

REVOLUTIONARY REFLECTIONS

FRENCH
MEMORIES
OF THE
WAR
FOR
AMERICA

I FEEL THAT LIBERTY WILL ULTIMATELY BE ESTABLISHED
IN THE OLD AS WELL AS IN THE NEW WORLD,
AND THAT THEN THE HISTORY OF OUR REVOLUTIONS
WILL PUT ALL THINGS AND ALL PERSONS IN THEIR PROPER PLACES.

Lafayette



The American Revolution marked the beginning of an age of democratic revolutions that swept over France and challenged the old order throughout the Atlantic world. The French officers who served in the American War of Independence, whether as idealistic volunteers or resolute soldiers of their king, remembered the experience for the rest of their lives. Many preserved their reflections on the revolution in America in daily diaries, private journals, and carefully composed memoirs, leaving us with a remarkable array of perspectives on America, Americans, and the first act in the age of revolution.

None of them could have foreseen that the war for America was a prelude to an even greater upheaval that would transform France. The astonishing turmoil of the French Revolution shaped and colored memories of the war for America. For some, the American war was a distant reflection of their unshakeable loyalty to their martyred king. Others cast themselves as chroniclers and historians of the American war, recognizing that they were witnesses to events that had changed their world. For the most visionary, the war for America was the first stage in an international struggle for liberty. Together their reflections remind us that historical memory is fragile, always shifting, and often very personal.

This catalog accompanies the
exhibition *Revolutionary Reflections:
French Memories of the War for America*,
on view April 5 – October 27, 2019,
at Anderson House, headquarters
of the American Revolution Institute
of the Society of the Cincinnati,
2118 Massachusetts Avenue, NW,
Washington, D.C. 20008.
Text by Jack D. Warren, Jr.,
Ellen McCallister Clark,
and Emily Schulz Parsons.
Design by Glenn A. Hennessey.



Soldiers of the king

Eighteenth-century France was dominated by aristocrats for whom military service was the primary path to social advancement and personal glory. The officers of the French army and navy were drawn almost entirely from the aristocracy. Most welcomed the war for America as an opportunity to serve their king, restore the honor of France (diminished by defeat in the Seven Years' War), and win distinction for themselves.

Dozens of French army officers volunteered for service in the Continental Army, and hundreds more arrived in America with Admiral d'Estaing in 1778, General Rochambeau in 1780, and General Saint-Simon in 1781. As aristocratic soldiers of a king, most regarded their rebel allies and republican ideals with skepticism. Many were fascinated by the American landscape and others by the character and habits of Americans. A few, among whom the young marquis de Lafayette proved the most important, recognized the war for America as a struggle for liberty, equality, natural and civil rights, and responsible citizenship—ideals inspired by the Enlightenment.

(opposite page)

Louis Seize, Roi des Français, Restaurateur de la Liberté
Jean-Guillaume Bervic, engraver, after Antoine François Callet, artist
Paris: Felix Hermet, ca. 1880s
The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of Paul A. Rockwell, 1959

Louis XVI was just twenty years old when he ascended to the French throne in 1774. His early support of the American Revolution, both unofficially and with the formal alliance of France and the United States in 1778, inspired George Washington to herald him as "a powerful Friend among the Princes of the Earth to establish our liberty and Independence."

This likeness of the king in his coronation robes was engraved in 1790. As the French Revolution turned more radical, the engraver broke the copperplate of the king's portrait into two pieces and destroyed all the printed proofs he had in his possession. The original plate was restored in the nineteenth century and additional impressions, such as this one, were made from it.

