THIS IS NOT TRUE ! THE REPORTER APPARENTLY LISTENED TO MS. GOSTON'S INTERPRETATION OF MY 1/8/92 LETTER.

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tracts of land intended to form a colony for "thirty families of farmers destined to cultivate wheat for the supply of these provinces . . . ." As in many cases of royal land grant, the Congress approved the land grant ownership.

Goston said her ancestors, Henry Turner and others, were heirs to the property, though they lost it in the 1840s for failure to pay taxes.

Last fall, Goston applied to the State Land Office to have the land redeemed in the name of Turner and others, which the state did.

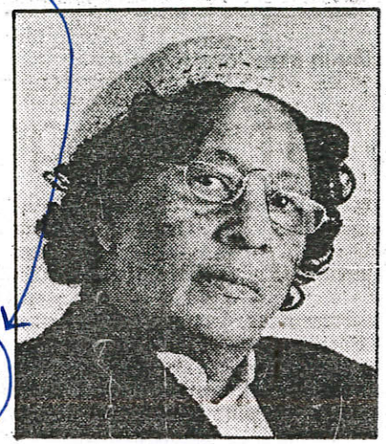
In a letter dated Jan. 8, the State Land Office officially restored 68,883 acres to the ownership of Henry Turner and eight other people, who Goston claims to be her ancestors.

Bobby Freyou, public lands records manager for the State Land Office, said the state constitutions of 1921 and 1974 presume the forfeiture for non-payment of taxes of land prior to Jan. 1, 1880, is "irregular and null" and the land restored to its original owners.

"Nobody has ever come in and asked for what she's asking for," Freyou said. "That's why we have to be extra careful what we tell her. We don't want to imply that it's hers."

The state clearly does not say that Goston or any other living person now own the property.

"We cannot interpret any of this, regarding current ownership," Freyou said. "I told her (Goston) that the Constitution says the land goes back in the name of the original tax debtor. She has to prove she's the rightful heir."



Verdiacee Goston: Proclaims herself empress

So now, Goston and her tribe must prove the property is theirs.

No problem, said the empress.

"I have all of the marriage licenses from that day until this," Goston said. "I have my birth certificate. I have my marriage license. I don't think it's going to be a matter of proving this to a judge . . . . The land was never ceded to the United States."

The nearly 69,000 acre tract, however, is only a small part of her empire, Goston said. Over the last two centuries, the rest of the land was stolen, cheated or somehow wrested from control of the original black owners, she said.

So that's where it stands, which, actually, is not much of anywhere, though the condition of limbo doesn't stop Goston from making plans for her empire.

"Of course it was an empire then, just like any other empire, whether they were in control of it or whether they were not in control . . . . Our people knew who they were and they always crowned an empress. I was crowned as an empress as a baby. Knowing there are many heirs, it is supposed to stay in the empire, under the empress."

Last November Goston wrote to the Ouachita Parish Police Jury asking it to cease its operations inside her "general community area" because the Washitaw people intended to pick up their own trash and police their own area.

The letter, which was delivered from Columbia to the attorney for the police jury, "via U.S.A.," offered to discuss the situation with the parish at any time.

"I am sure you know at this time you are temporary residents, until it is possible that you apply for citizenship," Goston wrote.

Jury attorney Lynn Tubbs said Goston has "addressed the jury *many* times" and said the jury has "taken no action on any of the requests that she has made."

"My plans for the property is just like any other empire," Goston said. "The rule is established. And we will be implementing the rule shortly. The state will cooperate because it will bring megabucks to the state" in the form of tourism and "curiosity," she said.

"We do not plan in any way to work contrary to the state of Louisiana or the United States of America. We plan to have a Christian empire, surrounded by the United States and parts of Louisiana."

Goston said, "I welcome all people."

Current worth of the empire is set by Goston at $420 billion.

The empire is only the latest of Goston's exercises in unusual governing.

In 1989, a state judge dismissed Goston's claims of a sovereignty after Goston and her 60-member Wellington Jenkins Jr. Evangelical Association were sued by the state Department of Revenue and Taxation for failure to pay taxes on sales made from an association-owned store. Goston said she would appeal that ruling.

"We're not in the judge's district," she told a reporter at the time. "I went to the hearing in honor of him being a judge . . . . You can't order someone to pay taxes if you don't have jurisdiction."

Goston represented the group in court and claimed that her Washitaw nation "is, in fact, a country within a country."

In 1982, Goston won a $1.5 million federal sewerage improvement grant for Richwood. That same day she was arrested for shooting two of her neighbor's pigs.

'Empress' claims 'Washitaw' people's ownership of much of northern La.

By STEVE CULPEPPER
Advocate staff writer

For the time being, the relatively new political subdivision of Louisiana is only a "temporary resident" inside the much older "empire" of the "Washitaw" people.

That's according to Verdiacee Goston, "empress" of the Washitaw people.

It was five years ago that Goston issued an unusual proclamation to the world. The founder and former mayor of the northeastern Louisiana town of Richwood announced the sovereignty of her nation — which includes most of northern Louisiana and parts of the three contiguous states — and proclaimed herself as its empress.

Goston and her tribe — the more than 200 descendants of one Henry Turner — claim ownership of the land dating back to the late 18th century.

It gets to be very confusing, but according to Goston, the land never belonged to the United States.

"Napoleon stipulated in his document (the Louisiana Purchase) that he was not selling the land belonging to the ancient ones and my family is without a doubt the ancient ones," she said.

As proof, Goston offers copies of the federal record of the 16th Congress, 1820.

In those documents, it appears that in about 1795, the king of Spain approved a land grant to the Marquis de Maison Rouge of four large

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