

# The Gazette of the American Friends of Lafayette

No. 98 Part I

[friendsoflafayette.org](http://friendsoflafayette.org)

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On May 11, AFL COO Chuck Schwam and AFL VP Robert Kelly were invited to the French Embassy to discuss Lafayette Farewell Tour Bicentennial plans with Ambassador Laurent Bili. The visit was made possible by AFL friend and Consul General in Washington, D.C., François Penguilly. Chuck and Robert also met with Cultural Attaché Denis Quénelle and Military Attaché Colonel Maxime Do tran. The meetings were very productive, and the embassy is excited to partner and participate with the AFL and their Bicentennial plans. Pictured above from Left to Right: François Penguilly, Chuck Schwam, Robert Kelly, and Ambassador Laurent Bili. Robert Kelly is holding a bust of Lafayette that the AFL gave to the Embassy.

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## President's Message



Dear Friends of Lafayette,

The American Friends of Lafayette was founded at Lafayette College on May 20, 1932, the 198<sup>th</sup> anniversary of General Lafayette's death. Thus, we completed our 91<sup>st</sup> year a few days ago on May 19, 2023.

In year 91, we entered into important partnerships with three venerable legacy societies – the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Sons of the American Revolution, and the Children of the American Revolution – who have committed to support our educational and Bicentennial efforts. Moreover, the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati and the North Carolina Society of the Cincinnati have generously provided matching grants for our Farewell Tour Bicentennial virtual travelogues.

Under the stewardship of Chuck Schwam, planning for the Farewell Tour Bicentennial continues at a brisk and increasingly effective pace. The AFL has over 30 committees – such committees were called “arrangement committees” during the Tour – in full-steam-ahead mode. We are very grateful to our local chairs and committee members for their drive and commitment.

Since the last *Gazette*, the AFL has organized and participated in several important events including Virginia Lafayette Day, at which over 60 members attended the ceremonies in Richmond, and the Authors Congress at Washington Crossing, New Jersey, at which an AFL panel – Bruce Mowday, Chuck Schwam, Patti Maclay, and I – discussed Lafayette, the AFL, and the upcoming Bicentennial. We are on the cusp of what promises to be a fantastic annual meeting at LaGrange, Georgia. Thank you, Dr. Richard Ingram and the Lafayette Alliance!

In the last few months, the AFL also created a second website devoted to the Farewell Tour Bicentennial and engaged Kat Smith, a skilled professional who is helping us enhance our social media presence. Welcome aboard Kat!

The AFL has come a long way since its 1932 founding, and it has done so without paid staff. It is our hundreds of volunteers who are making it possible for the AFL to carry out its mission of educating the public about the life and career of General Lafayette.

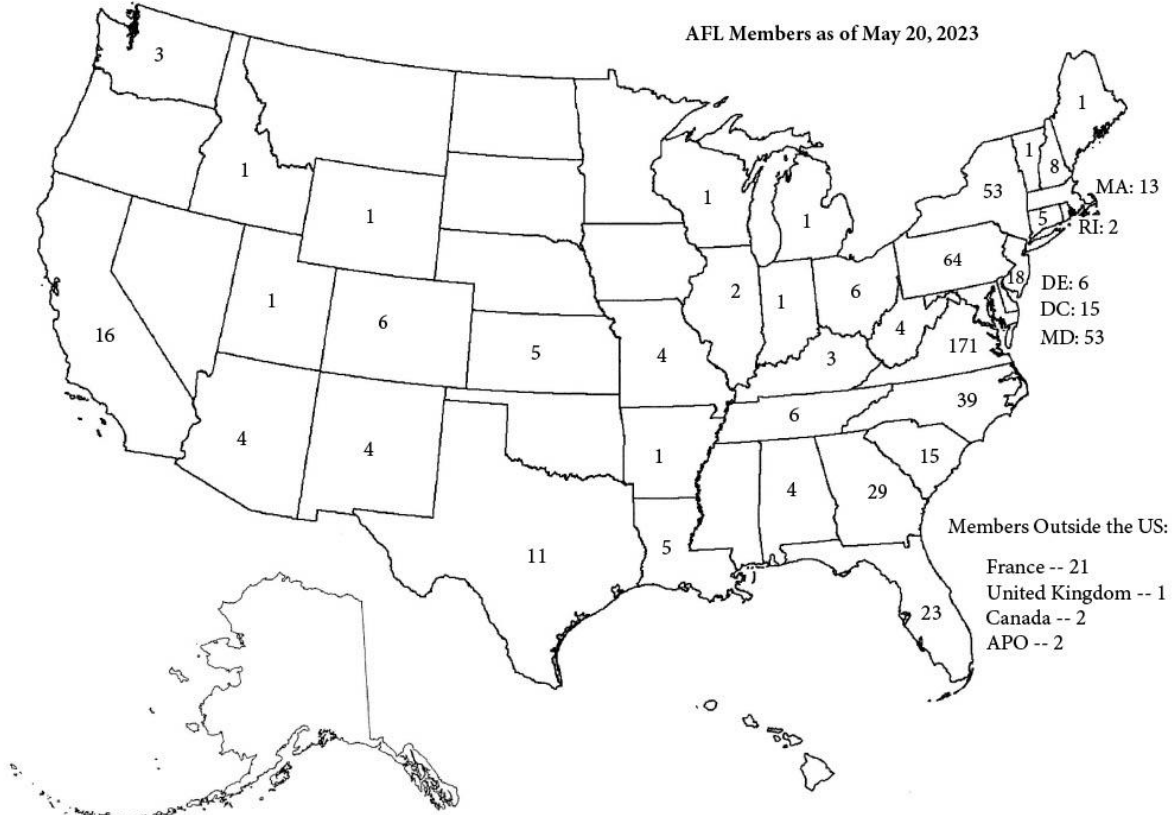
I cannot acknowledge all of you individually, but I want to acknowledge those persons who have made particularly significant contributions during our 91<sup>st</sup> year. Here is my list in alphabetical order: William Cole, Robert Kelly, Patti MacLay, Susan Joy Minker, Jan O'Sullivan, Peter Reilly, Chuck Schwam, Chuck Schwam, and Frank Womble.

No, repeating Chuck's name twice is not a typographic or other error. If it were, our able Associate Editor, Jan O'Sullivan, would surely have caught and corrected it before we went to press. It's just that he deserves double mention and a few exclamation points, too!!!

I cannot elaborate on their contributions in this letter or in the *Gazette* for that matter. We don't have the space, for one thing. I will acknowledge these volunteers more fully during the Friday, June 9 business meeting at LaGrange in the President's report. The business meeting will be available on Zoom so that every member, not only the 105 of you who will be in Georgia for the meeting, can attend.

The efforts of officers, board members, and member-volunteers have borne fruit in our 91<sup>st</sup> year. From May 20, 2022 to May 19, 2023, the AFL added 177 new members. Moreover, after taking into account normal attrition, we now have 632 members. See the map below for distribution of AFL members.

Best Regards,  
Alan R. Hoffman



# Lafayette Bicentennial Update

by Chuck Schwam

Plans for Lafayette Farewell Tour Bicentennial commemorations are in full swing. Over 30 geographical committees have been formed around the country as we prepare to bring Lafayette's legacy forward in 2024 and 2025. Other subject-specific committees include an Education Committee, a Human Rights Committee, and committees focusing on early 19<sup>th</sup> century music and period dress.



We are bolstering our infrastructure as well. We've launched a new website specific to the Bicentennial; [www.lafayette200.org](http://www.lafayette200.org). This website will allow folks to see where Lafayette traveled on an interactive map and learn about upcoming events. The website will eventually allow AFL Bicentennial Committee members to access documents and share ideas. We have installed a "donate" button for individuals who would like to donate towards our Bicentennial efforts. There is also a link to our BRAND-NEW LAFAYETTE STORE!!! Proceeds from the sale of merchandise will support our Bicentennial committees.

As we approach our big Bicentennial year of 2024 and as we concentrate on attracting a younger and more diverse membership, the American Friends of Lafayette plans to embrace social media more robustly. Up to this point, all aspects of AFL social media have been managed expertly by board member Mackenzie Fowler. But since "two heads are better than one," the



AFL is VERY proud to announce a partnership with AFL member Kat Smith. Kat is a social media mastermind who will be representing the AFL on all platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter). In fact, she's already started, and the results have been remarkable. Mackenzie and Kat are keys to the future of our organization as well as our upcoming Bicentennial efforts.



DRAWN BY ALICE GARDNER STEPHENS

PHILADELPHIA'S OVATION TO LAFAYETTE—THE NATION'S GUEST GREETING MRS. ROBERT MORRIS

AFL board member Patti Maclay is preparing a “tool kit” for our Bicentennial Committees. This tool kit will include logos, reference materials, contact information, letters, music, menus, and dozens of other helpful items to ensure the success of our committees.

Our geographical committees are doing great work preparing for 2024 and 2025. Committees meet regularly for Bicentennial commemorations in Alexandria, Arlington, Baltimore, Boston, Brandywine, Buffalo, Camden (South Carolina), Chadds Ford, Charleston, Charlottesville, Columbia (South Carolina), Connecticut, Fayetteville (North Carolina), Frederick, Historic Triangle Virginia, Hudson River Valley, Leesburg, Montpelier, New Orleans, Norfolk, Philadelphia, Princeton, Raleigh, Rhode Island, Richmond, Savannah, Suffolk, Syracuse, Trenton, Washington, D.C., West Chester, and all-over New England (just to name a few!!!).

One of our most important committees is “Weekend One” in New York. Not only is this committee in charge of DAY ONE of the Farewell Tour, but it is also hosting our annual meeting (August 15-18, 2024). This committee is being expertly managed by Co-Chair Susan Joy Minker. Tall ships, a parade up Broadway, a ceremony at City Hall are all in the works (along with MANY other surprises). This committee is chock full of wonderful New York insiders who plan on wowing us with their commemorative events.



Another important weekend in New York is September 6-8, 2024 (“Weekend Two”), as we celebrate Lafayette’s birthday (and Bicentennial) with a symposium at Columbia University. This committee is attracting a virtual cornucopia of scholars and authors to educate (and entertain) us with their collective expertise.

Most committee meetings take place via Zoom (which I attend daily), but many committees meet in person. Consequently, I’ve tried to attend some of the in-person meetings in Annapolis, Fredericksburg, Mount Vernon, and many other places. Traveling throughout the eastern seaboard attending meetings and visiting Farewell Tour Bicentennial sites has become commonplace for me as of late. I enjoy meeting committee members and sharing the excitement of the upcoming festivities. But what about west of the Allegheny Mountains? These committees need to be formed. I resolved to meet these people in person to drum up excitement (and involvement).



*Chuck Schwam (L) with his son Matthew (R) in front of the WWI Museum in Kansas City, Missouri*

### **Road Trip!!!**

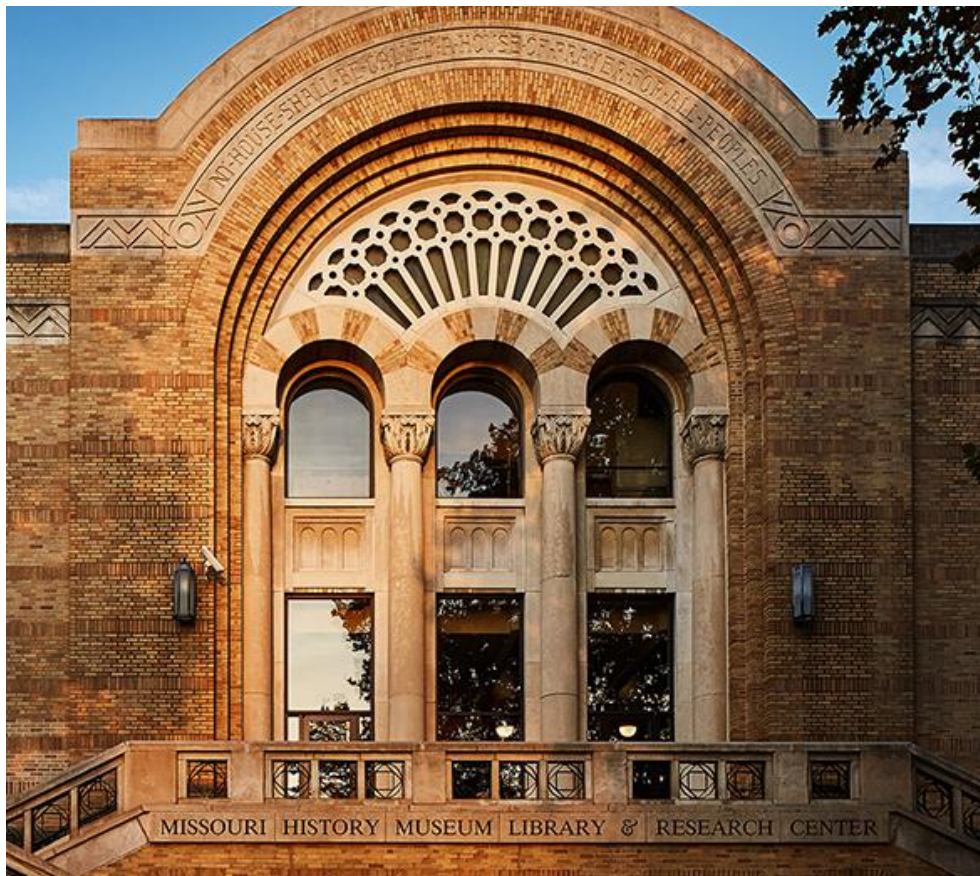
My son (and AFL member) Matthew Schwam and I left Gaithersburg, Maryland on May 13, 2023, on a 2,500 mile, nine-day trek west. On this trip we started several new geographical committees and went to places that Lafayette visited on his Farewell Tour. We also visited places that Lafayette never saw, but that proved to be very interesting as well: the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site in Illinois, the Arabia Steamboat Museum in Kansas City, and the Air Force Museum in Dayton (plenty of Lafayette Escadrille “stuff” on display there).

We saw more Lafayette Escadrille material on display at the fabulous WWI Museum in Kansas City, where AFL member Augie Huber is a member of the board. Augie and the museum staff rolled out the “red carpet” for Matthew and me during our visit. Later that evening, we attended the ribbon-cutting and reception for the opening of a new wing at the museum.

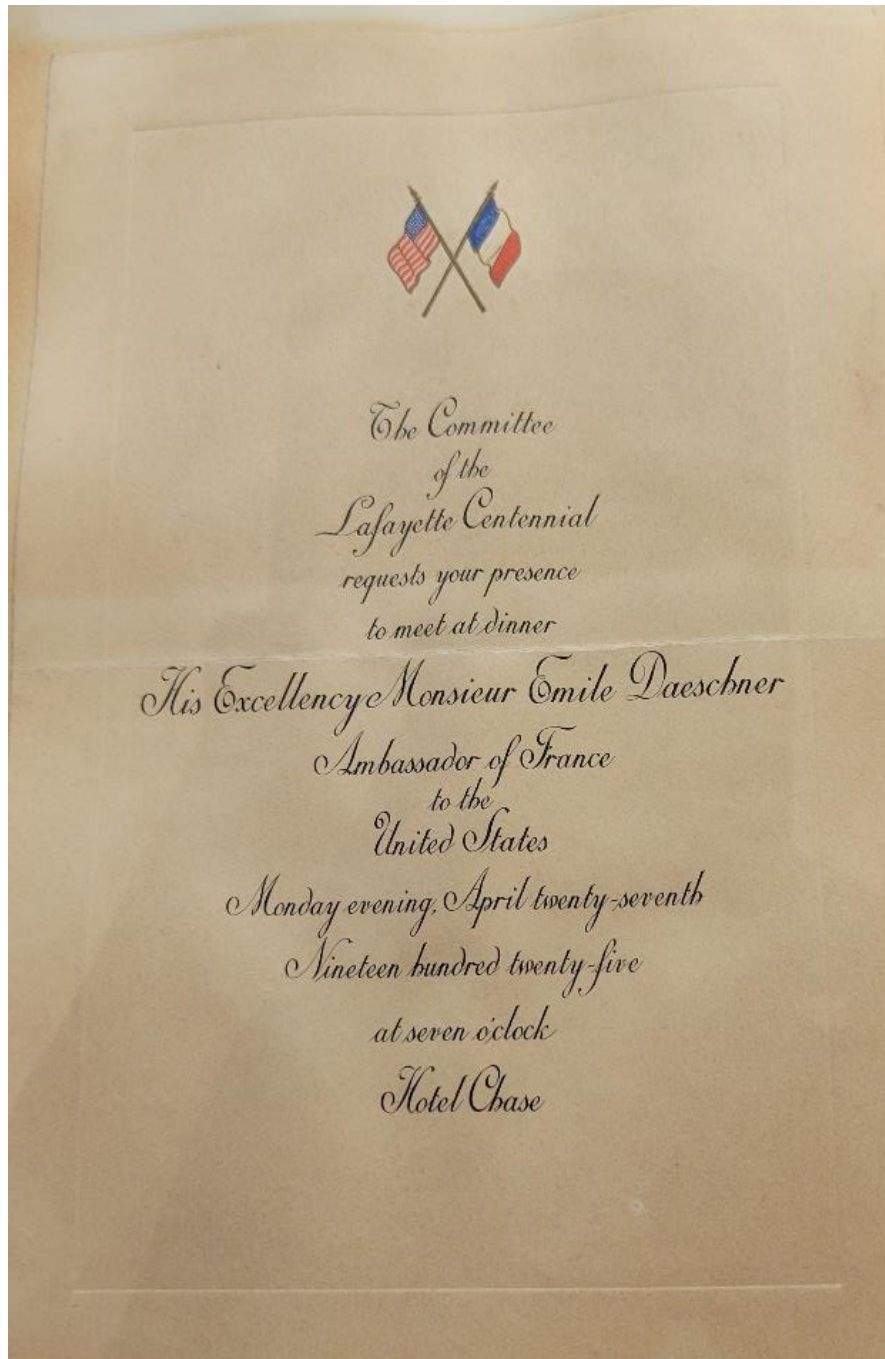
But alas, there was Lafayette love to be spread, and we did plenty of that as well. In Cincinnati, we met with committee chair Mark Holland (and his lovely family) to discuss his plans in the Queen City. We also visited with committee members in Georgetown, Kentucky as they begin to plan Lafayette’s Bicentennial there (May 18, 2025).

In St. Louis, we met with the Missouri Historical Society, and they brought out Lafayette-related papers for us to see. These included a letter from Lafayette updating William Clark on the grizzly bear cub which Clark had sent to him in France. The documents also included a pamphlet outlining the 1925 Centennial commemorations of Lafayette’s visit to St. Louis.

The Missouri Historical Society was very receptive to forming a committee to commemorate Lafayette’s Bicentennial there in 2025. I have since corresponded with them, and things are moving forward towards an exciting time in St. Louis (the furthest west that Lafayette traveled).



*The Missouri Museum, Library & Research Center  
(home of the Missouri Historical Society)*



*Invitation to Dinner during St. Louis's  
Lafayette Centennial Celebrations in 1925*

In Gallipolis, Ohio, Matthew and I were treated like royalty with a luncheon in our honor at Our House Tavern, which is a restored brick Federal-style tavern dating to 1819. The prominent citizens of Gallipolis entertained General Lafayette at Our House Tavern on Sunday, May 22, 1825. This was one of the few stops on the Farewell Tour where Lafayette spoke French to the local citizens. Gallipolis was first settled in 1790 by the "The French 500" who were a group of French aristocrats, merchants, and artisans who had fled the violence and disruption of the French Revolution.



We were hosted by the effervescent and extremely knowledgeable Our House Tavern Museum Director, Bev Jeffers. Bev proudly showed us artifacts from Lafayette's visit including a jacket that he left behind and a violin that was played during his visit. Bev invited historians and local politicians to the luncheon, along with educators and business partners. We even met restaurateur Bob Evans' son Steve who assured us that the Governor Mike DeWine already had the Lafayette Bicentennial dates on his calendar. Steve Evans promised a steamboat for all events in Ohio. Thank you, Steve! Wow!!!

I had an opportunity to address the gathering and had a wonderful time discussing the many facets of Lafayette and our Bicentennial plans. There were many questions and comments, and a great time was had by all. Once I had finished, we were entertained by local musicians in period clothing playing 18<sup>th</sup> century instruments. It was a very special day, and it was exciting to hear about all of their Lafayette Bicentennial plans for 1825.



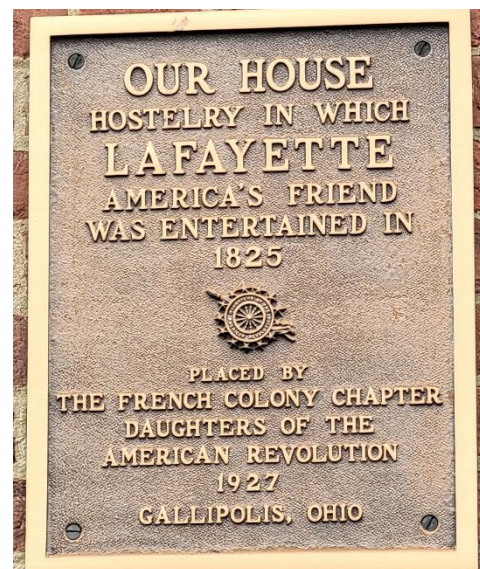
*(L-R) Erin Augenstein, Chuck Schwam, and Bev Jeffers at Our House Tavern*



*Chuck with DAR members Denise Toler (L) and Emily Daly (R) at Our House Tavern*



*Our House Tavern and the plaque to the left of the front door*



We also had the opportunity to meet Erin Augenstein in Gallipolis. Erin is the Executive Director of the Campus Martius Museum in Marietta, Ohio (another stop for Lafayette in 1825), and she kindly invited Matthew and me to visit her museum the next morning. That afternoon, we drove to Marietta, spent the night at the *Lafayette Hotel* and headed for Campus Martius Museum in the morning.

If you've ever wondered about Marietta, Ohio, simply read David McCullough's last book *The Pioneers*. Thanks to Rufus Putnam, westward pioneers were afforded a place to settle in the Ohio Country. It is a fascinating story, and I highly recommend the book. Lafayette met with the citizens of Marietta on May 23, 2025.

The Campus Martius in Marietta, Ohio is a large museum, celebrating and educating the public about these pioneers. The museum is expansive, and we were truly impressed as we went room to room with Executive Director Augenstein. We saw several original buildings that belonged to the pioneers including the blockhouse where Lafayette was feted.

Erin assured us that a Lafayette Bicentennial Committee would be formed in Marietta. With the museum going through renovations and the town of Marietta getting excited about the Lafayette Bicentennial, I left feeling optimistic about May 23, 2025 in Marietta.



*The Campus Martius Museum, Marietta, Ohio*



Matthew and I left Ohio for home on May 21. Nine days and eight different beds later, we were very happy to have returned to Maryland. On our return trip, we thought of all the people we met and the connections we made. I'm here to report that Bicentennial plans for Lafayette are in full swing west of the Alleghany Mountains. 2025 is going to be epic!!!