(above)
Allegorical portrait of Thomas François Lenormand de Victot Nicolas René Jollain (1732-1804)
1783
Oil on canvas
The Society of the Cincinnati, Museum Acquisitions Fund purchase, 2010

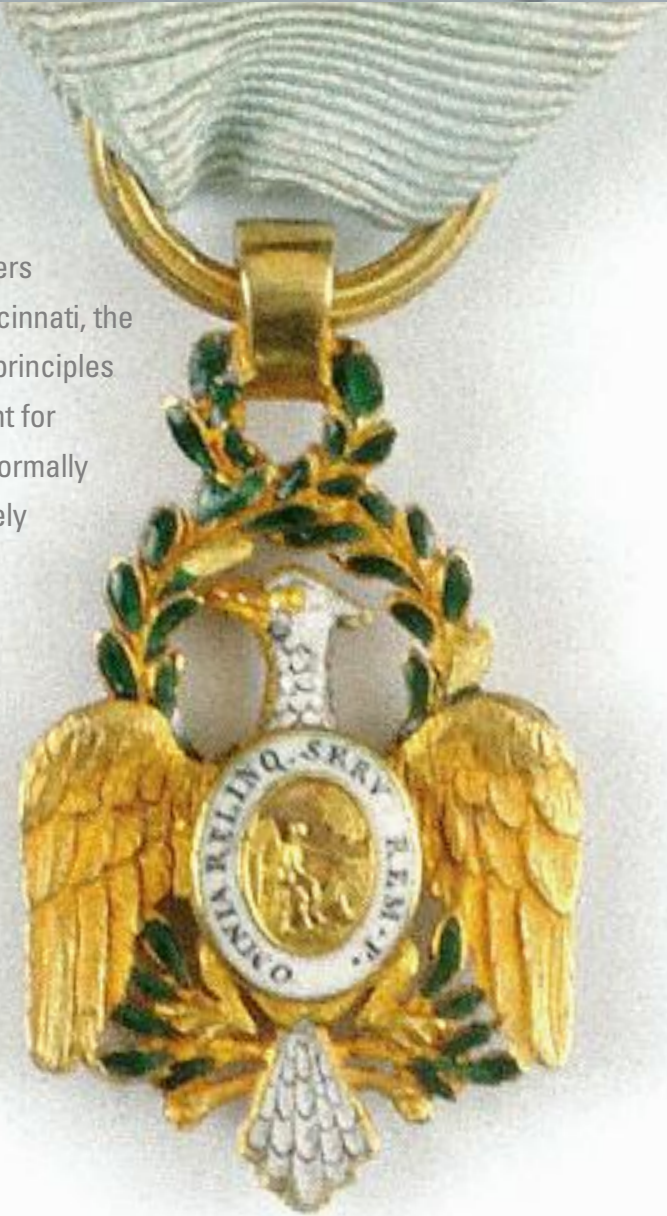
French memories of the war for America were reflected in the way families honored their dead. Thomas François Lenormand de Victot (1742-1782) died of disease at Fort Royal on Martinique in April 1782. His family commissioned this dramatic allegorical portrait to memorialize his sacrifice. It depicts the fallen French officer's spirit standing between Death and wounded sailors, who are receiving their last rites—with Fort Royal and de Grasse's fleet in the background.

Less than a year after the Revolutionary War ended, French officers who served in America formed a branch of the Society of the Cincinnati, the hereditary order founded in New York in 1783 to memorialize the principles of the American Revolution and the service of the men who fought for American independence. The Société des Cincinnati de France, formally established at a meeting in Paris on July 4, 1784, became extremely popular among French officers, as both a familiar military order recognizing their service to the king and a unique patriotic organization celebrating the Franco-American alliance that defeated Great Britain. More than two hundred veterans of the American war joined the French Society, whether they had served in the French military under the king or in the Continental forces under the American Congress.

The French Society was active for ten turbulent years before it went dormant during the violent height of the French Revolution. French officers clamored for membership in the organization but confusion over the rank necessary for eligibility and who could approve applications for membership dominated its early months. Louis XVI, who sanctioned the Society's Institution in December 1783, became patron of the Society in France and approved membership for officers. The French Society's association with the king and membership drawn almost entirely from the aristocracy forced the organization to go dormant by 1793 during the French Revolution, which abolished all royal orders and trappings of nobility.

