

HHH Princess Napoléon

at the Consulate General of France in New York

October 3rd 2013

Mr. Consul General,

Ambassador Stapleton,

Mr. Young,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to be here tonight at this prestigious dinner in the spirit of the Empress Joséphine and in favour of the Château de Compiègne, but also in celebration of French-American friendship.

The Château de Compiègne is a really special place for the Bonaparte dynasty. Napoleon the First considered it as one of his favourite residences and welcomed there his second wife, Marie-Louise, Archduchess of Austria, on March the twenty-seventh, Eighteen Ten (March 27th, 1810), the day before their wedding. After that epic first meeting in the forest of Compiègne, the two newly-weds retained memories of this happy time as the life of the Emperor became more and more hectic.

Then, Napoleon the Third and Eugénie chose Compiègne as the destination of their famous « Séries », when the most brilliant characters of the Second Empire - artists, writers, composers amongst them - joined the Imperial couple in Compiègne each Fall.

You know how much our two countries are closely tied. Napoleon the First considered exiling himself to the USA after the defeat of Waterloo, believing it to be a friendly country. He had to give up the idea because of the British naval blockade. Furthermore, after the fall of the Empire, Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon's eldest brother, left Europe and set up home in Bordentown, in the State of New Jersey. He spent twenty-five years (25) there in the mansion called Pont Breeze, which he built.

Today, the Château de Compiègne perpetuates this history through vital restoration work and by organizing exhibitions of national and international significance.

Among these, the restoration of the Ladies-in-Waiting Salon is particularly touching: decorated for and by Josephine, who took a special care of her own apartments in Compiègne, this Salon was actually not used by her, but was inaugurated by Marie-Louise. The Horn of Plenty which adorns the silk of all the furniture bears witness, even nowadays, to its first intended inhabitant.

I would like to thank all our American friends for their support, and especially for the restoration of the Ladies-in-Waiting Salon.

In particular, I would like to thank our friends from Raleigh who founded the American Friends of the Château de Compiègne in 2006.

I would like to express my deep gratitude toward The Honorable Craig Stapleton and to Mr. Miles Young who accepted to give a new impulse to the association with all the zeal we can see.

Finally, my thanks go to Mr. Antonin Baudry who decorated Ambassador Stapleton and Mr. Young in the French Order of Arts and Letters, delivered from the French Minister of Culture, but especially to Mr. Bertrand Lortholary who welcomes us today in the French Consulate in

New York. It is also necessary to pay particular tribute to the work and energy of M. Emmanuel Starcky, and his staff at Compiègne.

As we are all together, I suggest that we raise our glasses and make a toast to French-American friendship and to the Château de Compiègne.