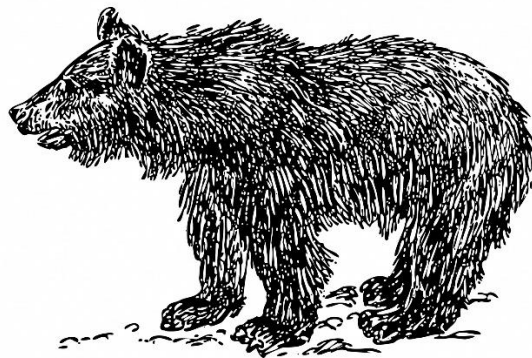
### **Editor's Note:**

William Clark, co-leader of the famous Lewis and Clark Expedition, greeted Lafayette during his short stay in St. Louis in late April 1825. Lafayette toured Clark's museum, which contained objects that he had retained from his explorations.

Indian collars made of grizzly bear claws "of a prodigious size" impressed Clark's French visitors. Likely as a result of the impression that these artifacts had made, Clark shipped a grizzly cub to Lafayette in France.

The letter referenced in the article, dated February 1, 1830, is Lafayette's acknowledgment of this gift. It reads in part:

The grisley [*sic*] bear you had the goodness to send to me, has been the more admired on this side of the Atlantic as it was the first animal of the kind, living or dead, that had ever made an appearance in Europe. I was inclined to make a pet of him as he was thereby gentle, but it was thought wise to put him under the care of the Board of professors at the Jardin des Plantes, the first European museum of Natural Philosophy. There he was received with much gratitude to you the principal donator and to me ... His large vile and ferocious temper have since been developed.



# The AFL Farewell Tour Virtual Travelogues

by Alan R. Hoffman

Lafayette's 1824-1825 Farewell Tour – his 13-month victory lap through all 24 states – was a unique event in American history. “The volumes of history furnish no parallel – no one like La Fayette has ever *re-appeared* in any country.” *Niles Weekly Register*, 1824. The first phase of the AFL's 2024-2025 Bicentennial Commemoration of Lafayette's Farewell Tour in at least four states is the production of a mobile and web-based travelogue covering all the places in those states that Lafayette visited during the Tour.

The AFL is working with our partner TravelStorysGPS ([www.travelstorys.com](http://www.travelstorys.com)) to produce virtual travelogues in New Hampshire, North Carolina, Virginia, and New York. The travelogues will not only activate, hands-free, as the user approaches a site, but will be available online on any device, free to the user. Each “geotagged” site will consist of a 3-minute story of Lafayette's visit with scrolling images, sound effects, and professional narration. The AFL is responsible for drafting each of the 150 stories included in these travelogues.



For those of you who are more technically inclined, the travelogue project is primarily a suite of digital assets available for *free* via a downloadable mobile and web-based app – TravelStorys™ – for use on any commercially available smart phone (iOS, Android, etc.). The award-winning TravelStorys mobile and web-based platforms enable “hand-free,” location-based, podcast-like audio content about various locales and travel routes across the world. Using patented geotag technology, the audio narratives for each stop will launch automatically as travelers approach sites of interest, without the need for cell service or Wi-Fi. Accompanied by an exhibit hall of images, videos, and weblinks, the audio tour can be accessed via the phone app by the user in real time in proximity to the subject locations, or independently away from the locations for passive listening as a podcast or trip-planning. The AFL intends to complete the travelogues so that they are available for distribution prior to the Farewell Tour Bicentennial commemorations in 2024-2025.

The creation of the travelogues will educate the public about the Farewell Tour, Lafayette's role in the American Revolution, his human rights advocacy, and his significance for today. It will also serve as a springboard for local communities to plan and promote the Farewell Tour commemorative events. The AFL will utilize the historical expertise of its member-scholars and Lafayette authorities to create the content of the travelogues and the technical expertise and experience of TravelStorys to produce them. The travelogues are perfectly suited to achieve the AFL's goal of educating the public about General Lafayette.

The AFL has received tremendous support for the travelogues from state humanities councils, private foundations, the National Park Service, and patriotic societies. New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Virginia Humanities made major grants to support the travelogues as did the Florence Gould Foundation in New York.

The Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati provided matching funds for the New Hampshire award. The North Carolina Society of the Cincinnati has supported our efforts in that state. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, matching funds were provided by the Celebrate Yorktown Committee of the Yorktown Foundation, and the National Park Service.

AFL Curator Diane Shaw and I are drafting the New Hampshire stories. In North Carolina, AFL Vice President Hank Parfitt and Mike Samperton, the Lafayette Society's historian, are engaged in drafting the ten Fayetteville stories; former city historian Bruce Daws has agreed to review them. AFL member and North Carolina native Frank Womble and I are covering the rest of the state.

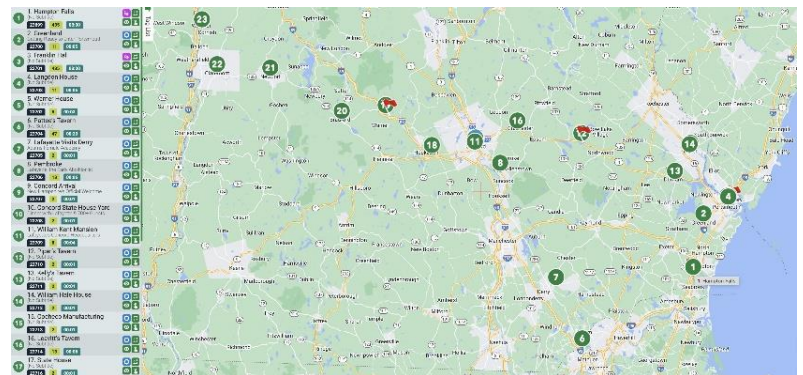
We have five authors in Virginia: AFL members Bill Cole and Frank Womble, AFL Vice President Robert Kelly, AFL board member Rob Raffety, and I. We have completed the Hampton Roads stories and are working on central and northern Virginia. AFL member, teacher, and scholar Lloyd Kramer has agreed to review and edit the North Carolina and Virginia stories.

In New York, joining Diane Shaw and me as writers are AFL members David Felsen of Brooklyn and Stacy Draper of Troy, and Patrice Bernier of Albion. In addition, AFL members Bill Jeffway of Poughkeepsie and Margot Jones of Manhattan are drafting stories for us. AFL board member Patti Maclay recently volunteered to join the New York team. As to the New York City stories, this spring we have been helped immensely by Sarah Kenny, an intern provided by Fordham University. For the summer, intern Bridget Woods is joining "the staff."

Finally, AFL member and Lafayette interpreter extraordinaire Mark Schneider has graciously agreed to speak Lafayette's part whenever we attribute a direct quote to the General in the 150 or so stories. Huzzah!

To provide a sample of the travelogue stories, the *Gazette* is publishing "Two Tales of Troy" (New York), written by the aforementioned Stacy Draper, following this article. While these tales will give you an idea of the content of a travelogue story as it will appear on the screen, they cannot duplicate the full effect of a story as produced by TravelStorysGPS, which will be accompanied by scrolling images, professional narration, Mark Schneider's Lafayette, and sound effects. Think 24-gun salute, clinking of glasses as toasts are made, "Yankee Doodle," and the acclamations of an adoring public.

To appreciate what it would be like to experience an actual AFL Farewell Tour Bicentennial travelogue, download the TravelStorys app and play a tour near you, or play "Ten Crucial Days" about Washington's crossing the Delaware and the victories that followed.



*Map of New Hampshire Bicentennial Tour sites  
as it will appear in the TravelStorys app*

# New York Virtual Travelogue: Tales of Troy

by Stacy P. Draper

## Troy Welcomes the “Nation’s Guest”

The seven-story brick and stone Monument Square Apartment building in front of you is on the site of the Troy House, which was the finest hotel here during the city of Troy’s early years. On the morning of September 18, 1824, after the parade of citizens, military and city leadership marched through the city streets celebrating the “Nation’s Guest’s” arrival, they came here to the Troy House.



*Print, Troy from Mount Ida (Mt Olympus), NY, c. 1825. John Hill (1770-1850), Henry I. Megary, NY, Publisher. This view shows the city of Troy at about the time of General Lafayette’s visit, prior to there being a bridge across the Hudson River at this location. The Catskill Mountains can be seen in the distance and the road along the river in the foreground is still known as River Street. Collection of the Hart Cluett Museum, Troy, NY.*

From the moment the packet boat *Schenectady*, carrying Lafayette and his Albany escort, landed at the ferry dock on the Troy shore, the welcome was exuberant with crowds cheering and bands playing. As noted in Lafayette’s secretary Auguste Levasseur’s account of the visit, the Honorable George Tibbits made the city’s official welcoming speech, saying:

Your indefatigable devotion to the cause of civil and religious liberty has made you famous everywhere where the rights of man are respected and honored ... May you be able to enjoy for a long time among us ... the spirit of enterprise and industry of a frugal people, happy with its lot, obedient to its laws, at peace with itself and the entire world ...



*Portrait of George Tibbits by Troy artist Abel Buel Moore, c. 1840. Mr. Tibbits was a member of the Troy Committee of Arrangements for the General's visit. He had also been in New York State Senate and instrumental in the planning and building of the Erie Canal and one of the leaders of Troy's commercial growth and development since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Collection Hart Cluett Museum, Troy, NY.*

The inhabitants of Troy recalled the General's five-month visit in 1784 after the end of the American Revolution which had included a stop in what was then just a ferry crossing and farmland. The local newspaper the *Troy Sentinel*, reported that Lafayette noted that the changes he saw in Troy since his visit forty years previously were "astonishingly great ... where, when he last saw it, there was only one small house, and where he now saw a beautiful city."



*Engraved miniature print portraits of Lafayette and his wife given by him to the Adancourt family who traveled on the same ship with him on his 1784 return to America after the American Revolution was over. Mrs. Adancourt met with Lafayette in Lansingburgh, now part of Troy, on his second briefer visit to Troy in July 1825. These treasured mementos were given to the Hart Cluett Museum by family descendants. The artist is "C. Tiebout."*  
Collection Hart Cluett Museum, Troy, NY.

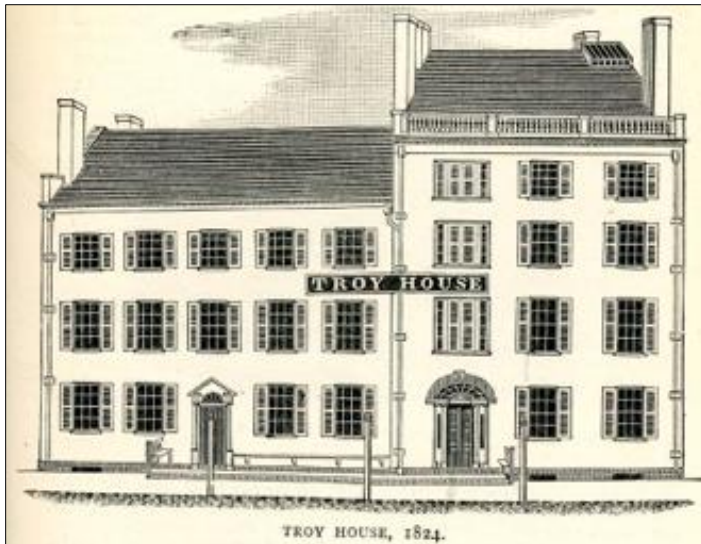


Preparations for the arrival of the “Nation’s Guest” had been in process for a number of weeks as expectations rose to a fever pitch. A satin ribbon badge with Lafayette’s image was worn by dignitaries and the young ladies and teachers at Emma Willard’s Troy Female Seminary, just one souvenir of many available to remember the grand occasion.



*Lafayette badge, engraved on satin, Myron King, 1824. King went on to have a long printing and engraving career in Troy, including creating the first wood cut published to illustrate the much-loved poem by Clement Clark Moore, A Visit from St. Nicholas (T’was the Night Before Christmas) which was first printed in the Troy Sentinel in December 1823, less than a year before Lafayette’s visit. Collection Hart Cluett Museum, Troy, NY.*

The parade ended here in the heart of Troy’s bustling commercial district. Lafayette met with the local Masons in their rooms in the hotel and enjoyed a luncheon in his honor before he addressed the large crowd outside. Imagine militia companies, Revolutionary War and War of 1812 veterans, Masonic groups and representatives of other civic organizations, clergy, regular Troy citizens and others who had come from the surrounding area, all gathered to hear Lafayette’s speech from the hotel balcony, which was decorated with flags and evergreens and a banner that read “Welcome La Fayette, the friend of Washington, the friend of America, the friend of Liberty.” Above the arch of greens perched a live eagle, the symbol of the new nation.



*Print advertisement designed and engraved by Myron King, Collection Hart Cluett Museum, Troy, NY. The Troy House was the most prominent Troy hotel of the day. Located just back from the Hudson, it served the busy commercial sector of the city. This print view of the building by Myron King, who also engraved the souvenir satin ribbon, gives an idea of what Lafayette would have seen. The balcony he spoke from was probably over the front door of the 4-story section of the hotel. The building followed the curve of River Street just as the present early 20<sup>th</sup> century building does. Collection Hart Cluett Museum, Troy, NY.*

## Women's Education and Abolition (now Russell Sage College)

The statue in front of you is Emma Hart Willard, a leading proponent of female education in America. Her innovative school for girls, the Troy Female Seminary, once stood on this site, today the campus of Russell Sage College. Lafayette's visit to the school was one of many he made in support of women's education during the Farewell Tour.



*Print portrait. One of many images of Emma Hart Willard (1787– 1870), the founder of the Troy Female Seminary, friend of Lafayette and pioneer of female education through her school (1814 to present) and theories of education. Collection Hart Cluett Museum, Troy, NY.*

The ladies of Troy had invited Lafayette to visit the school during his time in the city. Arriving at the entrance to Sage Park, around the corner on Congress Street, Lafayette found them waiting eagerly to welcome him, along with students, teachers and Emma Willard herself. An arbor covered with evergreens and flowers at the park entrance displayed a banner that read, "America commands her daughters to welcome her deliverer, La Fayette." The General was welcomed by Eunice Pawling, wife of Albert Pawling, Troy's first mayor and fellow aide to George Washington during the American Revolution.



*This view looks west from the Courthouse towards the Seminary (3-story building on the left). Congress Street is at the right and the park where the ladies of Troy met Lafayette is at center. Today the statue of Emma Willard is in the park about where her parlor would have been in the school building. Collection Hart Cluett Museum, Troy, NY.*

Above the doorway to the school building, was another decorated arch with a banner that read, "We owe our schools to Freedom; Freedom to La Fayette." Students sang a song composed by Willard for the occasion, and she presented him with a copy of her revolutionary *Plan of Female Education* during their private conversation in her parlor.



*Photograph, c. 1890 looking south at the Troy Female Seminary building and park, corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> and Congress Streets. The park is where General Lafayette met Mrs. Willard and her students and staff and the ladies of Troy. His carriage continued south on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (left of image) on his way back to the ferry back to Albany. Collection Hart Cluett Museum, Troy, NY.*

After this visit, Willard continued her friendship with Lafayette, corresponding with him and visiting him in France in 1830. He opened many doors for her there as she looked at female education in France and England. Willard shared Lafayette's letters with the young women of her school. According to one alumna of the school, the students were also required to translate the letters from French to English as an exercise. Today, the statue of Emma Willard recalls both the importance of her school and the visit of the "Nation's Guest."



*Photo of dedication of Mrs. Willard's Statue, May 16, 1895. Collection Hart Cluett Museum, Troy, NY This statue, dedicated in May 1895 by the alumnae of the Troy Female Seminary at the time the school was renamed in Mrs. Willard's honor, was placed in the approximate location of Mrs. Willard's parlor where she visited with the General during his visit to Troy. The seated figure of Mrs. Willard notes her belief that a lady could make a public speech only if she were sitting down, for then the speech became "conversation." It is still in place to commemorate Mrs. Willard's remarkable life and her impact on her school, students and the wider world of women's education and progress.*

After his visit to the school, Lafayette went by carriage to the ferry dock just a few blocks away to return to Albany. His secretary, Auguste Levasseur, later noted that Lafayette "... observed with pleasure that the Colored population, which is not very numerous (around 300) freely joined its good wishes for the Nation's Guest with those of the White population. One counts now hardly 30 Slaves in the City and its dependencies. Three more years, and liberty will not have to blush any more in the presence of men of Color ...!"



The city of Troy's early involvement with the Abolition movement and its important early community of free Black citizens would have been of interest to Lafayette given his advocacy for abolishing slavery. Slavery officially ended in New York State in 1827, three years after Lafayette's visit.



*Detail, View of Seminary (at left) and Park, from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street looking west. The small building to the left of the church was the religious home of many of Troy's black families mentioned by Levasseur. Many of them were in attendance for the General's visit.*

### About the Author

AFL member Stacy Pomeroy Draper recently retired from the Hart Cluett Museum (HCM) in Troy, NY where she served as Curator from 1978 to 2021. An American Studies graduate of Smith College and the Cooperstown Graduate Program in History Museum Studies, Ms Draper is the co-author of *The Marble House in Second Street, Biography of a Town House and Its Occupants, 1825-2000*, the historic structures report on the National Register-listed Hart-Cluett House. The historic house, people who lived and worked there, and the wider social and architectural history of Troy over two centuries was a large focus of her curatorial duties and study for over 35 years. Building the HCM's museum and archival collections to "recognize every face and every story" has been her mission as well as her great pleasure. Her involvement with the American Friends of Lafayette began in 2007-8 when the AFL visited Troy for part of the group's annual meeting that year. Preparation of a lecture and walking tour of the area of downtown Troy that Lafayette saw on his 1824 visit led Ms Draper to delve further into this important event in Troy's early history and make it part of the regular programming of the museum. She is honored to be part of the Hudson Valley celebration of Lafayette's Farewell Tour and the raising of awareness of the General's huge impact both locally and in the wider world.

## Guest of a Changing Nation: Lafayette and the Election of 1824

by Joshua Neiderhiser

Despite the tremendous animosity they had for each other, John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson proved the main actors in an unexpected interaction witnessed by Lafayette on February 10, 1825. Following the contentious Election of 1824, Lafayette observed the President-Elect, simple and modest, greeting well-wishers by “clasping their hands cordially.”<sup>1</sup> When Jackson appeared, there was a “murmur of satisfaction” and the two rivals “dashed towards each other, clasped hands and held them tightly for a long time. The congratulations offered by General Jackson were frank and sincere. Mr. Adams appeared profoundly moved by it, and the numerous witnesses could not restrain from expressing their satisfaction.”<sup>2</sup>

In his memoirs, Lafayette does not mention the incident, nor the Election of 1824 at all. Given Lafayette’s penchant for taking credit for historical events, his omission of the election seems to indicate that even he could not take credit for the results. Nonetheless, can we assign credit to Lafayette for the manner in which the election unfolded? The contentious presidential election of 1824 featured sectional factionalism replacing party politics amongst the electorate. Did the presence of Lafayette, as the “Guest of the Nation,” as well as his embodiment in the flesh of the ideals of the American Revolution, contribute to the outcome of the election and its aftermath? Did Lafayette’s presence help show the nation a path to unity, or did it help lead the nation down a path of division?

In order to understand whether Lafayette’s presence impacted the Election of 1824, one must analyze the actions, outcomes, and effects of the presidential election of 1824 separately. That, in combination with the analysis of Lafayette’s tour of the United States can help to establish how his presence impacted the election.

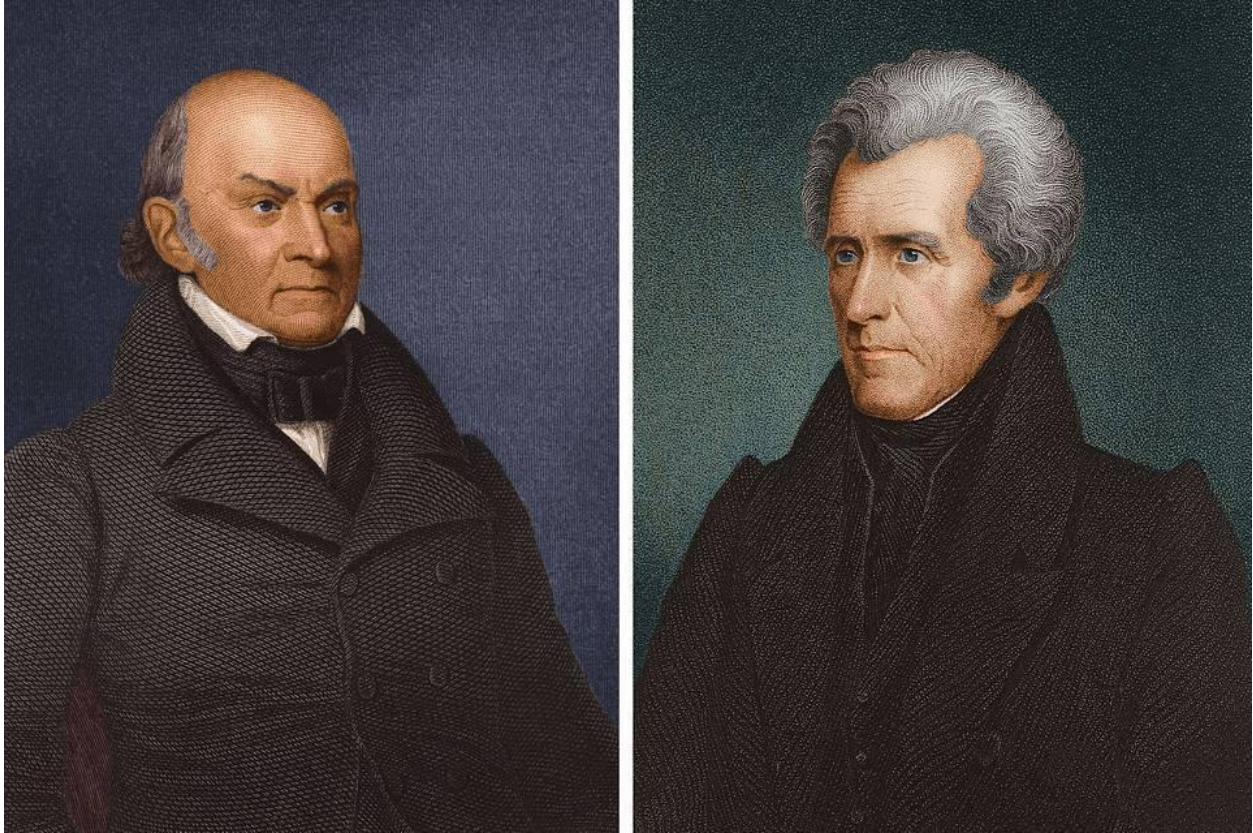
### **Election of 1824**<sup>3</sup>

John Quincy Adams expressed much disdain for Andrew Jackson. He referred to Jackson’s wife as an adulteress, and to Jackson himself as a slave trader with a violent temper and a history of dueling and massacres of Native Americans and military deserters. Their relationship proved so bad that Adams refused to stand, or even sit, in the vicinity of Jackson. “I said that the personal Relations in which President Jackson had chosen to place himself with me were such that I could hold no intercourse of a friendly character with him[.]”<sup>4</sup> When Harvard decided to award Jackson an honorary doctorate of laws, Adams, an alumnus of the university, declared he, “[W]ould not be present to witness her disgrace in conferring her highest Literary honours upon a barbarian, who could not write a sentence of Grammar, and hardly could spell his own name.”<sup>5</sup> His wife, Louisa Catherine Adams, composed a short poem, “Discerning old Harvard presents the Degree, Old Hickory asks pray *what means LLD?* The Corporate Sages afraid of excess, Reserve for themselves that of A.S.S.”<sup>6</sup>