Society of the Cincinnati Eagle insignia owned by Louis François Bertrand du Pont d'Aubevoye, comte de Lauberdrière Nicolas Jean Francastel and Claude Jean Autran Duval, Paris 1784
Gold, enamel, and silk
The Society of the Cincinnati, Museum Acquisitions Fund purchase, 2013

French officers desired to join the Society in part to be able to wear its gold insignia, a prestigious honor comparable to the Saint Louis and other European orders. This example belonged to the comte de Lauberdrière, an aide-de-camp to Rochambeau.



François-Joseph-Paul, comte de Grasse, marquis de Tilly
School of Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson (1767-1824)
ca. 1820
Oil on canvas
The Society of the Cincinnati, Museum Acquisitions Fund purchase, 2016

The Society's Institution named seven senior French officers individually as members of the organization, including Admiral de Grasse (1722-1788). In accepting Society membership and the right to wear its insignia, de Grasse wrote to Washington that "this visible symbol can add nothing to the sincere attachment which I feel for the brave defenders of American Independence, and that this further association with them and with yourself will ever be to me a source of boundless satisfaction."

*la Société des
Cincinnati de France*

Private impressions

Robert-Guillaume, baron de Dillon (1754-1837) was born in 1754 near Bordeaux, France, to an ennobled family of Irish descent. At age twenty-four he joined Lauzun's Legion, an elite volunteer cavalry regiment, serving first in Senegal and then, in May 1780, sailing with his regiment to America as part of Rochambeau's expeditionary force. He served as Lauzun's mestre de camp with the rank of colonel until the end of the war. For his service in America, Dillon was awarded the croix de Saint-Louis and membership in the Société des Cincinnati de France.



Dillon's manuscript journal covers the period November 1780 through the siege of Yorktown, where, commanding a troop of hussars, he was wounded in a cavalry fight near Gloucester, Virginia, in early October 1781. During his travels in America he recorded candid observations of the people he met. In addition to comments on men of prominence, such as Washington and Lafayette, Dillon also wrote about the appearance and manners of American women, whose "defiant modesty" was at times a challenge to his aggressive flirtations.

Washington, Généralissime des Etats Unis de l'Amerique
Juste Chevillet, engraver, after Charles Willson Peale and Michel Honoré Bounieu, artists
[Paris], ca. 1783-1788
The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

Upon meeting George Washington at his headquarters in New Windsor, New York, in January 1781, Dillon wrote in his journal: "Mr. Washington fulfilled entirely the idea I had had of him...his great character and his soul are apparent in his features; I recognized without difficulty the general out of a thousand officers of his army, he was one of the most handsome men that I've seen in my life."

Journal of Robert-Guillaume, baron de Dillon
Covering the period 1780-1781
The Society of the Cincinnati,
Gift of Rémy Galet-Lalande, 2014

Dillon's journal begins in November 1780 when Lauzun's Legion was in winter quarters in Lebanon, Connecticut. He received permission to explore the country on his own, traveling from New England down to Virginia and back to Connecticut to rejoin his regiment before they marched south to Yorktown.

... nous sommes allés... de l'autre côté, et s'est
après le chemin qui nous restait à faire pour arriver
à New Windsor. après avoir marché environ un mille,
nous arrivâmes à la maison où était logé le héros. D'une
révolution pour laquelle mon étonnement et mon admiration
augmentent à chaque instant. il était environ 5 heures, et
j'étais encore au dessert de son dîner, le Marquis de la Fayette
était à table avec lui, nous nous retirâmes par discrétion,
lorsque le Marquis, qu'on avait sans doute averti qu'il y
avait des officiers français à la porte, courut après nous,
et ayant reconnu M. Charles pour son ami, il nous
entraîna sur le champ dans la salle où était le Général
auquel il nous présenta. M. Washington nous tendit la
main affectueusement, je lui présentai la mienne avec une
inclination respectueuse, après quoi il se tourna vers M. de
Washington à qui il nous nomma ainsi qu'un général honnête
au Colonel Jayson qui dînait avec lui.

