George Cockburn was the British Admiral who successfully burnt down the American White House and Capitol Building during the War of 1812 with the United States.
64 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 317.
65 Ibid., p. 318.
66 Ibid., p. 318-319.
67 Ibid., p. 319.
68 Napoleon actually crowned himself Emperor and then proceeded to crown Josephine Empress. The Pope was present, seated behind Napoleon.
71 Ibid., p. 40.
72 Ibid., p. 40.
73 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 322.
75 Ibid., p. 41-42.
76 Ibid., p. 42-43.
77 Marchand, *In Napoleon's*, p. 323.
80 Marchand, *In Napoleon's*, p. 320, footnote.
81 Weider, *Murder*, p. 34.
82 Ibid., 34-35.
84 Ibid., p. 321.
86 Ibid., p. 120.
88 Ibid., p. 112.
89 Ibid., p. 111-112.
90 Cockburn, Sir George, *Buonaparte's Voyage To St. Helena; Compromising the Diary of Rear Admiral Sir George Cockburn*, Lilly, Wait, Colman, and Holden, Boston, 1833, p. 16.
91 Ibid., p. 17.
94 Ibid., p. 122-123.
95 Ibid., p. 126.
96 Cockburn, *Buonaparte's*, p. 61.
100 Marchand, *In Napoleon's*, p. 336-337.
102 Ibid., p. 106-107.
103 Ibid., p. 93.
104 Ibid., p. 25.
105 Ibid., p. 68.
107 Ibid., p. 336-337.
109 Marchand, *In Napoleon's*, p. 337.
110 Ibid., p. 337.
112 Cockburn, Buonaparte’s, p. 103.
114 Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 338.
115 Ibid., p. 339.
116 Ibid., p. 339.
118 Weider, Murder, p. 50.
120 Indian servant.
121 Weider, Murder, p. 51.
124 Abell, Mrs. (Betsy Balcombe), Recollections of the Emperor Napoleon at St. Helena, John Murray, Albemarie Street, London, 1844.
125 Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 340.
126 Weider, Murder, p. 51.
128 Abell, Recollections, p. 15.
129 Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 343-344.
130 St. Denis, Napoleon, 166.
131 Ibid., p. 166.
132 Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 343.
133 Ibid., p. 343.
134 Ibid., p. 343.
135 O’Meara, Barry, Napoleon In Exile, Worthington Co., New York, 1890, p. 5, Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 344.
136 Marchand, In Napoleon’s, 344.
137 Ibid., 343., Gourgaud, The St. Helena, p. 3, O’Meara, Napoleon, p. 6.
138 Ironically, on his way back from India in 1805, Arthur Wellesley, spent a few nights in the pavilion at the Briars. Wellesley would later become the Duke of Wellington. It is believed that while the Duke of Wellington was in occupied Paris, he stayed in Napoleon’s bedroom and sent a note to the Emperor on St. Helena stating that he hoped he found the pavilion to his satisfaction, for he found Napoleon’s room at the Tuileries to be the most comfortable.
Alexander was the same age as Napoleon's son. The Emperor often played little games with him and remarked how similar he was to his own son, the King of Rome. Betsy recorded a number of times in her memoirs that Napoleon would appear depressed after talking of his son.

Brookes, Dame Mabel, *St. Helena Story*, Dodd, Mead, & Company, New York, 1961, p. 3. Dame Mabel Brookes was the great-niece of Betsy Balcombe. Her grandfather was Alexander Balcombe, Betsy's little brother. Much of what she writes about in her book are stories and events that were passed down through the family. A considerable amount of stories about Betsy and Napoleon are known to Mabel through Betsy's daughter, Mrs. Johnston. “Betsy's memoirs, written in 1844, were of necessity guarded, but her daughter, Mrs. Charles Johnston, elaborated them and filled in the gaps that politics and the exigencies of the time made it expedient for her mother to leave unfilled. It was evident, she remarked, that Napoleon never ceased to be the preoccupation of her mother's life.”


Ibid., p. 350.

Ibid., p. 350.

Ibid., p. 350.


Ibid., p. 4.


Ibid., p. 23-25.


Ibid., p. iii-v.

Ibid., p. 29-30.

English card game.


Ibid., p. 156-157.


Ibid., p. 358.


Ibid., p. 160-161.

Ibid., p. 161-163.


Ibid., p. 354.

Ibid., p. 24-25.


Ibid., p. 26-27.

A Russian soldier.

Ibid., p. 31-32.

Unfortunately, these walks always had to be within a designated area where the Emperor could be seen by British soldiers.

Ibid., p. 32-33.

Jokes or pranks, Ibid., p. 30, 34-35.


Ibid., p. 40.

‘do not cry’


Ibid., p. 39-40.

Ibid., p. 40-41.

Ibid., p. 41.

Ibid., p. 41-42.