Andrew Jackson more than returned Adams’ disdain. Jackson held Adams and his campaign personally responsible for the death of his wife, Rachel, in December 1828, due to the constant attacks on her character and their marriage. He argued that Adams acted as a pimp for



Emperor Alexander I of Russia, procuring a young girl to serve as a prostitute while minister to Russia. Jackson also accused Adams of the misappropriation of government money to purchase frivolous items such as a billiards table and a chess set. Jackson's anger with Adams had intensified after what he called the "corrupt bargain" with Henry Clay swung the 1824 election to Adams.<sup>7</sup>



*John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson*

The fact that the Election of 1824 came down to these two fierce rivals seemed more than unlikely at the outset of the campaign. The campaign for the presidential election of 1824 actually began four years earlier during the campaign for the presidential election of 1820. "The chief interest in the presidential campaign of 1820 was not in the re-election of James Monroe, for that was conceded on all sides, but in the choice of his successor."<sup>8</sup> Monroe became the only person in American history other than George Washington to run unopposed for president. Meanwhile, with the disintegration of the Federalist Party as a national organization, presidential hopefuls began to jockey for position to succeed Monroe in 1824. By the time the official campaign for the election of 1824 began, five men joined the race for president: John Quincy Adams, John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, William H. Crawford, and Andrew Jackson.<sup>9</sup>

The political realities of the time created an atmosphere, and thus a campaign, of spirited debate and mudslinging. Old Federalists, with a party that disappeared during the Monroe administration, began courting dissident Republicans. These dissident Republicans believed "that party managers monopolized office, pursued the interests only of those who supported them, and prevented the proper pursuit of the common good."<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, more voters had the right to vote than ever before. Twenty-four states now existed as part of the United States, adding the West to the sectional divide along with the North and the South. The vote now included almost all white men, as in the early nineteenth century state legislatures began limiting property requirements for voting.<sup>11</sup> Despite the existence of just one functional political party nationwide, politics continued, now with significant division based on geography instead of party. “[S]ectional divisions induced by the campaign[s] were pushing the United States toward a political earthquake which will bury our free governments in irretrievable ruin.”<sup>12</sup>

The demand for increased democratic control existed as a significant underlying issue throughout the campaign. Generally, most people at that time had come to find the idea of allowing a congressional caucus to continue to select nominees for president antithetical to the nation becoming more educated and moving more toward democracy.<sup>13</sup> “[T]his election saw a shift in the character of the American polity from aristocratic republic to mass democracy.”<sup>14</sup> However, other issues presented themselves as well. The economic downturn that resulted from the Panic of 1819 and sectional disputes over slavery stemming from the Missouri crisis and Compromise of 1820 raised tensions amongst the electorate. Meanwhile, other events, like the abortive Vesey rebellion, the tariff and internal improvements tensions, dominated the political discourse.<sup>15</sup>

Due to the upheaval and questions raised by so many issues on the minds of the electorate, along with the presence of multiple candidates, a consensus by voters could not be reached. “All the candidates who won votes for president in the Electoral College were celebrities of considerable political appeal. All could point to significant public achievements that made them deserving of the highest honors; all attracted admiration, if in some cases reluctant admiration.”<sup>16</sup> Andrew Jackson, the junior Senator from Tennessee and the hero of New Orleans, captured the most votes, and the most electoral votes. However, he did not capture the necessary majority of the electoral votes, and thus the House of Representatives was convened to select the sixth President of the United States.

Many encouraged Jackson to run for president in an effort to head off the growing support for the Secretary of the Treasury, William Crawford, whom Jackson detested.<sup>17</sup> Jackson’s supporters originally conceived of this idea in order to decrease support for Crawford and to allow John Quincy Adams or Henry Clay to become president.<sup>18</sup> “But Jackson’s name proved magnetic to discontented politicians and voters far beyond Tennessee. Signs of widespread popular support, linked with Jackson’s pride and his principles, propelled the supposed diversionary candidate into serious contention.”<sup>19</sup> Jackson’s candidacy was boosted by the public perception that “Republicans had [...] created a regime of insider corruption and manipulation.”<sup>20</sup> Each of the other candidates had more government experience than Jackson, but this proved to be as much a liability as a strength as Jackson portrayed himself as an outsider, “the only true national candidate [...] free of the insider clubbiness of official Washington.”<sup>21</sup>

In 1824, many perceived John Quincy Adams heir apparent, and the most logical person to become the sixth president. Not only had he been raised by the revolutionary leader and second president, John Adams, but he had served outstandingly as Monroe’s Secretary of State. Each of the three previous presidents all served as Secretary of State before ascending to the presidency.<sup>22</sup> Despite his accomplishments, Adams did not “excite attention” from other

politicians, donors, or the electorate.<sup>23</sup> As such, constituents lacked interest, and support for him was not strong.

Adams effectively served as an astute politician, and did everything he could do in order to win the election. He suggested that then President Monroe send Jackson, Henry Clay, and John C. Calhoun on foreign missions in an effort to keep them occupied and end their campaigns.<sup>24</sup> Adams attempted to entice Jackson into an alliance, with Jackson assuming a role as his vice president.<sup>25</sup> In order to promote himself, Adams also provided personal notes of his accomplishments to editors at newspapers around the nation and attended every possible Washington society event.<sup>26</sup>

John C. Calhoun, the Secretary of War, entered the race knowing he was a long shot. Calhoun planned his campaign around winning in the South and in Pennsylvania.<sup>27</sup> Calhoun made overtures in New York as well. Martin Van Buren, a future secretary of state and president, created a strong pro-Crawford coalition in New York, that he hoped united New York, Pennsylvania, and the “Richmond Junto,” representative of the Virginia state Republican committee, behind William Crawford.<sup>28</sup> Calhoun, in early 1823, began corresponding with General Joseph G. Swift in attempts to create an anti-Van Buren coalition designed to defeat Crawford in New York.<sup>29</sup> Calhoun downplayed his sectionalist attitudes in these letters, attempting to portray himself as an ardent nationalist and best candidate for the presidency.<sup>30</sup> However, his attempts in New York proved a disaster, and Pennsylvania selected Jackson for president and Calhoun for vice president, a result duplicated in New Jersey, Maryland, North Carolina, and South Carolina, torpedoing Calhoun’s presidential hopes.<sup>31</sup> “Bowing to the inevitable, Calhoun withdrew as a presidential candidate” and satisfied himself with becoming vice president.<sup>32</sup>

William H. Crawford, meanwhile, had planned his presidential campaign for over ten years.<sup>33</sup> He had stepped aside in 1816 and allowed his rival, James Monroe, to ascend to the presidency, expecting Monroe to name him as his successor. This gamble proved mistaken when Monroe elected to remain neutral in 1824. Crawford ran as “*the* Republican candidate, ready to repel any threat from a resurgent Federalism.”<sup>34</sup>

Crawford’s long-planned campaign was seriously impaired by his medical issues. Crawford suffered a massive stroke in September 1823, leaving him partially blind and, for a time, immobile.<sup>35</sup> He then suffered a relapse in May 1824, making any public appearance nearly impossible.<sup>36</sup> This meant that Crawford’s lone path to the presidency lay in the hands of the Republican Congressional Caucus. While Crawford overwhelmingly won the caucus, no other candidate participated, making it a Pyrrhic victory.<sup>37</sup> Crawford’s team offered Clay, Adams, and Jackson the vice presidency to induce them to abandon their own campaigns, but each man turned him down.<sup>38</sup> Crawford’s last hope was to stay out of sight, hide his disability from the electorate, and hope that enough of the South voted for him to move the election into the House of Representatives.<sup>39</sup>

Henry Clay believed that the path to the presidency was wide open for him, and thus turned down overtures from the other candidates to act as their vice presidential candidate.<sup>40</sup> A Kentucky resident, he believed himself to be the only choice for western voters.<sup>41</sup> As the “great compromiser” and the architect of the Missouri Compromise, he fully expected to win significant

support in both the North and South.<sup>42</sup> As the well-known and popular Speaker of the House, Clay assumed himself to be the only true national candidate.<sup>43</sup> As the architect and main voice behind the “American system,” Clay thought he alone had his finger on the pulse of America.<sup>44</sup> He “believed that the election of Andrew Jackson would be disastrous, the greatest misfortune that could befall the country.”<sup>45</sup> He thought a Crawford presidency would prove equally ill-fated, since Crawford was both an enemy of public improvements and physically incapacitated.<sup>46</sup> Of all the candidates, Clay proved the most shocked with the results of the election.



*Clockwise from top left: John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, and William H. Crawford*

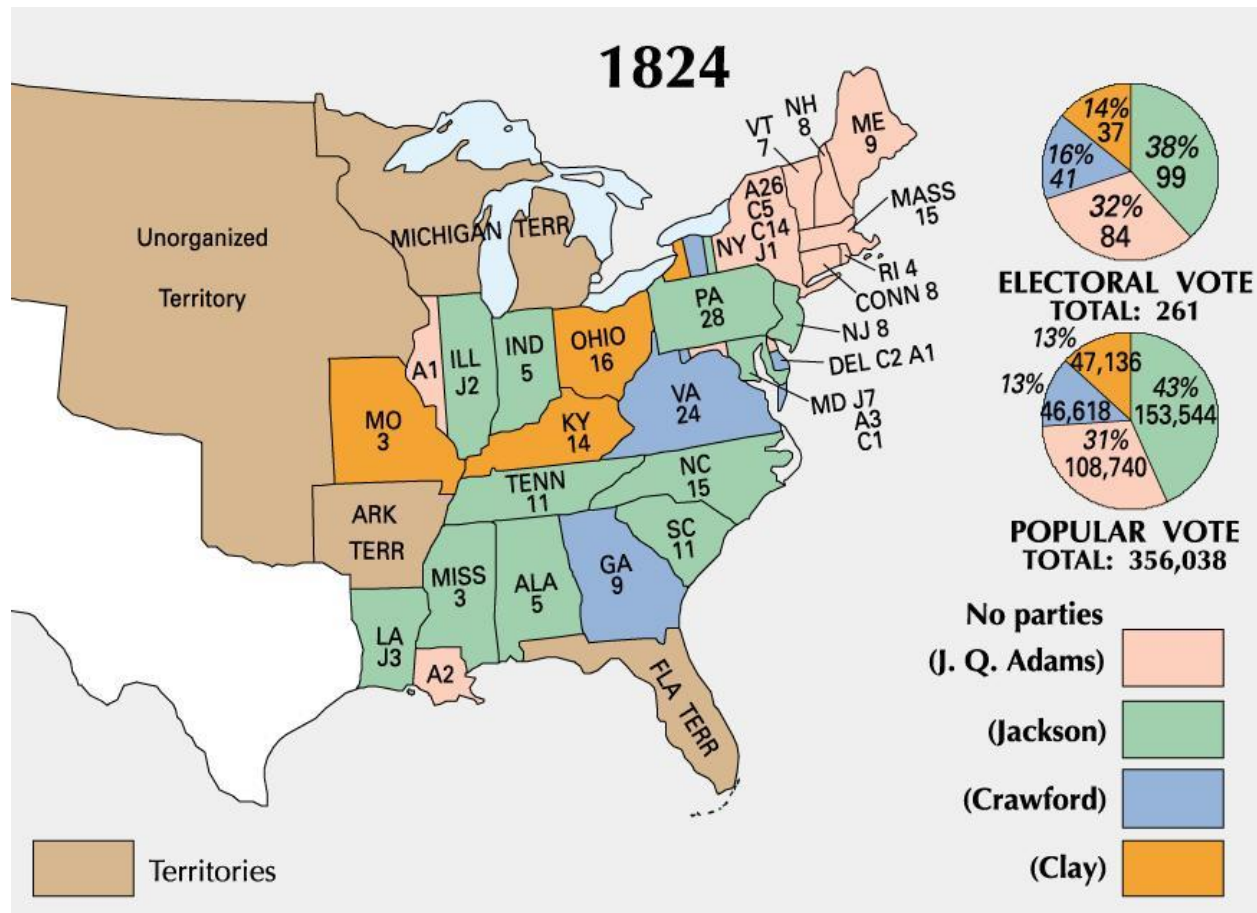
The results of the Election of 1824 were unique. Andrew Jackson, the political outsider and diversion candidate, received 41.4% of the popular vote, and 37.9% of the electoral votes.<sup>47</sup> John Quincy Adams, the favored son, received 30.9% of the popular vote, and 32.2% of the electoral votes.<sup>48</sup> William Crawford, while incapacitated, received 11.2% of the popular vote, and 15.7% of the electoral vote.<sup>49</sup> Henry Clay finished fourth, winning just 13% of the popular vote and 14.2% of the electoral votes.<sup>50</sup> Pursuant to the Constitution, since no candidate received a majority of the electoral votes, the three candidates with the greatest number of electoral votes would be presented to the House of Representatives, where each state delegation would cast one vote for the next president.<sup>51</sup>

Henry Clay, who finished fourth, remained Speaker of the House and thus carried substantial power and influence over the results of the election.<sup>52</sup> Jackson’s supporters, and historians, have frequently criticized Clay for the supposed “corrupt bargain” he struck with Adams. While it was not substantiated by the historical record, Clay, as the story goes, promised to deliver the presidency to Adams on the first ballot of the House, if Adams promised to nominate Clay as Secretary of State, thus positioning him as the heir apparent. Agreements for votes frequently influenced politics, and Adams made promises accordingly. Adams exchanged an agreement to grant certain printers government contracts to print the laws of Missouri with



Missouri's lone representative, John Scott.<sup>53</sup> Maryland Representative Henry R. Warfield, Massachusetts Representative Daniel Webster, and New York Representative Stephen Van Rensselaer, all received assurances from Adams that he would not displace Federalists from government jobs, in order to assure their states' votes.<sup>54</sup> Any promises that may or may not have been made to Clay certainly fell in line with accepted political practice.

On the first ballot, the House of Representatives elected Adams with a majority of thirteen states voting in his favor.<sup>55</sup> Outrage stemming from the "corrupt bargain" between Adams and Clay became the main driving force behind Jackson supporters. The Election of 1824 began in 1820, and now the Election of 1828 began in February 1825.<sup>56</sup>



The 1824 presidential election was of a "peculiar character."<sup>57</sup> In prior elections, the inherent conflict arising from a two-party system overrode the indirect restraints on the election process placed into the Constitution and the Twelfth Amendment. But, with no Federalist candidate, the 1824 election was "the first contested election since 1792 in which none of the informal procedures operated that had in effect democratized the presidential election. As a consequence, the choice was less clear, the candidates less easily distinguished, and the whole process more murky."<sup>58</sup> Many viewed the entire electoral process in 1824 "as a betrayal of the informal democratization of presidential elections [...] vulnerable to the charge of bargain, corruption, and perversion of the popular will."<sup>59</sup>



The Election of 1824 proved unique and “peculiar” for another reason. The impending fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence led the entire nation to reflect upon its Revolution. Never before had the nation’s chief executive been anyone other than a Founding Father; the revolutionary credentials of the first five presidents had never been questioned. Among the candidates in 1824, only Andrew Jackson and John Quincy Adams were old enough to maintain actual memories of the Revolution. Jackson, while underaged, did fight in some limited skirmishes against the British, and received a facial scar from a British officer whose boots Jackson would not shine.<sup>60</sup> Adams, meanwhile, appeared to be more Revolution-adjacent by accompanying his father, the second President, on his diplomatic missions abroad as well as living through the experiences of his father’s presidency.<sup>61</sup>

While the nation looked backwards in determining the next step in its evolution, an old hero made a triumphant return to the nation he helped create. At the invitation of President Monroe, the Marquis de Lafayette, now known simply as Lafayette, the highest ranking, surviving officer of the American Revolution, toured the United States as the “Guest of the Nation.”<sup>62</sup> With the nation desperately looking backwards in order to move forwards, could the presence of Lafayette have affected the tenor, or the outcome, of the Election of 1824 in any way?

### **Lafayette’s Farewell Tour – Guest of the Nation**

The presidential election was not the sole generationally significant event of 1824 and 1825. On August 15, 1824, Lafayette disembarked from his ship at Staten Island, New York. From that moment, until he set sail back to France on September 7, 1825, he became known merely as the Nation’s Guest. Lafayette’s importance and influence on Americans – not only in 1824 – affected the outcome of American history. He came to the United States to fight in the Revolution as a nineteen-year-old French noble. He disobeyed direct orders from his father-in-law and his king, and paid for his own passage across the Atlantic. His first taste of battle came on September 11, 1777, at the Battle of Brandywine. There, his quick thinking and action in encouraging the American troops aided an organized retreat and contributed to the preservation of the still fledgling Continental Army. Lafayette was wounded at the battle, shot through the leg by a British musket ball. He fully recovered and participated in campaigns in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Virginia. Lafayette led one of the groups which took the final two redoubts outside Yorktown, sealing the fate of Cornwallis and the British Army.

Aside from his battlefield heroics, Lafayette proved instrumental in obtaining and ensuring French aid during and after the war. After returning to France following the war’s conclusion, Lafayette acted as an unofficial American diplomat throughout Europe, helping the United States access and obtain critical loans, trade rights, and recognition. In Revolution-era France, Lafayette introduced the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen in an attempt to spread American ideals to Europe, further endearing him to Americans. His opposition to Napoleon and other European tyrants further solidified his legacy in the minds of most Americans.

In 1824, during a time of relative worldwide peace, Lafayette lost his bid for reelection to the French Chamber of Deputies, and the United States faced an important election – the first presidential election without a true hero of the Revolution. Also, the fiftieth anniversary of the

Declaration of Independence was approaching. President James Monroe recognized the importance of inviting Lafayette, the last surviving major general of the Revolution, to come tour his adopted country.

Washington City, February 7, 1824

My dear General, about 15 days ago, I wrote you a letter than I entrusted to Mr. Brown and in which I expressed to you my desire to dispatch, in the French port that you will indicate to me, a frigate to bring you here, in case you may be free to visit the United States now. Since that time, the Congress has passed a resolution on this subject in which it expressed to you the sincere attachment of the entire Nation, which ardently desires to see you again in its midst; the time in which you believe that you can respond to this invitation is left totally to your choice; but know that, whatever your decision may be, it will suffice to have the kindness to inform me so that, as soon as possible, I may give the orders for a vessel of the State to pick you up at the port which you indicate and bring you to this adopted country of your youth, which has always retained the memory of your important services. I am sending to you herewith the resolution of Congress, and I add to it the assurance of my high esteem and affectionate feelings.

James Monroe<sup>63</sup>

“Lafayette could not refuse an invitation so honorable and pressing,”<sup>64</sup> and more importantly, the United States could not wait to impress and celebrate their French hero.

Lafayette arrived on American shores to a hero’s welcome that lasted the entirety of his thirteen-month tour.<sup>65</sup> “[A]t every town, he would be greeted by the veterans of the Revolution. Men grown old and gray, some forgotten but now remembered, regularly turned out to see their old commander; chapters of the various states’ Cincinnati Societies would arrange fests and parades wherever Lafayette would go.”<sup>66</sup> Masonic Lodges also celebrated their famous French member, many renaming themselves in Lafayette’s honor.

Lafayette visited each of the twenty-four states during his time as the Nation’s Guest. Across the country he received accolades and admiration, which brought with it, quite a bit of attention. “Delegations met him at the boundaries of states and counties to escort him to his next engagements. He was entertained at balls and banquets, praised in speeches, poems, and songs, and paraded through triumphal arches.”<sup>67</sup> As the first foreign dignitary to address Congress, he stated, “To be sure, I can stand fast with head held high, when in their name and by you, Mr. President, it is solemnly declared that on each occasion I have stayed faithful to American principles of liberty, equality and true social order to which I have been devoted since my youth, and which, till my last breath, will be a sacred duty to me.”<sup>68</sup> Congress, as well as several states and local municipalities, granted Lafayette payment for services rendered to the United States.

Lafayette’s tour also impacted the nation in unanticipated ways. “Now arose an interest in creating monuments in every city to the heroes of the American Revolution. The souvenir industry was born in the United States, with plates and teacups and pitchers and gold medallions emblazoned with pictures of Lafayette and memorials in his honor.”<sup>69</sup> Accordingly, Lafayette’s

presence invigorated the art world. In his doctoral thesis, Marc H. Miller cited nearly 200 pieces of art released either in conjunction with Lafayette's tour or inspired by it.<sup>70</sup>

While Lafayette's presence had energized the nation, his departure saddened much of it.

Restrained as if by a magic spell, General Lafayette could not decide to separate from his friends; a thousand pretexts served to delay the definitive moment of parting; but finally, the first of 24 cannon blasts that announced his departure having sounded, he threw himself into Mr. Adams' arms again, expressed to him his last good wishes for the American Nation, and climbed into the carriage. From the top of the colonnade, the President repeated to him the sign of farewell, and at this signal the colors of the militia, who were drawn up in battle array in front of the mansion, were bowed to the ground.<sup>71</sup>

### **Lafayette's Impact on the Election of 1824**

Lafayette does not mention the Election of 1824 in his memoirs. Significantly, during his time as the Guest of the Nation, Lafayette never made any public comments on the election, nor did he indicate a preference for one candidate over another. Throughout his tour, Lafayette exchanged letters with, met with, and dined with all five of the presidential candidates. The closest Lafayette appeared to acknowledge or involve himself with the election was visiting Washington in February when the results of the vote of the House of Representatives were announced, and then when he appeared at the residence of out-going President Monroe the following day. No simple cause and effect between Lafayette's visit and the presidential election of 1824 exists.<sup>72</sup>

However, it remains unlikely that the two most momentous events in the United States occurred simultaneously, and had no impact on each other. Could Lafayette have impacted the election in a real, albeit, unquantifiable way?<sup>73</sup> Some contemporaries believed as much.