M. Washington remplît entièrement l'idée que je m'étais
faite de lui. il semble que la nature ^{de soit} lui prodigue ce
qu'elle accorde souvent avec tant de bonté. elle lui a donné un
air noble qui séduit à première vue, son grand caractère et
son âme se peignent sur son visage, je me souviens sans peine ce
général avec mille officiers de son armée, c'est un des plus beaux
hommes que j'ai vu de ma vie; mais c'est un genre de beauté qui
émane d'un plus de son âme que de son physique. ses manières
sont nobles et faciles, point d'embaras, point d'affectation, parlant
peu, mais avec force, sa voix est douce, sans force pour cela. Le
Majestueux qu'un organe mâle et distinct donne aux expressions
nous nous assîmes à table avec lui, et dînâmes plusieurs heures.
Quelques minutes après Madame Washington se retira, elle me
paraît beaucoup plus âgée que son mari. elle n'a jamais eu, je
crois, une figure agréable, mais elle apporte une grande fortune
à son mari.

Après dîner, nous nous assîmes dans une salle voisine où
nous restâmes jusqu'à l'heure du souper. j'eus une assez longue
conversation avec son excellence; comme ce n'était point à moi
à faire les questions, il lui en donna l'occasion.

...circulation française. Le 19 86...
...de Walli/ au son corps...
...Dedman...



François-Jean de Beauvoir, marquis de Chastellux (1734-1788) was already a celebrated soldier and man of letters when he arrived in America as a major general on the staff of General Rochambeau. He had served with distinction as a colonel during the Seven Years' War, but he was better known in France as a writer and philosopher. Fluent in English, Chastellux was the chief liaison between Rochambeau and Washington.

Chastellux was well acquainted with contemporary ideas about the natural world and about the nature of America and he was determined to make his own observations and come to his own conclusions. Among the spectacles he sought out was Virginia's Natural Bridge, which he visited after Yorktown.

Contemporary writers suggested that geological oddities like Niagara Falls and the Natural Bridge offered clues to the origins of the New World. Chastellux avoided biblical explanations for natural phenomena and rejected the idea that the bridge had been formed by rushing water, but he could find no evidence that it had been formed by an earthquake or a volcano. "It belongs to the learned of both worlds to judge of it." To facilitate that learned inquiry, Chastellux persuaded Rochambeau to order the baron de Turpin of the royal corps of engineers to return to the bridge to take detailed measurements. This engraving—the first depiction of the bridge—reflects Chastellux's scientific curiosity about America.



America observed

Voyages de M. le marquis de Chastellux dans l'Amérique Septentrionale dans les Années 1780, 1781 & 1782
François-Jean de Beauvoir, marquis de Chastellux
Paris: Chez Pault, Imprimeur du Roi, 1786
The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of Timothy W. Childs, 1983

From the moment he arrived in America, Chastellux took a keen interest in the people and country whose fight for independence they had come to aid. While the French army was still lodged at Newport, Chastellux published a volume of his travels around the northern states, which was printed by the press of the French fleet. He continued to make copious notes of his observations of the American landscape and culture through the army's march south to Yorktown, and after the allied victory he extended his stay for several months to continue his travels. In 1786, Chastellux published a two-volume account of his American experience, which included this plate of Natural Bridge.

General François-Ignace Ervoil d'Oyré
Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805)
1798
Oil on wood panel
The Schorr Collection

In this portrait, painted in the last year of his life, Oyré wears the croix de Saint Louis and the Eagle of the Society of the Cincinnati—reminders of his service to his king and his participation in the fight for American independence.