Balcombe, here is Miss Betsy’s theme, will it work.

Ibid., 44-45.

Ibid., 43.44.

Plantation House was the residence of the former Governor, then Admiral Cockburn, and later Governor Lowe. It was a spacious house that was beautifully decorated, and in quite better condition than Longwood.


Ibid., p. 48.

A gold Napoleon was currency under the French Empire.

Ibid., p. 48.

Ibid., p. 48-49.

Jokes or pranks

wicked or naughty

Ibid., p. 49-50.

Ibid., p. 50.

Ibid., p. 51.


Ibid., p. 55.

Ibid., p. 56-57.

Ibid., p. 149-151.

Old Huff was believed to be crazy and had “taken many strange fancies into his brain; among others, that he was destined to restore the fallen hero to his pristine glory, and that he could at any time free him from thralldom. All argument with this old man upon the folly of his ravings was useless; he still persisted in it, and it soon became evident that old Huff was mad…” Abell, *Recollections*, p. 199-200.
237 Ibid., p. 174.
240 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 387.
241 Ibid., p. 386.
244 Ibid., p. 31.
246 Ibid., p. 176-177.
249 Ibid., p. 186.
250 Ibid., p. 186-187.
251 Ibid., p. 187.
252 Ibid., p. 190.
254 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 60.
255 Ibid., p. 274.
256 Ibid., p. 286-287.
257 Ibid., p. 298.
258 Gourgaud, *St. Helena*, p. 32.
259 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 393.
260 Ibid., p. 393.
261 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 400-401.
263 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 401.
265 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 402.
266 Gourgaud, *The St. Helena*, p. 47.
267 Ibid., p. 47.
270 Marchand, *Napoleon*, p. 403.
272 Ibid., p. 48.
273 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 403.
Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 408.


Ibid., p. 409.

Ibid., p. 409.

Ibid., p. 410.

Ibid., p. 410.

Ibid., p. 411.


Ibid., p. 27.


Ibid., p. 191-192.

Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 412.


Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 413.


Ibid., p. 100.


Ibid., p. 35.

Lowe served under Prussian General Blucher at the battle of Waterloo.


Ibid., p. 41.

Ibid., p. 41.


Josephine’s adult son, sister of Hortense.


Abell, *Recollections*, p. 87-88.


Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 423.


Ibid., p. 213.
317 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 418.
318 Ibid., p. 418.
319 Ibid., p. 418.
322 Malcolm, *A Diary*, p. 43.
323 Ibid., p. 43.
324 Ibid., p. 44.
326 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 429.
327 Ibid., p. 429.
328 Ibid., p. 429.
329 Abell, *Recollections*, p. 94.
330 Ibid., p. 94.
331 Ibid., p. 94-95.
332 Ibid., p. 103-104.
334 Abell, *Recollections*, p. 103-104.
335 Ibid., p. 103-106, the eagle, along with the bee, was the Imperial symbol of the Emperor Napoleon.
337 Ibid., p. 114.
339 Ibid., p. 117.
340 Ibid., p. 119-120.
341 Ibid., p. 121.
342 Ibid., p. 122.
343 Ibid., p. 122.
344 Ibid., p. 122-123.
346 Ibid., p. 123.
348 Ibid., p. 135.
349 Ibid., p. 135-136.
Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 432.


Ibid., Vol. III., p. 123.


Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 442.

Ibid., p. 442.


Ibid., Vol. I., p. 271.


It was rumored throughout Longwood and much of the island that Napoleon was intimate on a number of occasions with Madame Montholon while in exile on St. Helena.


Upon removal from St. Helena, Rousseau and Archambault ended up settling in the United States.

Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 452.


Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 457.
388 Ibid., p. 457
389 Ibid., p. 453.
390 Ibid., p. 453.
395 Marchand, In Napoleon's, p. 463.
397 Ibid., p. 85.
398 Ibid., p. 85.
400 Ibid., p. 141.
401 Ibid., p. 143.
402 Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 461.
406 Balmain, Count, Editor Julian Park, Napoleon in Captivity, Books For
408 Ibid., p. 144-145.
409 Ibid., p. 149-150.
410 Ibid., p. 150.
411 Ibid., p. 177.
413 Gourgaud, St. Helena, p. 109.
417 Ibid., p. 102.
418 Ibid., p. 122.
419 Balmain, Napoleon, p. 29-30.
420 Ibid., p. 107.
421 Ibid., p. 107.
422 Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 477.
467 Ibid., p. 242.
469 Ibid., p. 313.
470 Ibid., p. 321.
471 Ibid., p. 321.
472 Ibid., p. 321-322.
473 Ibid., p. 323.
474 Ibid., p. 326.
478 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 518.
484 Ibid., p. 236.
485 Ibid., p. 237 footnote.
487 Ibid., p. 170-171.
489 Ibid., p. 522.
490 Ibid., p. 523.
493 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 524-525.
495 Ibid., p. 246-247, Dr. O’Meara was never successful at obtaining the letters.
496 Ibid., p. 247.
497 Ibid., p. 247.
498 Ibid., p. 247.
499 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 527-528.
500 Ibid., p. 528-529.
501 Ibid., p. 530.
502 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 533.
504 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 555.
505 Ibid., p. 557.
506 Ibid., p. 557.
507 Ibid., p. 558.
508 Balmain, *Napoleon*, p. 197.
510 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 564.
511 Ibid., p. 564.
512 Ibid., p. 565.
514 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 572.
516 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 582-583.
518 Ibid., p. 583-584.
519 Ibid., p. 584.
520 Ibid., p. 585.
521 Ibid., p. 393.
522 Antommarchi, *The Last*, p. 68.
523 Ibid., p. 69.
524 Ibid., p. 69-70.
525 Ibid., p. 72-73.
526 Antommarchi, *The Last*, p. 84-86.
527 Ibid., p. 86.
528 Quack doctor.
529 Ibid., p. 119-120.
530 Ibid., p. 120-121.
531 Balmain, *Napoleon*, p. 223.
532 Antommarchi, *The Last*, p. 122-123.
533 Ibid., p. 123.
534 Ibid., p. 160-161.
535 The name of the little girl.
536 Ibid., p. 161.
537 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 590.
538 Ibid., p. 590-591.
541 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 591.
542 Ibid., p. 592.
544 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 592.

Antommarchi, The Last, p. 292-293.

Ibid., p. 293.

St. Denis, Napoleon, p. 211.

Ibid., p. 205-206.

Antommarchi, The Last, p. 293.

Gorrequer and Reade were officers/secretaries to Governor Lowe.

Antommarchi, The Last, p. 294.

Ibid., p. 296.

Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 610-611.

Ibid., p. 612, St. Denis, Napoleon, p. 238-239.

Ibid., p. 594-595.

Ibid., p. 595-596.

Ibid., p. 598.

Ibid., p. 608.

Antommarchi, The Last, p. 326-327.

Ibid., p. 327.

Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 617-618.

Ibid., p. 618.

St. Denis, Napoleon, p. 241.

Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 621.


St. Denis, Napoleon, p. 250-251.

Montholon, History, Vol. III, p. 139-140.

Ibid., p. 136-137.

Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 631.


Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 626.

Ibid., p. 626.

Ibid., p. 628.


Ibid., p. 47.

Ibid., p. 124-125.


Ibid., p. 160-161.

Ibid., p. 163.


Marchand, In Napoleon’s, p. 637.
584 Ibid., p. 639.
585 Bertrand, Napoleon, p. 137.
586 Ibid., p. 127.
587 Marchand, In Napoleon's, p. 640.
588 Ibid., p. 640-641, Bertrand, Napoleon, p. 199.
590 Marchand, In Napoleon's, p. 642.
591 Ibid., p. 643.
592 Ibid., p. 643.
594 Ibid., p. 169.
595 St. Denis, Napoleon, p. 264.
597 Bertrand, Napoleon, p. 130-131.
598 Ibid., p. 207.
600 Marchand, In Napoleon's, 644.
601 St. Denis, Napoleon, p. 267.
602 Ibid., p. 645.
603 Ibid., p. 645.
605 St. Denis, Napoleon, p. 271.
606 Bertrand, Napoleon, p. 141.
607 Ibid., p. 150.
610 Bertrand, Napoleon, p. 176.
612 Ibid., p. 203.
613 Ibid., p. 183,186.
614 Marchand, In Napoleon's, p. 665.
615 Ibid., p. 665.
618 Ibid., p. 120.
619 Ibid., p. 120, Bertrand, Napoleon, p. 163.
620 Ibid., p. 126.
621 Bertrand, Napoleon, p. 197.
622 Ibid., p. 199.
Ibid., p. 201.

624 Ibid., p. 204.

625 Ibid., p. 181.


627 Ibid., p. 206.

628 Ibid., p. 206.


632 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 673.


634 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 673.

635 St. Denis, *Napoleon*, p. 270.


637 Ibid., p. 308.


640 Ibid., p. 213.


643 Ibid., p. 215.


645 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 687.

646 Ibid., p. 687.


650 Ibid., p. 169.

651 Ibid., p. 171.

652 Ibid., p. 173.

653 Ibid., p. 177-178, Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 695.


655 St. Denis, *Napoleon*, p. 280.


659 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 695.

661 Bertrand, *Napoleon*, p. 238.
662 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 698; Bertrand, *Napoleon*, p. 239.
663 St. Denis, *Napoleon*, p. 289.
664 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 709.
665 Bertrand, *Napoleon*, p. 244.
669 Marchand, *In Napoleon’s*, p. 746.