"Although Lafayette did not arrive in the United States until August of 1824, the anticipation of his visit preoccupied the American people for many months."<sup>74</sup> Auguste Levasseur, Lafayette's private secretary on the tour, believed that Lafayette's mere arrival impacted the campaigns, writing:

By the heat of the discussion, spirits had already arrived at a high degree of emotion when General Lafayette arrived on the American shore. Then, as if by magic, the electoral zeal was suddenly paralyzed. The newspapers, which the day before were fighting furiously to clear the path to the Presidency for their candidate of choice, immediately closed their long columns to the passionate discussions of the parties, in order to open them only to the unanimous expression of joy and national gratitude. In the public banquets, instead of the caustic toast inspired by the desire to attack a dreaded adversary with ridicule, they only toasted the health of the Nation's Guest, around whom all the parties gathered and embraced. In a word, for nearly two months, all hostilities as well as all the emotions excited by this election which, they say, were to have

delivered the country to the most terrible convulsions, were forgotten, and one could only think any more of Lafayette and the heroes of the Revolution.<sup>75</sup>

Thomas Jefferson thought so as well. In an October letter to Richard Rush, despite the campaign season in full swing and the impending election, Jefferson expressed his surprise that the newspapers had all but stopped covering the election as Lafayette's tour rolled on.<sup>76</sup>

President Monroe invited Lafayette ostensibly to help "instill the spirit of '76 in a new generation and to help kick off a celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence."<sup>77</sup> As Lafayette was the last surviving major general of the American Revolution, Monroe knew that "Lafayette and all he personified permeated the American consciousness."<sup>78</sup> Monroe knew something else as well. He knew that Americans, by and large, had become apprehensive at the idea of a new generation of men coming to power who had not been present at the creation of the nation.<sup>79</sup> A nationwide belief had formed that "the world's only viable experiment in self-government" was in jeopardy.<sup>80</sup>

Five men held the office for thirty-five years, and all five had instrumentally engaged in the Founding of the nation. Due to the passage of time, no one with similar credentials survived as a viable candidate to become the sixth. Jackson "had the coveted distinction of [...] actually [having] seen service in the Revolution[.]" at age thirteen.<sup>81</sup> Despite amounting "to little more than [...] Revolutionary virtue by association[.]" supporters of Adams, born just four months after Jackson, argued that "the effect of the Revolution on all who lived through it must have been deep and indelible."<sup>82</sup> Crawford (born in 1772), Clay (1777), and Calhoun (1782), were children when the war ended, allowing them to at least argue they were "boys of the Revolutionary era."<sup>83</sup>

The ideals and principles of the Revolution were so important to voters in 1824 that one suggested that the "venerable veterans of '76" be allowed to select the president, by packing the electoral college with only "surviving statesmen, patriots, and soldiers of the Revolution[.]"<sup>84</sup> Monroe's invitation to Lafayette proved a better, and far easier, solution. "The visit of Lafayette actually led to an intensification of the retrospective, patriotic spirit which pervaded America and affected the entire tone of American life in 1824."<sup>85</sup> No one in 1824 personified the ideals and principles of the Revolution more than Lafayette. His mere presence and connection to the Revolution impacted the men casting their votes that autumn.

While in the United States, Lafayette feared for the outcome of the election – specifically, how the supporters of a losing candidate would react given the contentious nature of the election. Levasseur wrote that they were in York, Pennsylvania when news of the election's referral to the House of Representatives was announced. "[A]t once, all the passions from all parts of the Union were called to this assembly. Enticements and threats were not at all spared; and in the midst of the shouts of the parties, one heard sinister cries of election by armed force, civil war!"<sup>86</sup> "[T]hese threats were followed by unanimous applause. Then, I confess, my heart sank."<sup>87</sup>

The day after Adams' election, following the cordial handshake witnessed by Levasseur (Lafayette's secretary), he was reminded of the threats overheard in Pennsylvania. Levasseur encountered soldiers from that banquet and reminded them of their threats. He asked them if they intended to begin a siege on the Capital. The soldiers laughed and reminded Levasseur that "Four



years are passed very soon. And the consequences of a bad election are very easy to repair.”<sup>88</sup> Levasseur added that “on the following day, no one spoke of the election any more.”<sup>89</sup>

While not entirely true, the fervor eventually died down as inauguration day approached. In the *York Gazette*, printed on March 1, 1825, a “Mr. Baker” of the Pennsylvania Legislature offered a resolution for a Constitutional Amendment for the direct election of the president, and to make sure that a presidential election never falls into the hands of Congress.<sup>90</sup> The resolution passed the Pennsylvania state legislature and was sent to Washington for consideration,<sup>91</sup> though research does not indicate that any debate or vote was ever taken. A letter from Federal Representative George Kremer, that appeared in the *York Gazette* the next week, explained the presidential vote in the House of Representatives and alluded to the corrupt bargain.<sup>92</sup> Kremer laid the blame for Jackson’s loss entirely at Henry Clay’s feet.<sup>93</sup> Neither article mentioned Lafayette.

Did Lafayette’s mere presence impact the presidential election of 1824? Did Lafayette, and the “spirit of ’76” alter the course of American history? Without specific evidence of his direct engagement, there is no way to quantifiably ascertain the rationale behind the votes of enfranchised voters. No records exist indicating that a supporter of one candidate changed their mind and voted for another merely because of the Guest of the Nation or his tour. However, Lafayette’s popularity and engagement with the American people during 1824 and 1825 impacted nearly every facet of American life. Therefore, his mere influence on the American ideology and his interaction with the country during that time period must have infiltrated the thought process of those casting votes.

Despite the contentiousness of the election, the press seemed more interested in covering, and the populace more interested in reading about, Lafayette. What did he say? What did he do? Where is he headed to next? Apart from one rumored, vague threat to install Andrew Jackson by violence, no action resulted from the allegation of a corrupt bargain between John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay. Andrew Jackson received the plurality of votes and electoral votes but did not win the presidency, and Jackson, a well-known firebrand and military leader, could have attempted a coup. Yet the American experiment rolled on. Jackson and his supporters accepted the outcome and began planning for 1828. The outrage expressed in newspapers around the nation died down with the inauguration in March. Lafayette’s influence on the nation and its republican principles likely permeated the post-election air.

Meanwhile, the Lafayette tour continued around the nation. By the time he left for France on September 7, 1825, Lafayette had visited Mount Vernon twice, all twenty-four states, and hundreds of towns, cities, and settlements along the way. Within a decade of his tour of the United States, Lafayette, Jefferson, Adams, and Monroe – virtually the entire generation of revolutionary leaders – were dead,<sup>94</sup> the Era of Good Feelings had given way fully to the Jacksonian Era, and sectional factionalism permeated the politics of the nation. Lafayette’s tour as the Guest of the Nation and the Election of 1824 signaled the end of the Revolutionary Era. His presence likely impacted the thought process and considerations of both the voters and the members of the House of Representatives who elected the president in 1824. Lafayette’s interactions with the young country, along with the nation’s dedication to the “spirit of ’76,” the spirit of the Revolution, likely affected the outcome of the Election of 1824, the peaceful transition of power, and the progression of America’s history.

## About the Author

Joshua Neiderhiser, a lifetime member of the American Friends of Lafayette, is an criminal defense attorney for indigent defendants and PhD in history candidate living in York, Pennsylvania. While he has written extensively on the American Revolution, this is his first article appearing in print. When not reading or writing about history, Joshua enjoys his work as a baseball umpire and spending time relaxing with his three rescue dogs. Joshua is originally from Downingtown, Pennsylvania, and has attended Shippensburg University in Shippensburg, Pennsylvania; Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego, California; Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont, via their online program; and currently attends Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, via their online program.

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<sup>1</sup> Auguste Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, translated by Alan R. Hoffman (Manchester, New Hampshire: Lafayette Press, Inc., 2006): 287.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> For years, historians determined that the Election of 1824 provided no real, serious issue. See, Everett S. Brown, "The Presidential Election of 1824-1825," *Political Science Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (September 1925); Robert P. Hay, "The American Revolution Twice Recalled: Lafayette's Visit and the Election of 1824," *Indiana Magazine of History* 69, no. 1 (Mar 1973). More recently, historians have begun to review the Election of 1824 and view it in a light as the first "modern" presidential election. See, David P. Callahan, *The Politics of Corruption: The Election of 1824 and the Making of Presidents in Jacksonian America*, (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2022); Donald Ratcliffe, *The One-Party Presidential Contest: Adams, Jackson, and 1824's Five-Horse Race* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2015); Paul C. Nagel, "The Election of 1824: A Reconsideration Based on Newspaper Opinion," *The Journal of Southern History* 26, no. 3 (Aug 1960).

<sup>4</sup> John Quincy Adams, *Diaries II: 1821-1848*, David Waldstreicher, ed. (New York: The Library of America, 2017): 307.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> From Hero to Barbarian: The Adamses on Andrew Jackson," The Beevine: Massachusetts Historical Society, Founded 1791, accessed October 3, 2022, <https://www.masshist.org/beeveblog/2017/03/from-hero-to-barbarian-the-adamses-on-andrew-jackson/>.

<sup>7</sup> "Corrupt Bargain," UVA: Miller Center, accessed October 3, 2022, <https://millercenter.org/contested-presidential-elections/corrupt-bargain>.

<sup>8</sup> Everett S. Brown, "The Presidential Election of 1824-1825," *Political Science Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (September 1925): 384.

<sup>9</sup> Calhoun eventually withdrew and settled for being elected Vice-President in 1824.

<sup>10</sup> Donald Ratcliffe, *The One-Party Presidential Contest: Adams, Jackson, and 1824's Five-Horse Race* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2015): 12.

<sup>11</sup> "Voting Rights: A Short History," Carnegie Corporation of New York, accessed October 10, 2022, <https://www.carnegie.org/our-work/article/voting-rights-timeline/>.

<sup>12</sup> Paul C. Nagel, "The Election of 1824: A Reconsideration Based on Newspaper Opinion," *The Journal of Southern History* 26, no. 3 (Aug 1960): 316.

<sup>13</sup> Ratcliffe, *The One-Party Presidential Contest*: 13.

<sup>14</sup> Donald Ratcliffe, "Popular Preferences in the Presidential Election of 1824," *Journal of the Early Republic* 34, no 1 (Spr 2014): 46.

<sup>15</sup> Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005): 251-3; Nagel: 316.

<sup>16</sup> Ratcliffe, *The One-Party Presidential Contest*: 7.

<sup>17</sup> Sean Wilentz, *Andrew Jackson* (New York: Times Books, 2005): 41.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*: 43.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*: 43, 45.

<sup>22</sup> Robert V. Remini, *John Quincy Adams* (New York: Times Books, 2002), 63.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*: 64.

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- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*: 65.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*: 65-6.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*: 67.
- <sup>28</sup> John Niven, *Martin Van Buren: The Romantic Age of American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983): 126-7, 129-30.
- <sup>29</sup> Thomas Robson Hay, "John C. Calhoun and the Presidential Campaign of 1824 Some Unpublished Calhoun Letters," *The American Historical Review* 40, no. 1 (Oct 1934): 82-96.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*: 84.
- <sup>31</sup> Remini: 67.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*: 63.
- <sup>34</sup> Daniel Peart, *Era of Experimentation* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2014): 109.
- <sup>35</sup> Wilentz, *Andrew Jackson*: 45.
- <sup>36</sup> Chase C. Mooney, *William H. Crawford 1772-1834* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1974): 276.
- <sup>37</sup> Wilentz, *Andrew Jackson*: 45; Niven: 143-4.
- <sup>38</sup> Mooney: 280-2.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup> "Henry Clay family papers, 1732-1927," Library of Congress, accessed August 30, 2022.
- <sup>41</sup> H.W. Brands, *Heirs of the Founders: The Epic Rivalry of Henry Clay, John Calhoun and Daniel Webster, and the Second Generation of American Giants* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2018).
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>45</sup> Wilentz, *Andrew Jackson*: 47.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>47</sup> "1824 Presidential Election," 270toWin, accessed October 4, 2022, [https://www.270towin.com/1824\\_Election/](https://www.270towin.com/1824_Election/).
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>51</sup> David P. Callahan, *The Politics of Corruption: The Election of 1824 and the Making of Presidents in Jacksonian America* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2022).
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>53</sup> Remini: 71.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*: 71-2.
- <sup>55</sup> "1824 Presidential Election," *supra*.
- <sup>56</sup> Brown: 403.
- <sup>57</sup> Donald Ratcliffe, "Popular Preferences in the Presidential Election of 1824": 76.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*: 76-7.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*: 77.
- <sup>60</sup> Robert P. Hay, "The American Revolution Twice Revealed: Lafayette's Visit and the Election of 1824," *Indiana Magazine of History* 69, no. 1 (Mar 1973): 56.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*: 55.
- <sup>62</sup> Historians use the phrases "the Nation's Guest" and "Guest of the Nation" interchangeably to describe Lafayette's tour. The same will be done throughout this paper.
- <sup>63</sup> Levasseur: 1-2.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*: 2.
- <sup>65</sup> Very little has been written about the impact Lafayette himself had on the Election of 1824. Thomas Jefferson noted that the local papers hardly carried a word about the election as it was all about Lafayette. However, opposing views of Lafayette, as well as his 1824-25 tour of the United States, do dot the historiographic record. Following his service in the American Revolution, through his tour of the United States, and until his death, Lafayette was esteemed to a level typically reserved only for Washington. See, Louis Gottschalk, *Lafayette Between the American and the French Revolution (1783-1789)* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1950); *Pennsylvania Packet* (Philadelphia, December 14, 1789); Gottschalk, *Lafayette in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1975);

Lafayette, *Memoirs, Correspondence and Manuscripts of General Lafayette Published by his Family* (New York: Craighead and Alles, Printers, 1837). Historians in the 1820s judged Lafayette by his intentions and continued to hold him in high regard. See, Robert Waln, *Life of the Marquis de Lafayette, Major General in the Service of the United States of America, in the War of the Revolution* (War College Series, 2015); Samuel Lorenzo Knapp, *Memoirs of General Lafayette* (Boston: E.G. House, 1824). Starting as early as 1834, after Lafayette's death, and continuing through the first half of the twentieth century, historians took a more reserved and conservative, and less worshipful, view of Lafayette. See, Anne C. Loveland, *Emblem of Liberty* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971); Henry Dwight Sedgwick, *La Fayette* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1928); Bayard Tuckerman, *Life of General Lafayette, with a Critical Estimate of His Character and Public Acts* (London: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1889); Walter Phelps Hall, "Hero of Two Worlds," *New Republic*, LX (1929); Russell M. Jones, "The Flowering of a Legend: Lafayette and the Americans, 1825-1834," *French Historical Studies*, 4 (1966). Modern historians have restored the "luster" to Lafayette and continue to hold him in high esteem. See Laura Auricchio, *The Marquis: Lafayette Reconsidered* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014); Mike Duncan, *Hero of Two Worlds: The Marquis de Lafayette in the Age of Revolution* (New York: Public Affairs, 2021); Harlow Giles Unger, *Lafayette* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002).

<sup>66</sup> William Jones, "Image of the American Patriot: Part V: Rekindling the Spark of Liberty: Lafayette's Visit to the United States, 1824-1825," The Schiller Institute. accessed August 20, 2022, <https://archive.schillerinstitute.com/educ/hist/lafayette.html>.

<sup>67</sup> Sylvia Neely, "The Politics of Liberty in the Old World and the New: Lafayette's Return to America in 1824," *Journal of the Early Republic* 6, no. 2 (Sum 1986): 151.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Marc H. Miller, *Lafayette's Farewell Tour of America, 1824-25; A Study of the Pageantry and Public Portraiture*, PhD diss., New York University, 1979, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

<sup>71</sup> Levasseur: 561.

<sup>72</sup> Hay: 44.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*: 46.

<sup>75</sup> Levasseur: 282.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Richard Rush, October 13, 1824, in *Thomas Jefferson Papers, 1606 to 1827*, Library of Congress.

<sup>77</sup> Jones, *supra*.

<sup>78</sup> Hay: 47.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*: 48.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*: 56.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*: 55.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*: 54.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*: 53.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*: 61.

<sup>86</sup> Levasseur: 282-3.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*: 283.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*: 288.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *York Gazette*, March 1, 1825: 2.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *York Gazette*, March 8, 1825: 1-2.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Madison, the last Founding Father, died in June 1836.



# Was Lafayette's Sale of his Cayenne Plantation in 1802 a Moral Lapse?

by Alan R. Hoffman

## Prologue

Dr. Richard Ingram, Chair and Founder of the Lafayette Alliance of LaGrange, Georgia, and a dear friend, invited me to discuss Lafayette as part of the Alliance's 2022 Speaker Series. Thus, Richard and I had a virtual discussion seen by the Lafayette Alliance and AFL memberships on September 9, 2022. When I say a discussion – “join us as Alan Hoffman and Richard Ingram discuss . . .” – what I really mean to say is that it was an interrogation. Richard is extremely knowledgeable about Lafayette as well as other subjects such as philosophy and literature, not to mention science and medicine, and during our session he peppered me with questions like the litigator that I thought I was. I recall thinking that I was handling myself reasonably well notwithstanding Richard's aggressive and probing style until he asked me how I would respond to the statement author Mike Duncan made on page 331 of his book, *Hero of Two Worlds: The Marquis de Lafayette in the Age of Revolution* – “The slaves Lafayette purchased to set free were only emancipated after Lafayette no longer owned them; then, once he regained his claim, he sold them all back into slavery. It is an ignoble end to a once noble experiment.”

Ouch! The question caught me off guard. I remember wincing when I read Duncan's passage in 2021 because the statement seemed to be completely off base or at best exaggerated for effect.

My review of *The Hero of Two Worlds*, which appeared in the *Gazette* (Number 95, *The Gazette of the American Friends of Lafayette*, Part II, pp. 106-110, November 2021) was quite positive, as was almost every other review of the book. I called Duncan “a great storyteller who has a flair for words and writes in an accessible conversational style suited to attracting a wide audience and introducing them to Lafayette.” (*Ibid.*, p. 106) I also praised his overall treatment of Lafayette. “As to substance,” I wrote, “Duncan provides a fast-paced and generally convincing portrait of his subject.” (*Ibid.*) While I noted Duncan's tendency to use exaggeration for effect, I gave a different example from the statement which is the subject of this article: “Surely, his statement that ‘Marie Antoinette hated Lafayette's guts more than every radical in Paris put together’ is overblown.” (*Ibid.*)

Getting back to Dr. Ingram and his penetrating stare that accompanied the question about slavery, after freezing for a second or two, I said something like, “It's unproven.” Richard kindly moved on to the next question, a softball thankfully, and the interview continued.

Later that fall, Chuck Schwam, our COO, Treasurer, and Chair of the Farewell Tour Bicentennial Committee, decided to appoint a committee to investigate the slavery question so as to be prepared to give a cogent, factual response to any allegation against Lafayette that might surface during our Farewell Tour commemorations. Duncan's allegation as quoted above was probably the most serious one that had been encountered recently by members of what I

sometimes call the “Lafayette Anti-Defamation Committee.” I agreed to investigate this question and report back. This article is my report.

### The Context of Duncan’s Statement

In order to understand and address Duncan’s charge, one should examine his entire argument, which is contained on pp. 330-331 of his book, as well as the references in his two endnotes. Here is the single paragraph in which he makes the allegation of Lafayette’s moral failure:

To win over Lafayette, the First Consul was not above tacit bribery. Knowing the Lafayettes were deeply in debt, Bonaparte directed his government to recognize Lafayette’s title to La Belle Gabrielle, the largest of his plantations in Cayenne. The state never sold the property after it was confiscated in 1792, and returning it to Lafayette was a simple matter of filling out a few forms. Bonaparte told Lafayette as soon as the title was transferred, the state would immediately buy it back for 140,000 *livres*. All of this paperwork could be done in an afternoon and Lafayette would walk away with a badly needed cash windfall. This purchase agreement was part of the dark conclusion to Lafayette’s noble experiment in emancipation. The slaves he owned were all freed by the emancipation decree of 1794, but when Lafayette read the contract, he discovered he was “made to cede ‘the blacks’ and consequently recognize a right of property ‘over those found’ on the plantation.”<sup>15</sup> Lafayette said, “This is the first notion that I had [of] plans to reestablish slavery.” He tried to get this clause removed and wrote Adrienne, “I declared I would not cooperate in any kind of slave system.” But lawyers told him the sale was contingent on renouncing any and all claims to the property. “In the long run,” Lafayette told Adrienne, “it was agreed that I should renounce my rights and all property of whatever kind that belonged to me in Cayenne.”<sup>16</sup> Lafayette needed the money so he took it. Within a matter of weeks, Bonaparte published an act reestablishing slavery in the French colonies. *The slaves Lafayette purchased to set free were only emancipated after Lafayette no longer owned them; then, once he regained his claim, he sold them all back into slavery. It is an ignoble end to a once noble experiment* (emphasis added).

The endnotes, notes 15 and 16, are found on page 457. Note 15 cites “My Relationship with the First Consul,” *MCM* 5:180. (*MCM* signifies *Mémoires, correspondance et manuscrits du general Lafayette*.) Note 16 is “Lafayette to Adrienne, April 3, 1802, quoted in Maurois, *Adrienne*, 416.” This is a reference to André Maurois’ *Adrienne: The Life of the Marquise de La Fayette*, a translation of which was published by McGraw Hill in 1961.

The excerpt from Volume 5 of Lafayette’s *Mémoires* was readily available with the assistance of Pam Murray of the Skillman Library at Lafayette College. As to the April 1802 letter from Lafayette to Adrienne, I did not want to rely solely on the excerpt that appeared in Maurois’ biography, as Duncan did. This letter is included in the La Grange archive which can be

found on microfilm in the Library of Congress and at Cleveland State University. Although the published “finding aid” was extremely difficult to navigate, with assistance from AFL President Emeritus and Lafayette scholar extraordinaire, Robert Crout and from the Cleveland State library staff, I was able to obtain a copy of the important April 1802 letter.

Volume 5 of the *Mémoires* had never been translated, and the La Grange letter was also in French. Therefore, I went to work on English translations. I found that the *Mémoires* excerpt was very translator-friendly, but struggled with parts of the letter. Therefore, I sought and received the assistance of Biruta and Jean-Pierre Cap, who generously reviewed my translations and suggested excellent and, I am embarrassed to say, numerous edits, virtually all of which I accepted. Any errors that remain are my fault alone. Appendix A is the excerpt from the *Mémoires* and Appendix B is the entire letter, only a portion of which appears in the English translation of Maurois’ *Adrienne*.

### Background Facts

In order to evaluate Duncan’s allegation, it is necessary to have a general understanding of (1) events in French Guiana and France from 1792 to 1794 relating to La Gabrielle, Lafayette’s clove-producing estate in Cayenne, and to the abolition of slavery in the colony, and (2) events in France from 1800 to 1802 relating to the removal of Lafayette’s *émigré* status and the negotiations for the sale of La Gabrielle.