Accompanying Chastellux on his travels through Virginia was François-Ignace Ervoil, chevalier d'Oyré (1739-1798). A captain in the royal corps of engineers, Oyré was one of eight French engineers who joined forces with their counterparts in the American army to play an essential role in the planning and conduct of the Siege of Yorktown. Oyré received special commendation for pushing the second parallel of entrenchments forward to allow the capture of Redoubt 9, a crucial step towards the allied victory. He was promoted to the rank of major in 1782 and rose to lieutenant colonel the following year.

After his return from America, Oyré transcribed his notes of his wartime experiences into five small notebooks. Recalling the march south to Yorktown in the fall of 1781, Oyré described being part of a select group of officers accompanying General Rochambeau who made an overnight stop at Mount Vernon on September 11. General Washington had preceded them by two days and was there to greet them. It was the first time, Oyré noted, that the American commander had been home since the start of the war.



*"Notes Relatives aux mouvemens
de l'armee françoise en Amerique"*
François-Ignace Ervoil d' Oyré
Covering the period 1780-1783
The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert
Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection



Witnessing history

Based in Saint-Domingue during the American Revolutionary War, Jean-Baptiste Dupleix de Cadignan (1738-1824) participated in the Sieges of Savannah and Pensacola. In August 1781, his regiment sailed with the French fleet to the Chesapeake where it would play a critical role in the Siege of Yorktown. After witnessing the British surrender on October 19, Dupleix de Cadignan returned to the West Indies. He won commendation and a pension for his valor during the French invasion of St. Kitts in 1782.

Dupleix de Cadigan's two-volume journal covers his participation in military campaigns over a period of nearly thirty years. The section on the war for America runs more than three hundred pages, from his departure for Saint-Domingue in September 1777 to his return to France in 1782. Drawing from personal notes, logbooks, official reports, and contemporary histories, he created a highly detailed chronicle of the war that procured American independence.

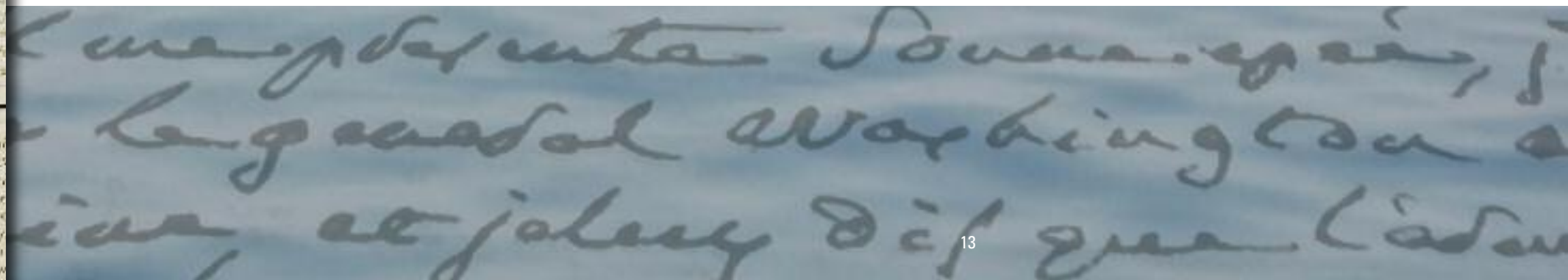


**"Journal des differentes
campagnes que j'aÿ fait soit
par terre ou par mer"
Jean-Baptiste Dupleix
de Cadignan
Covering the period 1754-1785
The Society of the Cincinnati,
The Robert Charles Lawrence
Fergusson Collection**

Dupleix de Cadignan's journal gives a day-by-day account of Yorktown, including a transcription of the Articles of Capitulation followed by a detailed description of the surrender ceremony.

Reddition de l'Armée du Lord Cornwallis
François Godefroy, engraver, after Jean Jacques
François Lebarbier, artist
From *Recueil d'Estampes Representant les
Différents Événemens de la Guerre qui a Procuré
l'Indépendance aux Etats Unis de l'Amérique*
Paris: Chés Mr. Godefroy...et chés Mr. Ponce, ca.
1784
The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles
Lawrence Fergusson Collection

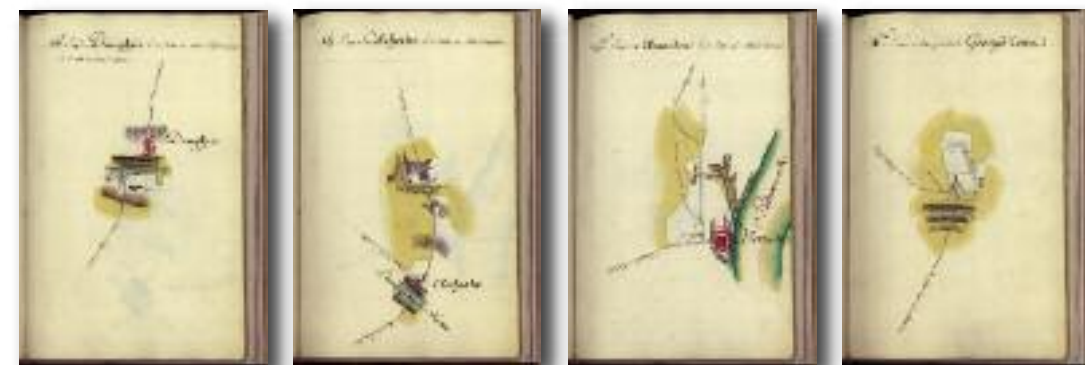
This contemporary French engraving of the British surrender at Yorktown depicts the moment, described in Dupleix de Cadignan's journal, when General Charles O'Hara, representing Lord Cornwallis, tried to present the British commander's sword to Rochambeau, who in turn pointed him toward General Washington.



the Return march

Henri-Dominique, chevalier de Palys de Montrepos (1733-1803) joined the royal corps of engineers in 1753 and had attained the rank of major by the time he came to America as part of Rochambeau's expeditionary force. For his services at Yorktown he was promoted to lieutenant colonel and sous brigadier of his corps. He was a knight of the order of Saint Louis and became a member of the Société des Cincinnati de France in 1792. He served as a maréchal de camp during the French Revolution but retired from service under suspicion of anti-revolutionary activity.

Palys de Montrepos' journal documents his voyage across the Atlantic from France to America, the army's arrival and residency in Newport, Rhode Island, and their subsequent march to Yorktown in 1781. The journal is silent on the details of the Yorktown siege and allied victory, but it picks up again as the French troops marched from Virginia north to Boston, from where they would depart for France. The orders to march were given on June 24, 1782. The soldiers marched from Williamsburg in four divisions of about one thousand men each, departing on subsequent days beginning on the first of July. The third division, in which Palys de Montrepos marched, crossed the Potomac at Georgetown, then part of the state of Maryland, on July 20. They camped about a mile to the east on Rock Creek in the vicinity where the Society of the Cincinnati's headquarters, Anderson House, now stands.



Plates from "Amérique campagne 1782: Plans des différents camps occupés par l'armée aux ordres de Mr. le Comte de Rochambeau" Louis-Alexandre Berthier
Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division

"Journal tenu par Henri Dque. de Palys, Chevalier d'Montrepos pendant son voyage en mer, pour aller en Amerique, 1780-1783"

Henri-Dominique, chevalier de Palys de Montrepos

Covering the period 1780-1783

The Society of the Cincinnati, Purchased with a gift from a private foundation, 2014

Palys de Montrepos' personal journal, kept during the American expedition, takes the form of rough notes of the places he visited, the people he met, and the events he witnessed. It is the kind of daily diary that might well have formed the basis for some of the more polished journals written up by French officers after the war.

Revolutionary upheaval

The expenses of the American war drove the French government to insolvency, hastening the outbreak of revolution in 1789. Moderate revolutionaries led by Lafayette proclaimed a new era of tolerance, equality before the law, and respect for natural rights.