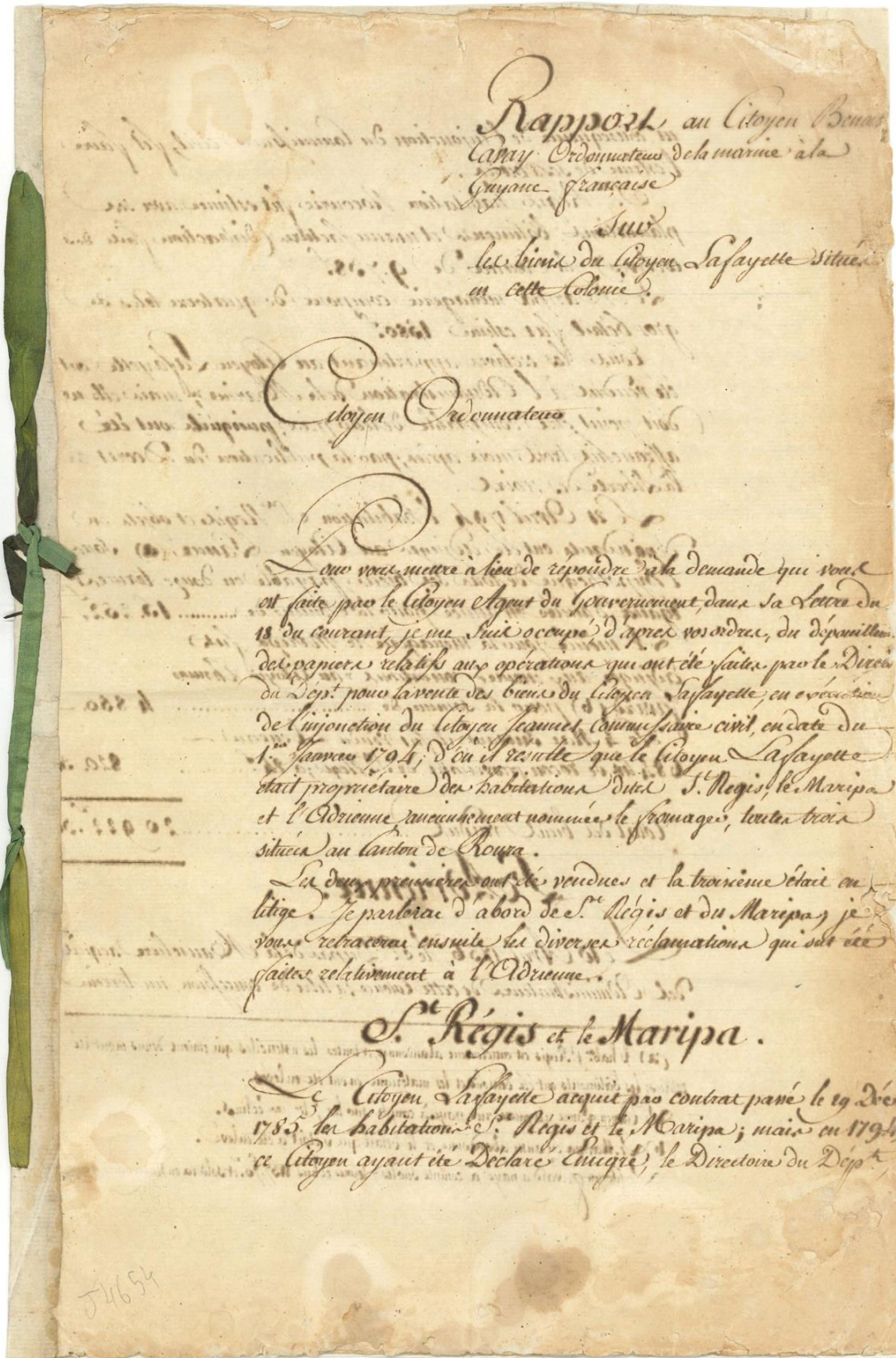
#### 1. France and French Guiana, 1792 – 1794

Lafayette’s flight from France in August 1792 had devastating consequences for him and his family. It led ineluctably to a five-year term of imprisonment in Prussia and in Olmütz, Austria. It also led to the loss of his property. As of March 1, 1794, properties belonging to Lafayette appeared on a list of *émigré* properties to be confiscated.<sup>1</sup> This included his three farms in French Guiana – Maripa, St. Régis, and La Gabrielle – that he had purchased to conduct his experiment in gradual emancipation of enslaved Africans. The experiment – to educate the enslaved workers and pay them for their labor so they could buy their freedom – was now doomed to failure.

As evidenced by a report contained in the French Archives, the sale of the confiscated properties Maripa and St. Régis to private buyers proceeded on April 21, 1794.<sup>2</sup> According to the report, Maripa was sold for 4,850 francs and St. Régis for 15,252 francs. The same report indicates that Lafayette’s third property, La Gabrielle, was not sold at this time but retained by the government. The report also indicates that the Black farmworkers residing at La Gabrielle were transferred to or sold to the office of the French Navy for 100,400 francs. This transfer took place on May 4, 1794.<sup>3</sup> At this time, Lafayette was imprisoned in the Prussian city of Neisse, and Adrienne was jailed in Brioude, France.

As to French Guiana, the French Assembly had abolished slavery in the Colonies on February 4, 1794 *before* the May 1794 sale of La Gabrielle’s enslaved workers.<sup>4</sup> The French Guiana enactment of the government’s decree, however, is dated June 14, 1794.<sup>5</sup> Thus, according to law, the La Gabrielle *cultivateurs*, as the Blacks came to be called after their liberation, were

free and entitled to the rights of citizens of France on or before June 14, 1794, regardless of who owned them and who paid to whom 100,400 francs.



Sale of St. Régis and Maripa, 1794  
 Special Collections and College Archives, Skillman Library, Lafayette College



## 2. France, 1800 – 1802

When Lafayette returned to France after five years of imprisonment and two years of exile in late 1799, he sought either the return of his property or compensation. The general rule for persons removed from the list of *émigrés* by the government was this: if a property seized by the government had been sold to private parties, a former *émigré* could not make a claim for it. However, if the property that had been seized was still owned by the government, the former *émigré* could make a claim for its restoration to him or for compensation for its loss.<sup>6</sup> Thus, Lafayette was potentially eligible to make a claim for La Gabrielle. According to a letter from Lafayette to the Navy Minister (written in 1799-1800), 48 Blacks who had belonged to him at St. Régis and Maripa were then employed at La Gabrielle.<sup>7</sup>

On April 21, 1800, a decree was issued expunging Lafayette from the list of *émigrés* and determining that he would have possession of property that had not been sold, without any right to any indemnity for those properties that had been sold.<sup>8</sup> The expungement was not limited to Lafayette; it included a number of his close associates like La Tour-Maubourg and Bureau de Pusy.<sup>9</sup>

On November 30, 1801, an opinion of the Council of State reflected that, since the property right of Lafayette to the plantation called La Gabrielle in French Guiana was acknowledged, the better solution for the plantation was to send Lafayette back to the Minister of the Navy and of the Colonies.<sup>10</sup> In a December 23, 1801 report from the Navy Minister to the Consuls, the Minister recommended that he be authorized to return the land improved by the clove trees to Lafayette or to buy it from him. The Minister deemed the return of the property to be detrimental, particularly because of the prosperity of the plantation and because of the imminent opening of a canal which would connect the Mahury River to the foot of the mountains. Therefore, the Minister proposed to convey to Lafayette an estate valued at 140,000 francs in exchange for his ownership rights over La Gabrielle, St. Régis, and Maripa. This report was approved by the Consuls.<sup>11</sup> (The First Consul was Napoleon Bonaparte, and there were two other Consuls.)

On December 23, 1801, the Minister was authorized to negotiate whether to restore Lafayette's possession of the land that he claimed or, if the Minister preferred, to acquire the property rights. In both cases, his decision would be subject to the approval of the Consuls.<sup>12</sup> In January-February 1802, the Minister reported that Lafayette preferred to receive funds instead of an estate.<sup>13</sup> On March 28, 1802, a decree authorized the Minister of the Navy and the Colonies to acquire from Lafayette, for the account of and for the benefit of the Republic, the residence La Gabrielle and its outbuildings located in French Guiana for the sum of 140,000 francs.<sup>14</sup> All the papers relating to this plantation would be delivered by the seller to the office of the Minister.<sup>15</sup> The final negotiations for the sale, which Duncan writes about, took place in Paris within days after this decree. The sale took place on April 3, 1802.<sup>16</sup>

### Analysis

In order to support his conclusory statements about Lafayette's purported betrayal of the La Gabrielle *cultivateurs*, Duncan puts Napoleon Bonaparte's fingerprints on every aspect of the sale. First, he characterizes the transaction as "tacit bribery" by the First Consul "to win over Lafayette." While Napoleon did try to co-opt Lafayette, the evidence is slim that the sale of the plantation was part of this campaign. In this regard, it is clear that the government's acknowledgment of Lafayette's ownership of La Gabrielle, which France had not sold to a private buyer, was consistent with how other returned *émigrés* were treated. There is simply no evidence in the two sources that Duncan cites that "Bonaparte directed his government to recognize Lafayette's title to La Belle Gabrielle."

Indeed, in the *Mémoires* excerpt that Duncan relies on, Lafayette wrote that "my title to the clove trees [i.e., the plantation] was not contested, nor was it contestable." (Appendix A) The only intervention by the First Consul that Lafayette refers to in the *Mémoires* was to expedite the sale. In this regard, Lafayette writes that it was at a meeting with the First Consul *after* Lafayette's rights and the sale price had been discussed with M. Decrès, the Minister of the Navy, that "I entreated [the First Consul] to get the transaction completed; he gave the order on the spot." (Appendix A)

Duncan also writes, without any support in his references, that "Bonaparte told Lafayette as soon as the title was transferred, the state would immediately buy it back for 140,000 *livres*." Yet, it is clear from the French archival records, particularly the opinion of the Council of State dated November 30, 1801, that the Minister of the Navy was authorized to determine in negotiations the manner in which the transaction would be structured subject to the approval of the Consuls. Moreover, it was Navy Minister Decrès who proposed, in his December 23, 1801 report, to pay Lafayette 140,000 francs in exchange for his ownership rights in the Cayenne plantations. If anyone had his fingerprints all over the sale of La Gabrielle, it was M. Decrès, not First Consul Bonaparte.

Duncan characterizes the purchase agreement for La Gabrielle "as part of a dark conclusion to Lafayette's noble experiment in emancipation." He supports his assertion with a summary of the negotiations as evidenced in his two sources. The lawyers for the government had included a clause in the sale documents in which Lafayette was asked to "cede 'the blacks' and consequently recognize a right of property 'over those found' on the plantation." After acknowledging that Lafayette "tried to get this clause removed," Duncan continues, "But lawyers told him the sale was contingent on renouncing any and all claims to the property," and he renounced his rights. Duncan quotes Lafayette's letter to his wife, "it was agreed that I should renounce my rights and all property of whatever kind that belonged to me in Cayenne." Implicit in Duncan's account of the negotiations is that Lafayette did *not* succeed in eliminating the clause that acknowledged a right of property in the *cultivateurs* of La Belle Gabrielle.

To the contrary, a fair reading of the sources on which Duncan relies, in light of the then-current legal status of the Cayenne *cultivateurs*, belies this implication as well as his ultimate conclusion. In the *Mémoires*, Lafayette writes that at the reading of the contract, he learned that,

they had arranged for me to transfer *the Blacks* and consequently to acknowledge a right of property *over those who were found there* . . . . I left the table saying there was no deal. Our two attorneys, the clerk and the witness interceded between us; the language was changed and we signed. (Appendix A)

It is apparent that Lafayette risked the entire transaction on which his solvency depended by insisting that an acknowledgment of a right of property in human beings be removed from the documentation of the sale and that he *succeeded* in having it removed.

Indeed, at the time of the 1802 sale, *no one* had a property right in the *cultivateurs* of La Gabrielle. It is not clear what had become of these farm workers in the eight years since their sale to the French government in 1794. One scholar has written that “nearly all the emancipated people [in French Guiana] abandoned the property of their former owners and moved elsewhere.”<sup>17</sup> Yet, it appears that in 1802 workers dating back to Lafayette’s period of ownership were harvesting the cloves at La Gabrielle.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, in 1798, portions of the Black Code (*le Code Noir*) were reinstated in French Guiana, and these provisions restricted the ability of workers to change employers, to buy and sell property, and to marry.<sup>19</sup> Be that as it may, at the time of the final negotiations and sale of La Gabrielle, those working the plantation were still entitled to be free persons and were not chattels that could be bartered away.

### Conclusion

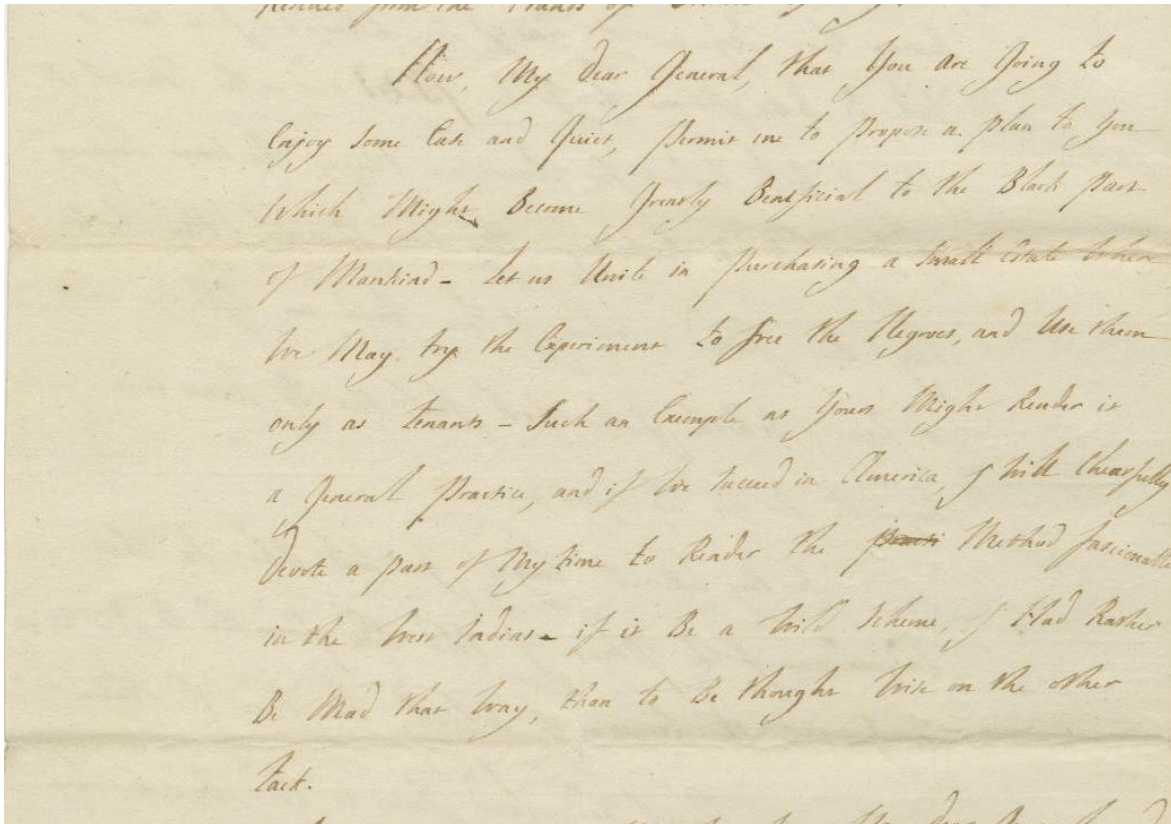
One of the most admirable traits that Lafayette possessed was consistency or constancy, particularly in his support of human rights for the oppressed.

Charles X, the reactionary Bourbon monarch who succeeded to the French throne in 1824 and proceeded to lose it in 1830, said of his inveterate adversary, Lafayette: “I only know of two men who have always possessed the same principles, myself and M. de Lafayette; he as a defender of liberty, and I, as the King of the aristocracy.”

As I pointed out in my review of *Hero of Two Worlds* (Number 95, *The Gazette of the American Friends of Lafayette*, Part II, p. 110), Duncan clearly admires Lafayette for this aspect of his character throughout his long and fruitful life. He titles his final chapter “A Tower Amid the Waters,” a quotation from Samuel Morse’s July 4, 1832 toast to Lafayette in Paris, which focused on Lafayette’s constancy. Duncan ends his book with an excerpt from the toast, a part of which reads, “The winds have swept by him, the waves have dashed around him, the snows of winter have light upon him, but still he is there.”

In my review, I wrote, “[n]obody is perfect, not even the great Lafayette, . . . But throughout his long and eventful life, Lafayette mostly got things right and earned the descriptors of an Enlightenment hero, a promoter of national revolutions to bring people power to bear on communal life, and a human rights advocate and crusader.”

Even such a man as Lafayette can have and probably did have moral lapses. But, clearly, the sale of La Gabrielle in 1802 was not one of them.



Detail of Lafayette's letter to George Washington proposing a shared experiment in the gradual emancipation of slaves, 5 February 1783  
Hubbard Collection, Skillman Library, Lafayette College

<sup>1</sup> Liliane Willens, "Lafayette's Emancipation Experiment in French Guiana – 1786-1792," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* (1986), p. 359

<sup>2</sup> Chantal de Tourtier-Bonazzi, editor, *Lafayette Documents Conservés en France*, Tome I (Paris: Archives Nationales, 1976) C<sup>14</sup> 81, fol. 62-66, pp. 231-232. Lafayette College has recently acquired a copy of this report; see Number 96, *The Gazette of the American Friends of Lafayette*, Part II, May 2022, pp. 132-133.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Willens, p. 360

<sup>5</sup> Miranda Spieler, "Abolition and Reenstatement in the Caribbean," in *The French Revolution in Global Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), p. 136

<sup>6</sup> Friedemann Pestel, "French Revolution and Migration after 1789," *European History Online* (2017), p. 33 (<http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/europe-on-the-road/political-migration-exile/friedemann-pestel-french-revolution-and-migration-after-1789>)

<sup>7</sup> Tourtier-Bonazzi, C<sup>14</sup> 81, fol. 69-70, p. 232

<sup>8</sup> Tourtier-Bonazzi, AF IV 11, dossier 52, n° 10, pp. 130-131

<sup>9</sup> Tourtier-Bonazzi, note 1, p. 131

<sup>10</sup> Tourtier-Bonazzi, AF IV 48, dossier 276, n° 20, p. 131

<sup>11</sup> Tourtier-Bonazzi, C<sup>14</sup> 81, fol. 97-100, pp. 233-234

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Tourtier-Bonazzi, C<sup>14</sup> 81, fol. 101-102, p. 234

<sup>14</sup> Tourtier-Bonazzi, AF IV 58, dossier 332, n° 14, p. 131

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Tourtier-Bonazzi, C<sup>14</sup> 81, fol. 104-109, p. 234

<sup>17</sup> Spieler, p. 146

<sup>18</sup> Willens, p. 360. See also endnote 6.

<sup>19</sup> Spieler, p. 145



## Appendix A

### Lafayette's *Mémoires*, PARIS edition, Vol. V, pp 180-181

Meanwhile, the rescinding act which returned to proscribed persons the part of their property that had not been sold by the State was applied to my plantation *la Gabrielle*, since it had been joined to those of the Government since 1792; my title to the clove trees was not contested, nor was it contestable. General Decrès had become minister of the Navy; they discussed the matter in the council where my rights were acknowledged, but they resolved to keep my property and to give me an indemnity which was reduced by the ministers to 140,000 francs. This was not a half of its value; they wanted to pay me in national property or in paper money; I addressed my objections to M. Decrès.<sup>1</sup>

It was then in a meeting with the First Consul on another subject that I said that, since they had debated my rights and the rate of compensation, I did not want to speak to him about them, but now that the decided upon price was not at issue, I entreated him to get the transaction completed; he gave the orders on the spot. I had, however, still one dispute with the minister at the reading of the contract in which they had arranged for me to transfer *the Blacks* and consequently to acknowledge a right of property *over those who were found there*. This was the first that I had heard of the plan to reestablish slavery<sup>2</sup>; I left the table saying that there was no deal. Our two attorneys, the clerk and the witness interceded between us; the language was changed and we signed.

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<sup>1</sup> General Lafayette pointed out in his letter to M. Decrès “that he did not want estates confiscated from his friends or his adversaries.”

<sup>2</sup> The fleet commanded by the brother-in-law of the First Consul against Saint-Domingue, left in December, 1801. In May 1802, General Richepanse commanded an expedition to Guadeloupe that resulted in the reestablishment of slavery that was abolished by the Convention in February 1794. Here is the legislative scheme that was adopted by the legislature on May 19, 1802 with a majority of 211 against 63:

Article 1. In the colonies returned to France by the Treaty of Amiens, slavery will be maintained in conformity with the laws and regulations prior to 1789.

Article 2. It will be the same in the French colonies beyond the Cape of Good Hope.

Article 8. The slave trade and the importation of blacks into the said colonies, will take place in conformity to the laws and regulations in effect prior to the said time of 1789.

## Appendix B - Lafayette's April 1802 letter to Adrienne

Paris 14 Germinal

I returned here [to Paris] the day before yesterday, my dear Adrienne; there was a meeting yesterday at the office of the Minister of the Navy to sign the contract: his counsel and Mr. Trutat, Mr. Beauchet and Mr. Granet, General Decrès and I: there were three problems: 1<sup>st</sup> to know who was to pay the costs of the documentation totaling two thousand francs; it was decided that it would be the Government in its capacity of buyer; 2<sup>nd</sup> to take out a mortgage while waiting for delivery of the property being sold: my counsels said that it should be as I wanted – that they choose the Hôtel de Noailles, but as neither you nor I own the property, it would have been impossible to make them accept this idea. Therefore, la Grange was chosen. Mr. Trutat and Mr. Beauchet saw to it that this did not at all prejudice our other arrangements.

The third point that caused a dispute pertained to the request for an explicitly stated relinquishment of my rights over the farmworkers; I declared that I did not want to cooperate in a plan that would make enslavement possible. They ended by being satisfied with a declaration that I renounce all my rights over any property whatsoever which belonged or had belonged to me at Cayenne.

But I saw the moment where I almost lost the transaction: it had been agreed at 140 thousand francs in hard currency. I saw Marbois who indicated to me the course that I had to follow in order to effectuate prompt payment. It is this that I am going to take care of this morning; I presented my requests to abate the taxes; but I believe that you have taken the documents. Your arrangements for money had not been made by Mr. Beauchet; he had dismissed Travers and the door-keeper. We do not agree about the money going to la Grange.

All that was explained when, on arriving here, I found at the door-keeper's place a roll of paper that he said had been forgotten, it was our inventory for Mr. Beauchet, the accounting of the Department of state, etc. I am giving you this little detail so that you are not troubled if it appeared to you by letters from Paris that our interests have not been included. The door-keeper had not known that it was necessary to furnish the papers.

You will have the agreement. It will be brought in eight or ten days to the legislature: the maximum for the archbishops will be 20,000 francs. There will be bishops: Abbé Cambacérès will be the one for Paris: the bad rumors about him spread over Guadeloupe are not at all true. I am going today to the office of the minister of police and to that of Villiers du Terrage to prevent our interests from erasure.

There it is, my dear Adrienne, the official report of my stay in Paris; I am waiting impatiently for yours: you will have surely written while stopping at Moulins; you will give me very detailed news of my aunt: my prayers hasten the moment when George will be reunited with you; I still count on your return to la Grange for the 6<sup>th</sup> of Floréal, I embrace my aunt, Virginie, George and you my beloved Adrienne.