Moderation collapsed in 1792. On August 10, revolutionaries stormed the Tuileries, slaughtered the king's guards, and arrested the king. Louis XVI was executed on January 21, 1793. From June 1793 through July 1794, tens of thousands of French citizens were arrested as enemies of the state and nearly seventeen thousand were condemned to death during the period of political violence known as the Terror.

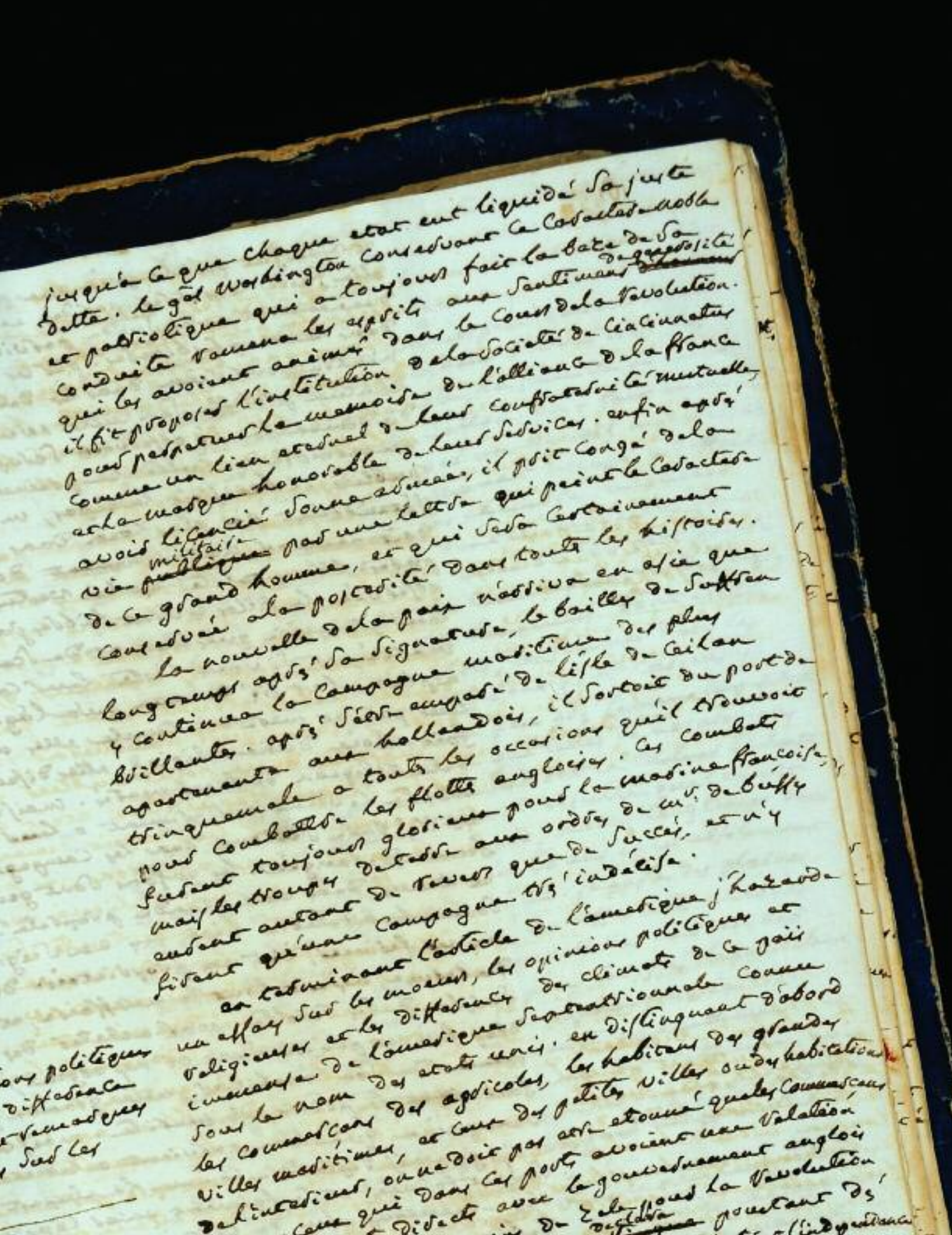
Scores of aristocratic officers of the American war were executed during the Terror, including Admiral d'Estaing, who had commanded the first French expedition in support of the American revolutionaries and was twice wounded in the Siege of Savannah. He went to the guillotine in April 1794. His crime was testifying to save the life of Marie Antoinette.