## Response from Mike Duncan

May 26, 2023

I would like to thank Alan Hoffman for writing this thoughtful and well-supported critique of a passage I wrote in *Hero of Two Worlds*. It is never pleasant to be confronted with possible errors of either fact or judgment in one's work, but I'm grateful for the opportunity this article presents to reflect and respond.

I see two main points of dispute. The first is my characterization of Bonaparte's role in the La Gabrielle transaction. As Alan ably documents, the transaction was primarily handled by the Naval Ministry in keeping with established practice toward former *émigrés*. Bonaparte himself only appears near the end of the story. In a meeting with the First Consul, Lafayette asked Bonaparte to expedite the final paperwork now that the terms had been settled. Lafayette writes: "I entreated him to get the transaction completed; he gave the orders on the spot." In attempting to summarize a complicated real estate transaction, including the First Consul's order to complete the deal post haste, I wrote (pg. 330), "Bonaparte directed his government to recognize Lafayette's title to La Belle Gabrielle," and "Bonaparte told Lafayette as soon as the title was transferred, the state would immediately buy it back for 140,000 *livres*." This is an inaccurate characterization I wish I could re-write, as Bonaparte's role in the story was to merely cut through any final delays in getting Lafayette his money.

That said, it is well established the First Consul was particularly interested in co-opting Lafayette and the Marquis's unimpeachable liberal credentials. Though my characterization of the incident as tacit bribery is conjecture, I still find it impossible to believe Bonaparte's "order on the spot" was not motivated by his well-known desire to cultivate Lafayette's support. The mechanism for awarding Lafayette the money may have been standard Consulate policy, but Bonaparte personally ensuring the mechanism was well-greased in Lafayette's favor indicates a further interest beyond simply paying off a former *émigré*. I take that further interest to be Bonaparte's desire to keep Lafayette happy and content so that he would be a friend of the regime.

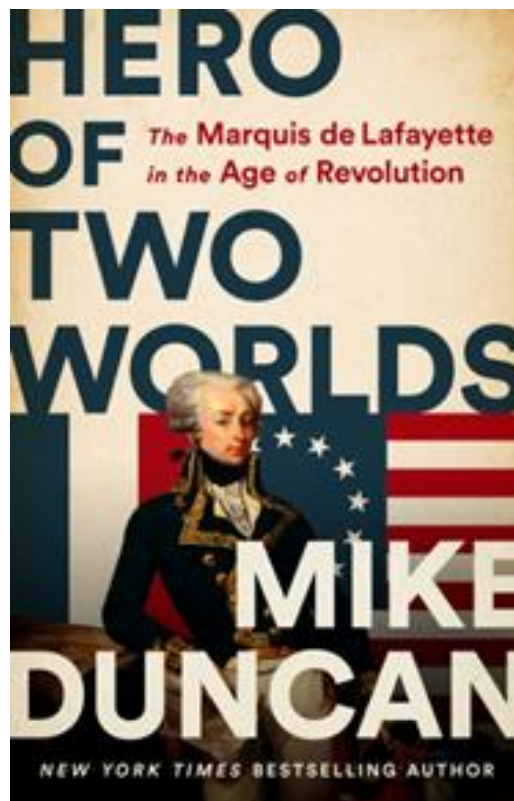
The second dispute is more troubling. I wrote that Lafayette took the money for La Gabrielle despite a dawning awareness that the *cultivateurs* working the plantation would be re-enslaved. In writing this, I made no mention of the fact that Lafayette refused to sign the contract until the clause about acknowledging a right of property over those who were found on the plantation was removed. Lafayette writes, "I left the table saying that there was no deal. Our two attorneys, the clerk and the witness interceded between us; the language was changed, and we signed." I have reviewed my notes and believe I interpreted his subsequent statement, "They ended by being satisfied with a declaration that I renounce all my rights over any property whatsoever which belonged or had belonged to me at Cayenne," as indicating the removal of the written clause from the contract was merely a pedantic salve for Lafayette's conscience, as his renunciation of any property that "*had belonged to me*" could be interpreted to include his

former slaves. This interpretation led to my rather cynical and exaggerated conclusion that “once [Lafayette] regained his claim, he sold them all back into slavery.”

Reflecting on Alan’s critique, I agree my conclusion is too harsh. Lafayette *did* risk losing badly needed money unless the language of the contract was changed, and I agree this is proof of his ongoing anti-slavery commitments. In summarizing the incident, I left out that part of the story and painted Lafayette as simply choosing money over principle. I would further volunteer that there was little Lafayette could have done anyway. Had he refused to sign the contract, the Naval Ministry would have simply retained possession of the planation and slavery would have returned to La Gabrielle regardless of Lafayette’s moral objections.

I believe that taken in full, no reader walks away from *Hero of Two World* with the impression Lafayette was anything but a committed abolitionist. From his first letter to Washington in 1783 (pg. 150) to his final letter to the president of the Glasgow Emancipation Society during his literal dying days in 1834 (pg. 432), I attempted to document the long arc of Lafayette’s abolitionism as one of his defining traits. But I also wanted to acknowledge that Lafayette was not always perfect, and the experiment in Cayenne did indeed turn out to be a *failed* experiment. But despite this, I must admit that the carefully documented details Alan presents show that my depiction of this incident was inexact and unfair. I never found Lafayette to be so stubborn or arrogant that he refused to acknowledge his mistakes and misjudgments. In keeping with that spirit, I will not fail to acknowledge my own.

*Vive Lafayette,*  
Mike Duncan





# **Lafayette's June 1, 1830 Cautionary Letter to Bolívar Sets the Stage for Inquiry into the Contrasting Historical Legacies of These Two Revolutionary Titans, Theories of Governance and the End of Slavery in the Americas.**

by Rex Cowan



*Rembrandt Peale, Marquis de Lafayette, 1824-25, Oil on Canvas  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund 1921*

## **Why This Article?**

For some reason, it never occurred to me that the paths of two of the most famous liberators of the new world in both the northern and southern hemispheres knew one another and were in correspondence with each other for a time. I have never seen this fact referred to in any of the standard history books used in our schools.

In fact, the first I became aware of any personal relationship between the Marquis de Lafayette and Simón Bolívar was while reading AFL President Alan Hoffman's remarkable translation of Auguste Levasseur's 1829 book *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, which recounted his travels as Lafayette's private secretary during Lafayette's Farewell Tour through all twenty-four of the then United States as Our Nation's Guest. Reproduced in this book would appear to be the first written contacts between Lafayette and Bolívar, in the form of a letter by Lafayette dated September 1, 1825, to Bolívar and Bolívar's response thereto dated March 16, 1826.<sup>1</sup>

The context of Lafayette's September 1 letter is that of his serving as a conduit for the presentation of certain gifts by the Custis family to Bolívar as a way of evidencing the esteem in which the *Libertador* ("Liberator" in English) was held by the family of the then deceased George Washington, as well as many citizens of the United States.

To assist in understanding the comparative lives of General Lafayette and the great liberator Bolívar, a brief summary of certain salient facts is in order. These are as follows:

**Lafayette** was born on September 6, 1757, at Château Chavaniac in the south of France. On June 13, 1777, he arrived in South Carolina intending to fight in the American Revolution. He took part in the defeat of Cornwallis at Yorktown on October 19, 1781. Lafayette died in Paris on May 20, 1834, at the age of 76.<sup>2</sup>

**Bolívar** was born in Caracas, Venezuela on July 24, 1783. His revolutionary activities started in earnest on July 5, 1811. Bolívar died on December 17, 1830, at age 47 in Santa Maria, a small town located on the coast of Colombia.<sup>3</sup>

The brief "window" in which the personal lives of Lafayette and Bolívar intersected through their correspondence would appear to have commenced on September 1, 1825, and lasted until Lafayette's final letter to Bolívar on June 1, 1830. A total of less than five years. A small window, but an important and revealing window, into the lives and views of both men: which provides an interesting opportunity to contrast their respective views and legacies.

Now, about that final letter from Lafayette to Bolívar. Several years after having learned of the initial exchange of letters between Lafayette and Bolívar in 1825, I was stunned while reading author Marie Arana's authoritative biography *Bolívar American Liberator* (Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2013). There, in the closing pages of her book, Arana calls attention to Bolívar's broken dreams, and his ever-declining health, during a final voyage down the Magdalena River from Turbaco at the end of May 1830 until his arrival in Cartagena, Colombia at the end of June. Bolívar was still in Cartagena as of September. At about this time, he is described by Arana as having received what appears to have been Lafayette's last correspondence to him. The letter contained advice which Arana relates was "more than a dying man could bear."<sup>4</sup> Roughly six weeks later, the *Libertador* died.

**Points of Inquiry Raised by Lafayette's June 1, 1830 Communication**

This vignette concerning Lafayette's final letter to Bolívar suggested several questions to me. What motivated Lafayette to write it when he did? What was in the letter which brought the *Libertador* such anguish? Was Lafayette's final assessment of Bolívar's activities up to that point objective and fair to his circumstances? An effort to find out the answers to these questions would require a review of the actual letter itself. Following up on the reference made in the Notes section of Arana's book, with the kind assistance of this *Gazette's* Publisher, Chuck Schwam and Director Emerita of Special Collections & Archives of Lafayette College, Diane Shaw, I was able to obtain the full text of the subject letter as it appears in *Documentos para la historia de la vida publica del Libertador de Colombia*, vol. 14. Of course the letter, as so published, is in Spanish. Later, in the course of editing the draft for this article for publication, the indefatigable Editor of our Gazette, Alan Hoffman, came to the rescue and was able to retrieve a transcription of the original letter in French which appeared in the Paris edition of Lafayette's *Mémoires*, Vol. VI, pp. 365-372. One might say "historical research, it's complicated," but we got the job done.

**What Motivated Our Hero to Have Written the Letter in Question?**

My first line of inquiry was to try and determine if the letter itself reveals what motivated Our Hero to write Bolívar in June of 1830. The answer is definitively provided by Lafayette himself toward the end of his communication where he states to Bolívar as follows:

Some days before his death the good Salazar, who cherished before all his country and you, came to tell me that a reconciliation between the liberator and general Santander appeared to him to be of great utility in the reestablishment of internal peace and in the consolidation of your glorious and patriotic wishes for the liberty of your country. He added that, **as he is honored by your esteem and goodwill, there could be no suspicion of any bias or local intrigue**, and that it would be fitting for me to submit this idea. **Such a step on his part, and above all the unexpected choice made of me, truly merited an explanation**; he died before we had occasion to speak again (emphasis added).

**Who Was Santander, and Why Bolívar's Negative Reaction to Lafayette's Letter?**

Try as I might, I have been unable to pin down the identity of the specific "Salazar" referenced here by Lafayette. The implication of Our Hero's statement, however, is clear. He was approached as an esteemed acquaintance of Bolívar, for reasons not specified with particularity, to broach the idea of a strategic reconciliation between Bolívar and General Santander. Lafayette felt he needed an explanation as to why he, in particular, was sought out to perform this task; but Salazar died before he could make inquiry of him on this point.



*Bolívar and Santander at the Congress of Cucuta, 1821  
by Ricardo Acevedo Bernal, La Quinta Museo de Bolívar, Bogotá*

Francisco de Paula Santander was born on April 2, 1792, in Rosario, New Granada (now Colombia). In 1810 he left law school to join the patriot army with which Bolívar was then involved.<sup>5</sup> Although this particular revolt was successfully suppressed by the Spanish in Venezuela, he later served under Bolívar's command as a Sergeant Major in the Battle of Cúcuta Colombia on February 28, 1813.<sup>6</sup> This battle marked the end of Spanish rule in New Granada. Following this victory, Bolívar wished to proceed to his home country, Venezuela, to finally liberate it also.<sup>7</sup>

Santander, who by then was commander of the troops from New Granada, initially refused Bolívar's order to proceed with him to Venezuela. Only under threat of execution for this mutinous response did Santander finally acquiesce.<sup>8</sup> According to Arana:



A lifetime and many victories later, the insult would continue to gall [Santander]. For Bolívar, the [clash] with . . . Santander would mark the beginning of a long struggle with his subordinates. He would learn in time that for every revolutionary brother there is a ready traitor; and for all his visions of a unified Colombia [i.e.: Venezuela and New Granada], there were small-minded obstructionists, happy to lord over their tiny turfs.<sup>9</sup>

Once Bolívar had successfully liberated Venezuela, he then turned his attention toward what are now the modern countries of Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru. Santander, left behind in Colombia as Vice-President to Bolívar, objected to the continuing financial drain on the public treasury which resulted from these efforts and pressured Bolívar to resign his Presidency: to which Santander then acceded.<sup>10</sup> Bolívar, meanwhile, decisively defeated the Spanish at the battle of Ayacucho, Peru in 1824, thereafter returning to Bogotá, Colombia in 1826. Along the way, Bolívar learned through a variety of sources that Santander had governed poorly in his absence.<sup>11</sup> Further, it became clear that Santander's New Granada did not want to be joined with Venezuela as Bolívar wished and had no desire to support his dream of Pan American unity.<sup>12</sup> For these, and many other reasons, Bolívar's relationship with Santander continued to fray over the years.

As of September 1827, Santander described his relationship with Bolívar as follows:

[Bolívar's] force of personality is such that **on the countless occasions where I have been filled with hatred and revenge**, the mere sight of him, the instant he speaks, I am disarmed, and I come away filled with nothing so much as admiration. (emphasis added)<sup>13</sup>

When not in Bolívar's presence, envy and jealousy were clearly uppermost in Santander's sentiments toward Bolívar and his accomplishments. All of this drew to a head at around midnight on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 1828, when a group of Santander supporters entered San Carlos Palace in Bogotá in an attempt to assassinate Bolívar.<sup>14</sup> Although historical opinions differ as to Santander's actual connection to the plot, the result was that he was sentenced to death. A sentence later commuted to banishment for lack of absolute proof of Santander's role in the plot.<sup>15</sup>

### **Was the Cautionary Tone of Lafayette's June 1, 1830 Communication in Synch with the Libertador's Revolutionary Record?**

The issues surrounding the governance of groups have been in evidence since the beginning of recorded time: from the advent of tribes, to the creation of city states, and the eventual development of what we now refer to as nations. The author of this article would argue that the time commonly referred to as "The Enlightenment" was, perhaps, the most creative and productive period in history during which the issues surrounding governance were seriously studied and immense intellectual effort expended in attempting to address them. This period represents the milieu in which Lafayette, George Washington, Bolívar and others of the time were raised.

Lafayette was raised in a pure monarchy, Washington in a colony of a country sometimes referenced as a constitutional monarchy, Bolívar in a colony of a pure monarchy.

Our Hero's June 1, 1830, cautionary letter to Bolívar leaves no doubt of the potential for error on his part in attempting to apply his personal experiences, as related to the revolutionary developments of the time in both North America and France, to those which Bolívar was dealing with in his sphere of influence.

**It is not my part to judge, at so great a distance,** what obstacles you have encountered to the peaceful and complete execution of matters both legal and popular; . . . in your new republics . . . . (emphasis added)

Nevertheless, Lafayette then proceeds to provide advice which could objectively be viewed as “judgmental” concerning certain actions taken by Bolívar in addressing the issues of governance under his particular circumstances. Our Hero's information relating to Bolívar's activities necessarily came to him from “a great distance” and through third party sources having their own agendas relating to the potential effect on them of his actions. All of this necessarily raises the question. What was Lafayette's concern relating to Bolívar's recent activities as these had been so described to him, and was this concern justified?

1826 found Bolívar in Lima, Peru finishing up a proposed Constitution for Upper Peru. He had decided that Upper Peru must become the sovereign republic of Bolivia both to prevent the forfeiture of this mineral-rich region to neighboring Argentina, as well as to keep it out of the hands of the Peruvian aristocracy, many of whom he distrusted.<sup>16</sup> Historians have pointed to this event as being pivotal in the eventual reversal of the *Libertador's* overall plans for Pan American unity via a federation of nations. The accusation leveled against Bolívar with respect to his drafting of the Bolivian Constitution was that he sought to enthrone himself as Napoleon had in France. In his cautionary letter to Bolívar, Lafayette, diplomatically, alludes to just this concern.

[D]ifficulties in your new republics [may arouse therein the desire] to leave in place, against an enemy always menacing and never appearing, troops and generals to whom the situation allows for time to form their own projects of turbulence and ambition. One could fear, I tell you that, due to a feeling, not unknown to me, of impatience against anarchy, populist hypocrisy and civic incapacity, you have not heeded the need to strengthen executive power in permanent institutions; and I tell you frankly, my dear general, that I myself, your admirer and your friend, see in the *Bolivian constitution* traces of this disposition.

What Bolívar had proposed in his Bolivian Constitution was:

[A] division of powers—executive, legislative, judicial-- . . . similar to that of the United States although he added a fourth branch, a separate electoral college . . . . The constitution provided for freedoms of speech, press, work and passage. It ensured citizens of personal security, equality before the law and a

jury-based system of justice. It abolished slavery. It put an end to all social privilege.<sup>17</sup>

The sticking point, though, was his provision that the president be appointed for life – even though Bolívar never aspired to wear a crown and had specifically forbidden his own family to seek political office.

History fails to provide any concrete example of the *Libertador's* having exercised monarchical powers over Bolivia following adoption of this constitution on November 19, 1826. In fact, Bolivian General Andrés Santa Cruz had effectively already been appointed by Bolívar as acting president, and served as such until a revolt of Colombian troops based in Lima, Peru. This revolt was justifiably believed to have been inspired by the *Libertador's* continuing nemesis, Santander, and took place on January 26, 1827.<sup>18</sup> Thereafter the Constituent Congress assembled in Lima, Peru, by act dated June 11, 1827, declared the Bolivian Constitution null and void.<sup>19</sup> From this point on, it was all downhill for Bolívar. As far as he was concerned “Vice President [Santander] of Colombia and a diabolical congress had been the ruin of his ambition [of creating a united confederation of former Spanish possessions] in Latin America.”<sup>20</sup>

What are we, as acknowledged admirers of Our Hero, to make of all this? Your writer would posit the following: i) it was, with the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, perhaps ill-advised of Lafayette to have undertaken to write a letter gratuitously suggesting a political/strategic “reconciliation” at the behest of third parties whose motivations he admittedly did not thoroughly understand; ii) Bolívar’s longtime nemesis, Santander, was quite likely behind the approach by Salazar to Lafayette; iii) the presumed cynical intentions of Santander, to use a man whom he knew was respected and loved by Bolívar in order to manipulate him, created conflicting emotions “almost too much to bear”; and, iv) Our Hero’s recitation of calumnies, heard from a “great distance,” although set forth with the greatest attempt at diplomacy in their repetition, perhaps evidences his failure to give consideration to the circumstances then faced by his friend the *Libertador*.

### **Bolívar’s Record of Governance and the Circumstances Faced by Him at the Time Our Hero’s Cautionary Letter Was Written**

It has been generally accepted that Bolívar was first and foremost a soldier/liberator and, although sincerely committed to Enlightenment principles of liberty, the rule of law, etc., a generally casual and reluctant administrator of the regions he liberated. There are significant grounds on which to conclude that he had no pretensions to make himself a monarch.

Support for this conclusion is found in the fact that, *prior to* his drafting of the Constitution of Bolivia, he accepted Greater Colombia’s overwhelming election of him to the presidency under its newly created Constitution “only halfheartedly.” In accepting the position, he stated to the Colombian Congress in September of 1821:

I am a son of war whom combat has elevated to the halls of rule . . . . This sword will be useless in a day of peace and, when that day finally comes, my

power will be finished, because I have sworn as much to myself, because I have promised it to Colombia, and because there can be no republic unless people take power into their own hands.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, Bolívar arranged for the holding of a Congress of new American republics, from June 22 through July 15, 1826, in Panama City for the explicit purpose of adopting a “Treaty of Union, League and Perpetual Confederation” between the United Provinces of South America (modern-day Argentina), Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia (then comprised of the modern-day nations of Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela), the United Provinces of Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica), and Mexico. His clear intention was to consolidate and institutionalize the human rights set forth in his Constitution of Bolivia. This Congress ended up being a dismal failure because of Argentina’s refusal to attend for fear of “too early a union”; disorganization in the affairs of Bolivia; Brazil’s refusal to attend due to its being at war with Argentina; and severe internal divisiveness in Chile. Of those invited to and attending the Congress, only one entity ratified what were thereafter treated as “empty initiatives.” Earlier in the same year, the *Libertador* had responded this way to a plea emanating from Caracas for him to free Argentina from malevolent powers in Bogotá (including, by implication, Santander), crown himself king, and wrest order from chaos. Bolívar replied: “Colombia is not France, and I am not Napoleon.”<sup>22</sup> This is hardly the sentiment of one who seeks to anoint himself as a monarch.



Death of Simón Bolívar, by E. Yezpe  
La Quinta Museo de Bolívar, Bogotá



In sum, Lafayette's well-intended cautionary letter, at least arguably, landed in the lap of a fellow revolutionary who was terminally ill, faced with chaos in every former colony he had liberated from hundreds of years of Spanish rule, and had no inclination or intention to become a dictator. Bolívar's providing for a president for life in his Bolivian Constitution was not a grab for power, but an attempt to prevent provincially minded politicians such as Santander from undermining the basic republican principles he had spent his life fighting for.

### **Contrasting the Revolutionary Legacies of Bolívar and Lafayette**

Our Hero was a soldier serving under General Washington, with whom he eventually formed a father-son relationship, and a valued interlocutor of the Continental Congress. Understandably, he lacked the inclination or power to interfere in the political decisions being made as the Revolutionary War progressed. For example, he could not, and did not attempt to, abolish slavery. His greatest attributes were as a brave warrior and as an essential link between the Continental Congress and France. His efforts resulted in what we know of today as The United States of America: perhaps the greatest Republic in the annals of history.

In the French Revolution, Lafayette's status was somewhat different. His feelings about the French population's readiness for an American-style democratically elected Republic were almost identical to those of Bolívar concerning his own peoples. Lafayette concluded the French were not ready, and that a constitutional monarchy was better suited to their then disposition.<sup>23</sup> Different revolutions, different experiences. Even for the same individual. His failed efforts in the French Revolution earned him exile, imprisonment and the lasting enmity of many of his countrymen.

The *Libertador*, on the other hand, was not only his revolution's ideological leader, but also its chief military officer and, oftentimes, drafted to act as president of colonies liberated by him. He was, definitively, closer to being a Washington than a Lafayette. As such he could, and did, accomplish things which neither Washington nor Our Hero could realistically have considered in the midst of the American Revolution. Perhaps the most prominent of these achievements was Bolívar's 1816 abolition of slavery in Latin America, nearly fifty years before Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was issued in the United States.<sup>24</sup> Bolívar, however, dreamed of a Latin American federation along the lines of the union he observed in the U.S. This dream, arguably, led to what some historians perceive as having been his "failure" in the end. The dream was simply too big, and too complex, for one individual to fulfill on his own. Nevertheless, during his military campaigns from 1813 through 1825, the *Libertador* freed six modern countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela) from Spanish oppression over an area seven times the size of the thirteen American colonies.<sup>25</sup>

Fortunately, Our Hero's long life allowed him to fashion a most honorable legacy with respect to the issue of slavery. This journey began with his first return to the United States for which he departed from France in June of 1784. During this trip, he arrived at Mount Vernon to visit with his former compatriot in arms and father figure, George Washington. Over a year before this visit, he had written Washington proposing a plan to purchase a small estate where they might try the experiment of freeing the slaves and permitting them to become tenants

thereof.<sup>26</sup> Although Washington had declined to participate with him in this “experiment,” Lafayette continued to judiciously press for the abolition of slavery in the United States during his 1784 visit. Later “tying himself into a moral knot that he never managed to untangle,” Lafayette opted paradoxically to demonstrate the benefits of gradual emancipation by becoming a slaveholder himself by acquiring properties in French Guiana in 1785 and attempting to put his plan into action.<sup>27</sup> Despite clearly sincere interest and effort on both his and his wife Adrienne’s part, events involved with the French revolution overtook him and the experiment appears to have failed.<sup>28</sup>

Lafayette, however, was a stubborn man and he did not give up on his abolition efforts. How these eventually played out, and his eventually successful efforts (albeit posthumously) in supporting the abolitionist movement in the United States is covered admirably in an article which recently appeared in *The Gazette of the American Friends of Lafayette*.<sup>29</sup> A most honorable revolutionary legacy, completed.

### About the Author

Rex Cowan is a 1971 graduate of Indiana University, having majored in Political Science with a minor in Central American Studies. He graduated from the Indiana University-Purdue University Law School Indianapolis (now known as McKinney Law School) in 1974. He has practiced in Central Florida since then and is now semi-retired. His wife, Doris (“Dodie”), and he are life members of the AFL. His last article written for the AFL was entitled “The Picpus Cemetery Flagpole Saga” and appeared in Issue 86, p. 42 of the *Gazette*. It describes his successful effort to install a dignified flagpole for continued display of the American flag at Our Hero’s grave in Paris almost twenty years ago.

The author wishes to express his sincere appreciation to Chuck Schwam, Alan Hoffman, and Jan O’Sullivan, without whose steadfast support this article could not have been written.

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<sup>1</sup> Auguste Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, translated by Alan R. Hoffman (Manchester, New Hampshire: Lafayette Press, Inc., 2006) 552-553

<sup>2</sup> “Timeline—1757 to the Present,” <https://friendsoflafayette.wildapricot.org>

<sup>3</sup> Natasha Ishak, *The Complicated Legacy of Simón Bolívar, The Liberator of South America* (2019) <https://allthatsinteresting.com/simon-bolivar>

<sup>4</sup> Marie Arana, *Bolívar American Liberator* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2013) 447

<sup>5</sup> “Francisco de Paula Santander: Colombian statesman and soldier,” <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Francisco-de-Paula-Santander>

<sup>6</sup> Arana, 137-138

<sup>7</sup> Arana, 139

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Arana, 329-330

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- <sup>11</sup> Arana, 362-366
- <sup>12</sup> Arana, 139, 372-373
- <sup>13</sup> Arana, 380
- <sup>14</sup> Arana, 379-400
- <sup>15</sup> “Francisco de Paula Santander: Colombian statesman and soldier,” <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Francisco-de-Paula-Santander>
- <sup>16</sup> Arana, 344-345
- <sup>17</sup> Arana, 350
- <sup>18</sup> Arana, 372-373
- <sup>19</sup> “Peru War with Gran Colombia 1828-1829,” <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/gran-colombia-1828.htm>
- <sup>20</sup> Arana, 376
- <sup>21</sup> Arana, 271
- <sup>22</sup> Arana, 349
- <sup>23</sup> “Adrienne de Noailles: The Extraordinary Life of Madame de Lafayette.” After-dinner talk by Diane Windham Shaw, AFL Annual Meeting, West Point, New York, June 10, 2022 (transcript). *The Gazette of the American Friends of Lafayette* No. 97, Part 1, (November 2022) 31; Tom Chaffin, *Revolutionary Brothers: Thomas Jefferson, The Marquis De Lafayette, and the Friendship That helped Forge Two Nations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2019) 298, 327, 398
- <sup>24</sup> Marie Arana, “Simon Bolivar the ‘Polar Opposite’ of George Washington” (interview), The George Washington University, Columbia College of Arts and Sciences History News Network (transcript). <https://historynewsnetwork.org/blog/15321>
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> Auricchio, Laura. *The Marquis Lafayette Reconsidered* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014) 116
- <sup>27</sup> Auricchio, 120
- <sup>28</sup> Auricchio, 121
- <sup>29</sup> Stauffer, John. “Lafayette, James McCune Smith, and Charles Sumner,” *The Gazette of the American Friends of Lafayette* No 97, Part I, (November 2022) 15

# Lafayette Day In Worcester County

## September 3, 2024

by Peter Reilly



### Introduction

In 2024-2025 the American Friends of Lafayette will be supporting events to commemorate the bicentennial of Lafayette's Farewell Tour when this true hero of the American Revolution and constant friend of the United States returned after a 40-year absence. During his return, this 67-year-old, last surviving major general of the Continental Army, visited all 24 states and Washington City (as well as Wheeling, Virginia, later part of West Virginia). Lafayette became a household name among roughly 12,000,000 Americans, about a fourth of whom rushed to get a glimpse of him, and if possible, to clasp his hand.

Contemporaries saw Lafayette's Farewell Tour as a unique event in our history, indeed in world history. Edward Everett, an American politician, educator, college president, and author wrote in the *North American Review* in 1830 that the Farewell Tour was "an event, taken in all its parts, unparalleled in the history of man." Hezekiah Niles wrote in *Niles Weekly Register* in 1824: "the volumes of history furnish no parallel – no one like La Fayette has ever *re-appeared* in any country."

Salem Towne Junior of Charlton wrote to his wife encouraging her to come to Boston where Lafayette would be greeted with a tremendous parade on August 24, 1824

*...there never was nor will be such a meeting in this or any country .....*

He could not have known that Lafayette would actually be in Charlton just over a week after the Boston parade. The reception there was smaller than the one in Boston or the reception in Worcester just hours before, but no less enthusiastic. The Rider Tavern where Lafayette stopped has had a display about his visit for many years. In 2018 the Charlton Historical Society partnered with the American Friends of Lafayette to commemorate the visit as a sort of trial run for the bicentennial.

The American Friends of Lafayette, founded in 1932 at Lafayette College, and its more than 600 members are taking the lead in planning and implementing the Farewell Tour Bicentennial from August 15, 2024 to September 8, 2025. Our goal is to commemorate Lafayette's return visit by orchestrating events in most if not all of the places that Lafayette visited to coincide with the actual date of his visits there.

AFL has received a commitment from a donor to fund a first-class Lafayette reenactor on September 3, 2024 to follow as closely as possible the route the General took in 1824 proceeding from Bolton to Lancaster to Sterling to West Boylston to Worcester to Leicester to Charlton to Sturbridge. AFL will offer support for local events including a speaker's bureau and research support.

If you want to participate or be the leading sponsor at an event in your community, please contact us.

The following will give you a feel for how the day went in 1824 and may give some idea as to how a commemoration might be planned. During this period precise times are not that commonly recorded. We might also consider that they did not have daylight savings time.

## Prequel

A constant theme of Lafayette's Farewell Tour is balancing the demands that the General be at a particular place for an event and the competing demands of the people in the places he passed through for him to stop and be honored. After his arrival on Staten Island on August 15, 1824 and a tremendous reception the next day when he landed in Manhattan, he did not linger in the city long. On August 20 he set off for Boston, but found that multiple stops were required along the way.

The reception in Boston was probably even grander than he anticipated. He was welcomed by a grand procession. Estimates are that there were 70,000 spectators. He met with John Adams. A committee invited him to help lay the cornerstone for the Bunker Hill Memorial on the fiftieth anniversary of the battle – June 17, 1825. That commitment would be a big consideration in his grand tour. A more immediate commitment dictated when he needed to leave the Boston area and the route he would take. The Society of Cincinnati would be celebrating Lafayette's birthday on September 6, 1824 in New York City. To speed things along, he hopped on a steamboat in Hartford.



Of course after Bunker Hill, he needed to visit Lexington and Concord which were stops on his journey back to New York beginning September 2. He would also be honored during a brief stop in Stow, an event that would have a sesquicentennial commemoration in 1974.

## Bolton

Sampson Vryling Stoddard Wilder (1780-1865) had made a fortune as a merchant in France and retired to gentleman farming in Bolton. Wilder knew Lafayette from his days in France and had visited him at La Grange.



*Sampson Vryling Stoddard Wilder*

Josiah Quincy, Mayor of Boston, wrote to Wilder to make arrangements to assure that Lafayette would be within ten miles of Hartford by the evening of September 3, 1824. Wilder went to Concord to escort Lafayette to his estate in Bolton, which is still there and was recognized by The Lafayette Trail with one of its ubiquitous markers on October 25, 2020.



*Lafayette Trail marker being unveiled in Bolton*

The party arrived at the Worcester County line between 8 and 9 pm. An escort of cavalry awaited them along with a large cavalcade of military officers in full dress uniform. The party arrived at Wilder's home around 10 pm. Pitch pine torches had been placed on the fences on both sides of the road for a mile. Veterans of the War of 1812 were stationed on top of the wall in front of the mansion and veterans of the Revolution were in front of the wall.

There was an arch over the front gate inscribed "The sword of Jehovah, of Washington, and of Lafayette." Everything was illuminated. The local militia Bolton Guards had renamed themselves Lafayette Guards and spent the night guarding the mansion.

A delegation from the Worcester Committee of Arrangements presented Lafayette with an invitation to breakfast with its chairman then Judge Levi Lincoln Jr. (1782-1868) in Worcester the next day.

The party retired after a great meal which excluded wine, as Wilder was an early temperance advocate, but included sherbet, an unusual treat available thanks to Wilder's ice house.

## **Bolton To Lancaster**

The party rose early. Lafayette reviewed the Lafayette Guards, who had watched all night, and several companies of cavalry and boarded the carriage. They passed a wood where there was a log house that Wilder had prepared as a possible refuge for Napoleon.

They soon arrived in Lancaster in front of a new church building designed by Charles Bulfinch.



*First Church of Lancaster, established 1653, Bulfinch building dedicated 1817*



Reverend Nathaniel Thayer (1769-1840) addressed Lafayette:

General Lafayette – In behalf of the inhabitants of Lancaster, I offer you their cordial congratulations on your arrival in a country whose wrongs you felt and resented; whose liberties you valiantly defended; and whose interests and prospects have been dear to your soul.

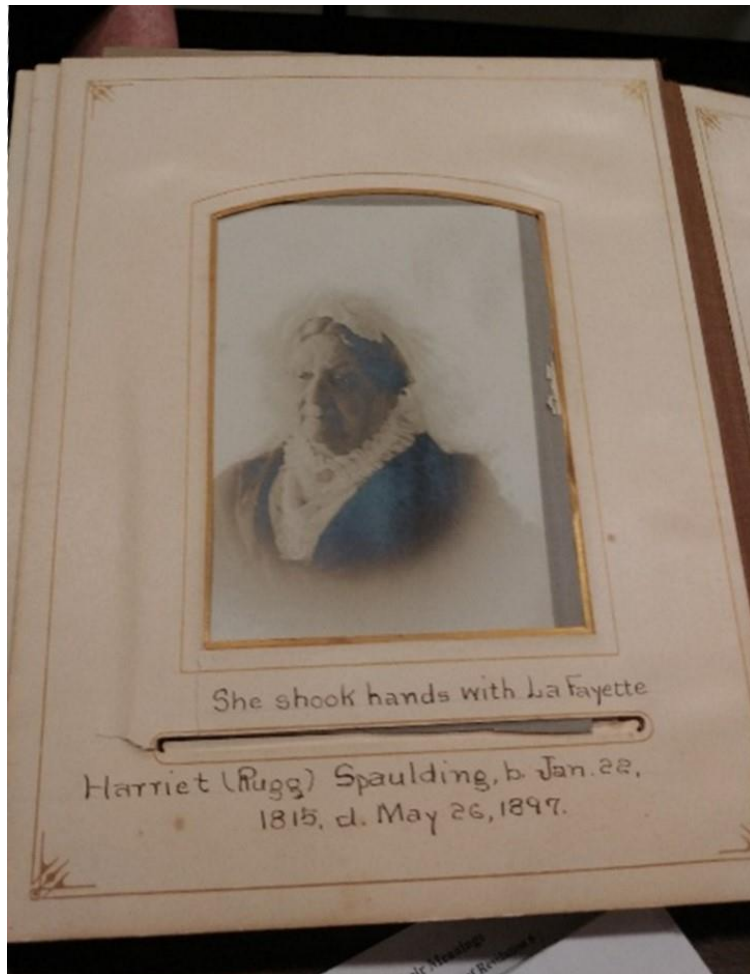
We all unite with the few surviving veterans which were with, loved and respected you on the high places of the field, in giving you a welcome to this village....and rejoice that you visit it under the improvements of civilized life, in prosperity and peace.

It gladdens us that we and our children may behold the man, whom we have believed, and whom we have taught our children to believe, was second only to his and our friend, the immortal Washington. We participate in your joy, on beholding our institutions in vigor, our population extended, so that since you left us, from a little one we have become millions, and from a small band a strong nation; that you see our glory rising, our Republic placed on an immovable basis, all of which are in part, under Providence, to be ascribed to your sacrifices, dangers and toils.

We wish you health and prosperity. We assure you that wherever you shall go, you will be greeted by our fellow-countrymen as one for the chief

deliverers of America, and the friend of rational liberty and of man. It is especially our prayer, that in that day in which acclamations and applauses of dying men shall cease to reach or affect you, you receive from the Judge of character and Dispenser of imperishable honors, as the reward of philanthropy and incorruptible integrity, a crown of glory that shall never fade.

In the Thayer Memorial library in Lancaster, there is a collection of photographs of prominent women of the town. Most of the pictures have just name and birth and death dates. Harriet (Rugg) Spaulding was different, because when she was nine years old, she shook hands with Lafayette.

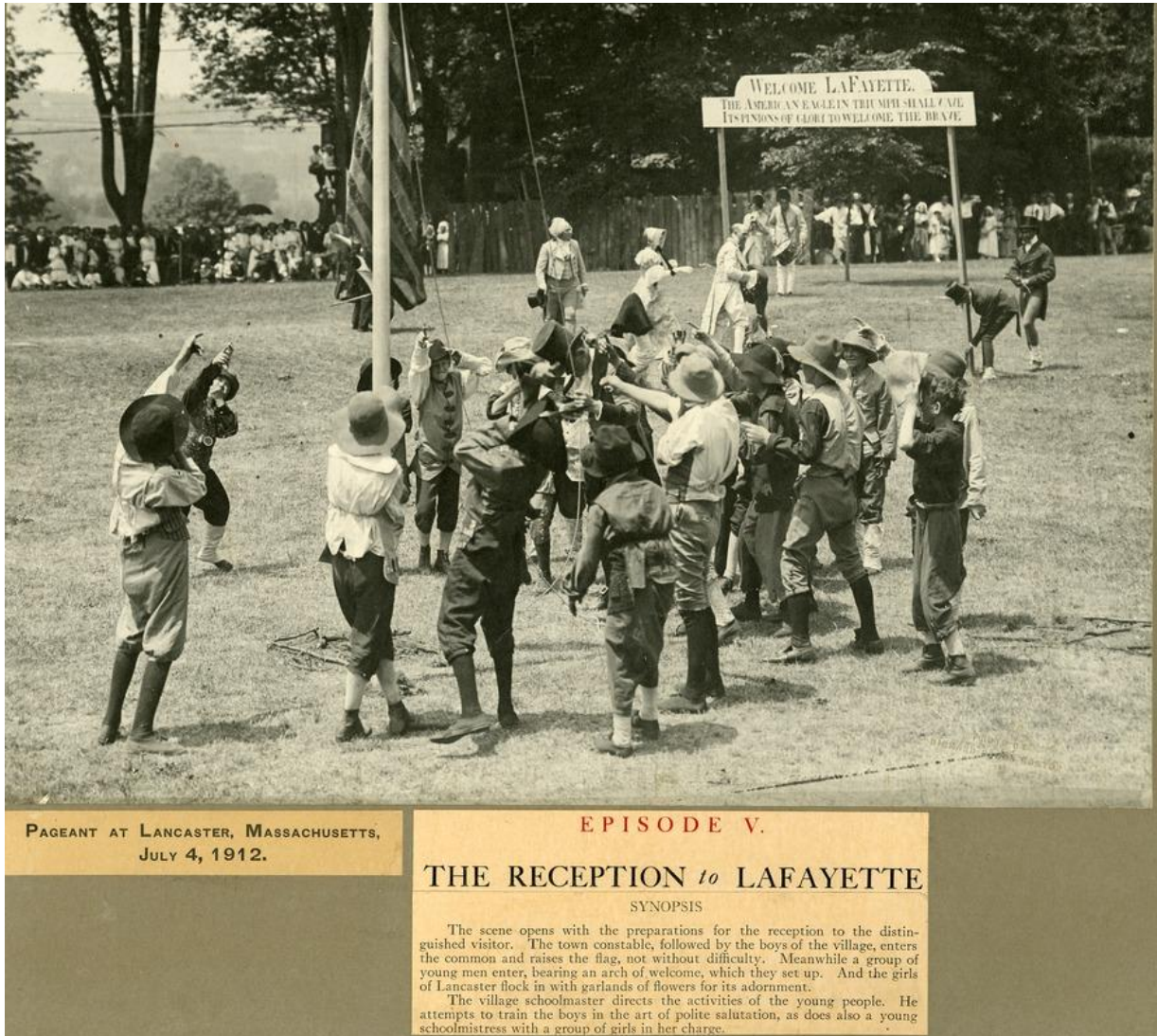


*Harriet (Rugg) Spaulding*

This is but one instance of a very common phenomenon in which that brief encounter with Lafayette would be a high point in someone's long life.



In 1912 the Town of Lancaster held an elaborate pageant to commemorate five important events from its history. The final one was Lafayette's visit.



The Welcome Lafayette arch is still stored at Thayer Library. Hopefully it will be coming out again in 2024.





## Sterling

The party proceeded to Sterling where Lafayette's approach was signaled with thirteen discharges of artillery and the ringing of bells. Two companies of light infantry under the command of Captain Calebe Dana and Captain Merriam met him. There was an arch of flowers and evergreens. At the top in gold letters, it read "Welcome Lafayette, America's Adopted son, Brother and Friend of Washington" and "Our land in trouble found a friend in thee, We'll not forget thee in prosperity."

Isaac Goodwin (1786-1832), chairman of the board of selectmen and later author of *Town Officer, Or, Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the Duties of Municipal Officers*, addressed Lafayette:

General Lafayette – The Selectmen, in behalf of the citizens of Sterling, welcome your arrival at their village. The name of this town associates with it the recollection of another transatlantic hero, who, like yourself, Sir, felt a sympathy for our fathers' wrongs, and whose sword was unsheathed for their redress. Lord Sterling, the gallant and the generous, now sleeps in dust, but the memory of America's benefactors will survive the decay of time. The multitudes that hail your march through this part of our country are not the assemblages of idle crowds, seeking to gratify a morbid curiosity, but, Sir, the men around you are independent possessors of their fields, and the defenders of their homes. From hoary age to lisping childhood, our whole population are eager of contributing deserved honors to the companion of Washington, the benefactor of our country, and the friend of mankind.

Lafayette responded:

I feel grateful for my kind reception here. I rejoice in your prosperity, and am happy to be once more among you. The name of your place recalls the recollection of Lord Sterling. He was my intimate friend as well as companion in arms. I venerate his memory, and when at New York, I had the pleasure of calling upon his family.

The General then reviewed the troops.

Sterling also has a Lafayette Trail marker commemorating the reception.



## West Boylston

Lafayette made a short stop at West Boylston where another company of cavalry under command of James Estabrook joined the escort.

## Worcester

Lafayette arrived at the Worcester line around 10:30 am. Judge Lincoln and the committee were awaiting him in coaches. A procession formed, consisting of two companies of cavalry followed by two of the marshals, members of the committee of arrangement, two more marshals, Lafayette and Judge Lincoln in a barouche, George Washington Lafayette and suite, a cavalcade of officers and militia of the Sixth Division in full dress, and a cavalcade of citizens.

A regiment of light troops under the command of Lt. Col. Ward joined the procession near Clarke's tavern. The road became thronged with people. When the procession reached the declivity near the Paine mansion, now called "The Oaks" (140 Lincoln Street), it passed under a number of flags. A national salute was fired. Bells started ringing.



*The Oaks, 140 Lincoln Street, Worcester*

Veterans of the revolution pressed up to the barouche and extended their arms. Lafayette shook the hands of many of the old soldiers as they moved along. It is worth noting here for perspective that the “old soldiers” were probably on average a decade or so younger than our Vietnam veterans.

They passed under a decorated arch upon Court Hill. Teachers and children lined the streets. The children threw laurel in his path. The procession passed under several flags extended across the street. One read “Hitherto I have only cherished your cause, now I go to serve it.” Underneath was inscribed “Brandywine, Jamestown, Valley Forge, Yorktown.”

There was a presentation in front of the mansion of Judge Lincoln (not the building preserved in Sturbridge).



The Honorable Levi Lincoln made the following address:

General Lafayette – The citizens whom you see assembled around you, have spontaneously thronged together, to offer you the tribute of their affection, their respect – their gratitude. In the name of the inhabitants of Worcester, the shire of an extensive county of more than 75000 population; in behalf of all who are present, and in anticipation of the commands of those, whom distance and want of opportunity occasion to be absent from this joyous scene, I repeat to you the salutations, which elsewhere have been so impressively offered upon your arrival in this country, and your visit to this Commonwealth. Welcome, most cordially welcome, to the presence of those who now greet you!

Your name, sir, is not only associated with the memorable events of the revolution, with the battle of Brandywine, the retreat from Valley Forge, the affair near Jamestown, and the triumph at Yorktown, but the memorials of *your* services, and *our* obligations exist, in the Independence of the nation which was accomplished, in the Government of the people which is established, in the Institutions and Laws, the arts, improvements, liberty and happiness, which are enjoyed. The *Sword* was beaten into the *Plowshare* to cultivate the soil which its temper had previously defended, and the hilltops shall now echo to the sea shore the gratulations of the independent proprietors of the land, to the common Benefactor of all ranks and classes of the people.

Wherever you go, General, the acclamations of Freemen await you – their blessings and prayers will follow you. May you live many years to enjoy the fruits of the services and sacrifices, the gallantry and valor of your earlier days, devoted to the cause of freedom and the rights of man; and may the bright examples of individual glory and of National happiness, which the history of America exhibits, illustrate to the world the moral force of personal virtue, and the rich blessings of civil liberty in Republican Governments.

Lafayette replied that:

...he received with much sensibility the expression of kind attention with which he was received by the inhabitants of the town and County of Worcester – that he was delighted with the fine country which he had seen, and the excellent improvement and cultivation which he witnessed – that he saw the best proofs of a great, prosperous and happy people, in the rapid advancement of the polite and useful arts, and in the stability of our free institutions-that he was especially much gratified in the great improvements of the face of the country because he was himself a farmer – that he felt happy to observe such decided proofs of industry, sobriety and prosperity. He begged the citizens to be assured of his affectionate and grateful recollection of their reception of him – he thanked them for all they had manifested towards him, for the kind expressions which had been offered him by the committee, and in a feeling impressive manner, reciprocated their good wishes.

Lafayette then entered the house where breakfast awaited him – a second breakfast we might say. He mingled with the citizens, but around 2:00 pm, he realized it was time to get moving. He reviewed the troops remarking that their appearance and equipment had not been excelled by any body of militia in the United States.

He remarked that, “It is the homage you pay to the principles of your government, and not to me.”



## Rochdale (Leicester)

The next stop was in front of Hezekiah Stone's tavern with an escort of a large procession of citizens, headed by Captain Howe. The tavern was across from the very recently completed Christ Episcopal Church (1089 Stafford Street). Reverend Joseph Muenscher of the Episcopal Church spoke. Christ Episcopal was the first Episcopal church in Worcester County.



*Christ Episcopal Church, Rochdale*



*Rev. Joseph Muenscher*



## Charlton

In preparation for Lafayette's arrival, Lt. Edwards assembled cavalry at Wilson's Coffee-House (now known as the Rider Tavern – 255 Stafford Street).



*Wilson's Coffee-House, now Rider Tavern, Charlton*

Cavalry from Dudley, Southbridge and Sturbridge joined together, all under the command of Captain Shumway. The General arrived around 4:00 pm and was received with a salute from the cavalry and cheers and applause from the citizens. Reverend Rich addressed him:

General La Fayette – The inhabitants of Charlton hold in grateful remembrance the very important services, which you, Sir, have rendered their beloved country. They cordially unite with their fellow-citizens throughout the Union in the heart-cheering gratulations excited by your recent arrival in America and visit through the states. Accept, Sir, our assurance of a hearty welcome, and the expression of our best wishes for your personal happiness.

Lafayette replied:

The repeated expressions of kindness and esteem which I have received since my arrival in this country render me unable to express the high delight with which I behold the grateful sensibility of the American people.

Lafayette had some refreshments and was introduced to a number of the citizens. The crowd applauded him after he entered his carriage. When he arrived at the village called the “city,” there was a large banner “Welcome La Fayette” suspended over the road.

The General expressed his high commendation of the appearance of the cavalry, and the fine style by which they performed the duties of escort.

Lafayette also greeted his old comrade Lt. Dunbar.

The Charlton Historical Society maintains the Rider Tavern and has had a display about Lafayette's visit for many years. In 2018, CHS collaborated with the American Friends of Lafayette to do a trial run of a small town bicentennial event. The Lafayette Trail recently placed one of its markers in Charlton on the grounds of the Rider Tavern.



## Sturbridge

Lafayette's last stop in Worcester County, and Massachusetts for that matter, was in Sturbridge. There was a triumphal arch erected over the road where it entered the common. Two rows of shrubbery were extended to the public house. Artillery and a band were stationed on the meeting-house hill. More than three thousand people from Sturbridge and the neighboring region assembled.

The veterans assembled separately in military style and Lafayette spoke to them individually. Most of them had seen him during the war and many had served under him.

Sturbridge celebrated its bicentennial in 1938 with an elaborate pageant. Lafayette and the Coming of Industry was one of the scenes portrayed.

## Note On Sources

One of the fascinating things about Lafayette's visit is that it was a major national event, but much of the story of it is buried in local history. For a great overview of the tour, there is Auguste Levasseur's *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825: Journal of a Voyage to the United States* which was translated by Alan Hoffman, current president of the American Friends of Lafayette. Levasseur, Lafayette's secretary, does not do justice to Worcester County though.

*Lafayette, Guest of the Nation; a Contemporary Account of the Triumphal Tour of General Lafayette Through the United States in 1824-1825, as Reported by the Local Newspapers*, Volume I, by Edgar Ewing Brandon is available online from Hathi Trust Digital Library and is a very detailed source. Brandon traces Lafayette from Bolton to Worcester and then comments “On leaving Worcester the route Lafayette was following lay through small towns and villages which had no newspapers in 1824, or none that are today extant. There exist therefore no local press reports of this part of his journey.” Professor Brandon passed away in 1957 so he missed out on the internet.

The most thorough overall account I found is in *Reminiscences of Worcester from the Earliest Period* by Caleb Arnold Wall. The book was published in 1877 and is available on google books. He gives the visit seven pages (243-249) much of it in pretty small print. Hall had access to newspaper accounts that Brandon could not find eighty years later. Hall also apparently spoke to some old timers who remembered the events, including General Nathan Heard who commanded the First Brigade of the Sixth Division.

*A Complete History of the Marquis De Lafayette Major General in the Army of the United States in the War of The Revolution by an Officer in the Late Army* published in 1846 is similar to Wall’s account with a little more attention to Sturbridge. It is also available on Google Books.

A visit to the American Antiquarian Society yielded online copies of contemporary articles in the *Boston Commercial Gazette*, the *Boston Intelligencer*, the *Christian Register*, the *Columbian Sentinel*, the *Columbian Reporter*, the *Old Colony Journal*, the *Concord Gazette*, *Middlesex Yeoman*, the *Haverhill Gazette*, the *Independent Chronicle*, the *Boston Patriot*, the *Massachusetts Spy*, the *National Aegis*, the *Newport Mercury*, the *Old Colony Memorial*, and the *Weekly Messenger*.

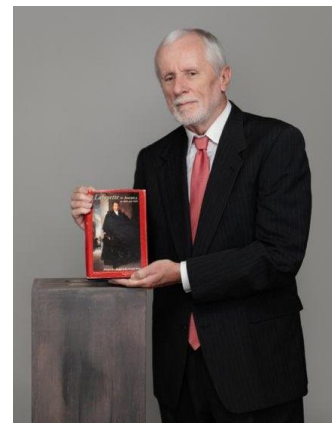
*Records From the Life of S.V.S. Wilder*, published by the American Tract Society in 1865 has an account of the visit. It also has a possible explanation of Levasseur’s neglect of Worcester County. There is a letter to Lafayette from Wilder in which he apologizes for not being able to send newspaper accounts which had been much sought.

Town histories were also helpful – *History of the Town of Lancaster* by Rev. Abijah P. Marvin, *Historical Sketches of the Town of Leicester, Massachusetts, During the First Century from Its Settlement* by Emory Washburn, and *A Historical Sketch of Sturbridge and Southbridge* by George Davis.

The website of The Lafayette Trail Inc. is also an important resource. Executive Director Julien Icher sent me some newspaper articles I had overlooked.

## About the Author

Peter J. Reilly grew up in Fairview New Jersey, which is apparent if you hear him speak, but has lived in Worcester County for much of his life. He has degrees from the College of the Holy Cross, Clark University and Worcester State University. He currently lives in North Oxford (birthplace of Clara Barton) less than a mile from the Rochdale Lafayette marker, which inspired his interest in the Bicentennial of the Farewell Tour. He is on both the national and Massachusetts American Friends of Lafayette Farewell Tour Bicentennial Committees.



# Lafayette's "Groupies"

## During His 1824-1825 Farewell Tour

by John C. Becica

### Fanny Wright

Frances Wright (better known as "Fanny") born in Scotland in 1795, was orphaned before age two. Subsequently raised by an aunt and grandparents in England, she benefitted from her substantial family inheritance. Well-educated and very intellectual, she rapidly formed radical convictions on a number of issues. She has been described as a lecturer, writer, freethinker, feminist, utopian socialist, abolitionist, and social reformer. At age 18, she and her younger sister Camilla returned to Scotland to live with their great-uncle James Mylne, a professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow College. Fanny gained access to the college library and thrived in this new environment. She read everything she could about the United States, and became determined to travel to America to see how the principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence were working out in practice.

At age 22, Fanny Wright, with her sister in tow, left for New York. The sisters then traveled the country extensively from 1818-1820. Back in London, Wright expanded her budding writing career in 1821 by publishing her impressions of the U.S. in a volume titled *Views of Society and Manners in America*. She wrote most enthusiastically of American society and republican institutions. She sent Lafayette a copy of her just published book to which he responded in a congratulatory letter. She then expressed her interest in coming to France to visit him. Their first meeting in Paris in 1821 began a rare intellectual friendship, which soon blossomed into an emotional attachment by Lafayette, who began considering Fanny as a daughter figure. She was hosted frequently at La Grange where she spent parts of three years. Lafayette found in her a worthy disciple, and she was devoted to him as well as to his liberal ideas and republican principles. Early on, Lafayette assisted Fanny in having *Views of Society and Manners in America* translated into the French language.



Frances Wright 1855

By the spring of 1824, there was a growing resentment in Lafayette's family at La Grange about his relationship with Fanny Wright, and she felt uncomfortable enough to return to England. Lafayette's letters to her indicated that he missed her terribly. His distress about possibly being separated from her during his planned upcoming extended trip to America, plus discord in his family caused by their relationship, may have contributed to Lafayette's coming down with an alarming illness. Informed of



this, Fanny returned to Paris in late May 1824, intent on reuniting with Lafayette and accompanying him on his Farewell Tour. She went so far as to propose that he legally adopt her as his daughter to put to rest rumors that they were in a romantic relationship. (At the time Lafayette was 66 and Fanny 28). The adoption idea was quickly rejected by both Lafayette and his children, but all agreed that it would be beneficial to have the Wright sisters accompany him to America in some manner. After Lafayette recovered from his illness, it was decided that Fanny and Camilla would go to America, but should travel separately on a different vessel and not be part of Lafayette's official party.

Lafayette sailed from Le Havre, France on the ship *Cadmus* on Tuesday, July 13, 1824. He arrived off Sandy Hook, New Jersey on Saturday, August 14. His official party consisted of his son George Washington Lafayette, his secretary Auguste Levasseur, and his valet Bastien Wagner. The four of them would be front and center, traveling together throughout the Farewell Tour.

About two weeks later on August 1, 1824 the Wright sisters sailed from Le Havre, arriving in New York on September 11, almost a month after Lafayette. They had already missed Lafayette's travels up the coast of New England to Boston and back to New York City. Late on the evening of September 11, after attending a performance at New York's Chatham Garden Theatre, the Nation's Guest called on them. The Fête at Castle Garden a few days later, on the evening of September 14 and early morning of September 15, was the first celebration in Lafayette's honor that the sisters witnessed, and they were very much impressed.



*A ticket to the Castle Garden Fête. Originally planned for September 10, it was postponed due to inclement weather. (The ticket holder might have been Fanny Wright.)*

*Special Collections, Skillman Library, Lafayette College*



Early in the morning of September 15, the Wrights were among the numerous guests aboard the steamboat *James Kent* as Lafayette left for his trip up the Hudson River to Albany. If Lafayette can be compared to one of today's rock stars, then the Wright sisters were "groupies." They followed him wherever he went, but usually stayed in the background. They did not travel directly with him riding in carriages with his party, and rarely did the newspapers of the day mention them when reporting on Lafayette's Tour. Lafayette's secretary, Auguste Levasseur does not mention them AT ALL in his descriptions of the Tour.

Lafayette, however, consistently expressed his desire to have Fanny Wright accompany him to political events and receptions and meet his famous friends. Thus, Fanny and her sister were introduced to such personages as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, and Andrew Jackson.

The sisters continued their "groupie" shadowing until February 23, 1825 at the end of the winter, when Lafayette left Washington City to commence the southern and western legs of his tour.

Wright, a staunch abolitionist, had grown weary of Lafayette's public acclaim by those who were slaveholders, and was tired of watching them fawn over The Nation's Guest, so she and Camilla set out on their own trip across the Midwest and down the Mississippi to New Orleans where they eventually reunited with the Farewell Tour party in April 1825.

During their private tour, Fanny and Camilla visited socialistic experiments at Economie, Pennsylvania; Albion, Illinois; and Robert Owen's community at New Harmony, Indiana. The ideas gleaned during these visits would lead to Fanny spending most of her inheritance to establish an antislavery farm in western Tennessee on 2,000 acres near Memphis. Named Nashoba, and first populated with ten slaves that she purchased, Wright's concept was to demonstrate the effectiveness of the gradual emancipation of slaves on a working farm.

After rejoining Lafayette in New Orleans, the sisters were seen again in Natchez and Louisville. In Pittsburgh, in June 1825, Fanny informed Lafayette of her detailed plans for Nashoba, and told him that she would not be returning to France with him. Other than another brief encounter in Boston, Lafayette had lost his Wright sister "groupies."

### **Francisque-Alphonse de Syon**

Francisque-Alphonse de Syon (1802-1857) was a French gentleman, the son of Antoine Marie de Syon (1759-1816 Baron de Saint-André), and Adelaide de Leusse (1774-1802). (Since de Syon's mother died at age 28 in the same year that he was born, it could be inferred that she died in childbirth.) Little is known about the early life of Francisque-Alphonse. It is said that in 1819, at the tender age of 17, he was an army officer in Italy. He later appears as Secretary at the Paris embassy of the King of Sardinia. He seems to have shared Lafayette's political views, being hostile to the authoritarian drift of France. In 1825 we find him in the United States in Washington City, evidently having shown up there before the Nation's Guest arrived on his Triumphant Tour. Why he came to the U.S., we don't know.

Lafayette's secretary, Levasseur described him as follows:

*Mr. de Syon, a very amiable young Frenchman of great intelligence who, on the invitation of General Lafayette, had left Washington with us to visit the States of the South and the West.*

Lafayette obviously enjoyed interacting with young intelligent people such as Fanny Wright and the 23-year-old de Syon. As it happened, just as Fanny was departing the Tour, de Syon arrived to take her place as Lafayette's "groupie", except, this time, de Syon openly traveled with George and Levasseur as part of the General's "family". Levasseur mentions de Syon only three times in his book: at their visit to Kaskaskia, Illinois; during the shipwreck of the *Mechanic* on the Ohio River; and later at Philadelphia, visiting the State of Schuylkill fishing club.



*Francisque-Alphonse de Syon*

The newspapers, on the other hand, DO mention de Syon as part of Lafayette's party, sometimes referring to him as "Count de Syon":

- In New Orleans he was introduced, and his seat at dinner was described.
- In Kaskaskia, Illinois he interacted with a Native American woman who had a family heirloom to show Lafayette (A letter to her father from him).
- In Shawneetown, Illinois he was mentioned as the General's party arrives.
- On the Ohio River, he was among the party that escaped the shipwreck of the *Mechanic*.
- He also signed the letter exonerating the *Mechanic's* captain Hall "F.A. DeSyon"

G. W. Lafayette  
Le Vasseur  
F. A. DeSyon

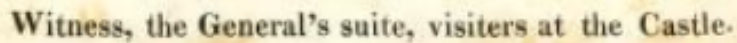
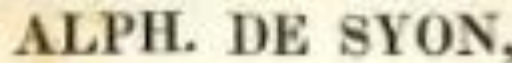
**I eagerly seize this opportunity of doing justice to Capt. Hall's conduct, and acknowledging my personal obligations to him.**

**La Fayette.**

- In Lexington, Kentucky, he was greeted and sat with George and Levasseur at Transylvania University.
- In Pittsburgh he was described as part of Lafayette's "family."
- In Meadville, Pennsylvania, home of Allegheny College, he signed a guest book "F. Alph. de Syon."



- In Fredonia, NY he was again greeted as a member of Lafayette's party.
- In Philadelphia he was part of the State of Schuylkill fishing club banquet.
- He witnessed Lafayette's written membership acceptance into the state, "Alph. de Syon"

- He was present at Lafayette's last visit to Thomas Jefferson at Monticello.
- He attended the final President's House dinner of the tour in Washington City, and he returned to France on the *Brandywine* with Lafayette.

Thus, it is apparent that de Syon was part of almost the entire 1825 portion of Lafayette's Triumphal Tour.

Back in France, de Syon authored several works, and appeared with Lafayette in a number of locations during the General's 1829 French tour. He is said to have attended a September 4, 1829 banquet challenging the King's power, and is remembered as distinguishing himself during the three glorious days of the French Revolution of 1830. Like Lafayette, he was a liberal espousing freedom and equality.

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### About the Author:

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## Pitching in at a Farewell Tour Event on Short Notice

by Peter Reilly

A lot of planning is going on for the upcoming bicentennial of Lafayette's Farewell Tour of 1824-1825. Still, there may be those moments when someone has to pitch in for an event with little warning. I thought you might find some inspiration if that were to happen from this account about the Phi Beta Kappa Exercises that took place in Cambridge, Massachusetts on the afternoon of August 26, 1824.

The exercises at which Lafayette was a guest of honor are most remembered for the hour and a half or so speech by Edward Everett who would go on to become one of the most celebrated public speakers in the United States. He is mostly remembered today for having given the two-hour warmup speech at the dedication of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863. He was followed by Abraham Lincoln's iconic Gettysburg Address, two to three minutes long, which, despite the President's modest self-assessment, has been long remembered.

Everett's Harvard oration on the "peculiar motive to intellectual exertion in America" is pretty well remembered as far as those things go. The speech closes with a great tribute to Lafayette. Before Everett, though, there was to be a poem by Dr. James G. Percival of Yale College. For some reason he couldn't make it, and Reverend Henry Ware Jr. was given just a day to prepare a poem suitable to the occasion.



*Portrait of Henry Ware by Sarah Goodrich*



Ware was the minister of the Unitarian Second Church in Boston. He was a mentor to Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), who succeeded him at Second Church in 1830. After Emerson's 1838 Divinity School Address, Ware distanced himself from Emerson and delivered a sermon titled "The Personality of the Deity" to refute Emerson. I have to admit some sympathy with Reverend Ware as I have never been able to understand Transcendentalism.

At any rate, Ware's brother John Ware in *Memoir of the Life of Henry Ware Jr.* gives us an account of that day:

The summer of 1824 was rendered memorable by the visit of Lafayette to the United States. He visited Boston in the latter part of August, and attended the Commencement at Harvard College in the last week of that month. Mr. Ware participated deeply in the general enthusiasm excited by this event, and was accidentally led to take a part in the public services to which it gave occasion. Lafayette had accepted an invitation to attend the annual celebration of the Society of Phi Beta Kappa, on the day after Commencement. The selection of Mr. Edward Everett, as the orator of the year, rendered it certain that so far the literary entertainment of the day would be worthy of the occasion. But the person originally appointed to deliver a poem failed to make his appearance, and my brother came to supply his place under the circumstances described below.

"August 28, 1824.

. . . . . "You may, perhaps, guess what an exhilarating week this has been. Nothing can exceed the splendor and happiness of the occasion. The scenes in the meeting house, and at the Phi Beta Kappa dinner, beggar description. You have seen, by the paper, that I presumed to manufacture a poem for the occasion. It happened thus. On Sunday evening, Father told me two remarkable dreams of Mr. Packard and Mrs. Fluker, about the year 1794. They struck my fancy, and, amid the strong excitement of the week, I versified them; and, Percival not appearing, I offered to declaim them. I hope I have escaped the charge of presumption, which I suppose I deserved, but, in the fervor of the season, had no time to think of. If any assail me with it, 'I'll print it, and shame the fools.'

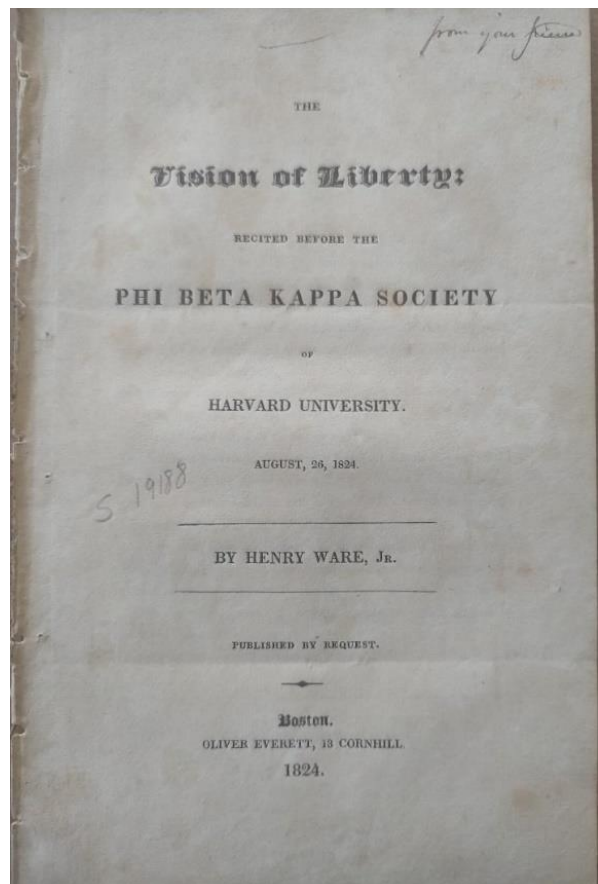
. . . . . "Everett's oration was very fine. The concluding address to Lafayette was one of the most affecting and overpowering efforts of eloquence I ever witnessed; it shook the whole audience, and bathed every face in tears. When he sat down, it was followed with nine cheers and an interminable clapping. Luckily I had spoken first. Two hundred dined with the Phi Beta Kappa, and there was a stream of wit and fine feeling flashing and flowing for two hours, with a brilliancy and rapidity that left no time to drink or speak, or to hear anything but cheerings, and clappings, and laughings. Lafayette enjoyed it highly, and cannot meet anything in America to surpass or equal what he has seen and enjoyed this week. What a favored man is he! enjoying 'a

triumph,' as Everett very well said, 'such as consuls and monarchs never knew.' One toast of Lafayette, at the Phi Beta Kappa, has not found its way into the paper; it was a comparison of the political institutions of America with those of Europe, and ended with an application of these words of Cicero: 'Quæ est in hominibus tanta perversitas, ut, frugibus inventis, glande vescantur?' ”

I asked my friend Google to translate the Latin but did not get a coherent answer. The last time I read Cicero in the original was 1969, so I will leave it at that. If you want to read the poem, search Google Books for “Vision of Liberty.” It was included in numerous collections. Here is one stanza that mentions Lafayette.

#### Stanza XVI

My eager eyes I upward threw,  
 The wonderous instrument to view,  
 In which such piercing power and ravishing sweetness met;  
 And on it a splendid form, behold,  
 Inscribed in living light and gold,  
 That all mankind might read – thy honored name, **FAYETTE!**



#### Editor's Note

The quote from Cicero is translated as follows: “What perversity in men is so great that, having found fruit, they eat acorns.



It's time to get outfitted for the Bicentennial! Click the "Shop" button on either [www.friendsoflafayette.org](http://www.friendsoflafayette.org) or [www.lafayette200.org](http://www.lafayette200.org) for hats, totes, several styles of shirts, and challenge coins. A portion of the proceeds will help fund the AFL's Bicentennial efforts.



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