Charles Hector, comte d'Estaing (detail)
Attributed to Jean Baptiste Le Paon
(1738-1785)
ca. 1785
Oil on canvas
The Society of the Cincinnati,
Museum purchase, 2001



(left)
*La Tableau Moral Raisonné des
Symboles de la République* (detail)
Nürnberg: Joh. Andreä Endterische
Handlung, ca. 1794
The Society of the Cincinnati,
The Robert Charles Lawrence
Fergusson Collection

Based on a popular children's history, *Livre Indispensable aux Enfants de la Liberté*, this print reflects the radical transformation of the French Revolution that began in the summer of 1792. Allegorical and historical figures associated with the moderate American Revolution are juxtaposed with those of the radical Jacobins who violently imposed political orthodoxy.



Mémoires Militaires, Historiques et Politiques de Rochambeau
Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau
Paris: Chez Fain, imprimeur, 1809
The Society of the Cincinnati, Purchased with a gift from a private foundation, 2016

Rochambeau's manuscript memoir was edited and published after his death. This copy belonged to Rochambeau's son, Donatien, a military officer who had served under his father in America. Of his father, Donatien wrote in the book: "He rallies the strongest patriotism, a true fatherly love for his soldiers. He did not court favor, was consulted by all ministers, and never wanted to be one."

Lasting respect

Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau (1725-1807) had been a military officer for thirty-eight years when Louis XVI appointed him commander of the French expeditionary force sent to aid the American fight for independence. With an army of five thousand men, he sailed from the French port of Brest in early May 1780, arriving in Newport, Rhode Island, in mid-July. The following summer he and Washington, under whose orders he served, combined forces to march to Virginia to entrap Cornwallis's army at Yorktown. For his service to the United States, Rochambeau received a proclamation of thanks from Congress and two captured British cannons.

In 1791, Louis XVI appointed Rochambeau maréchal de France. Rochambeau commanded the Army of the North during the early years of the French Revolution, but he was arrested during the Reign of Terror in 1794 and narrowly escaped execution. Pleading his case to the court, the general who had fought for liberty on two continents invoked the "principles I learned from Washington, my colleague and my friend, when we were fighting side by side for American independence." He was released after the execution of Robespierre and returned home. Rochambeau lived out his last years at his château on the banks of the Loire in central France. It was during this period of retirement that Rochambeau wrote his memoirs, reflecting on his experiences over seven decades of war and political transformation.

"Manuscript des memoires politiques et militaires du Marechal de Rochambeau"
Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau
Covering the period 1725-1807
The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of the Rochambeau family, 2016

Having survived the Reign of Terror and witnessed Napoleon's rise to power, Rochambeau wrote with special feeling about George Washington's resignation and return to civilian life at the end of the Revolutionary War.

Uncompromising royalist



Claude-Anne de Rouvroy, marquis de Saint-Simon-Montbléru (1743-1819) was intensely loyal to his king through a military career that spanned sixty-three years. Ordered north with Admiral de Grasse in August 1781, he joined in the Siege of Yorktown, where he commanded the left flank, barring a British escape by the road to Williamsburg. The highest-ranking officer wounded on either side, he remained at his post and joined the other allied generals in receiving the British surrender.

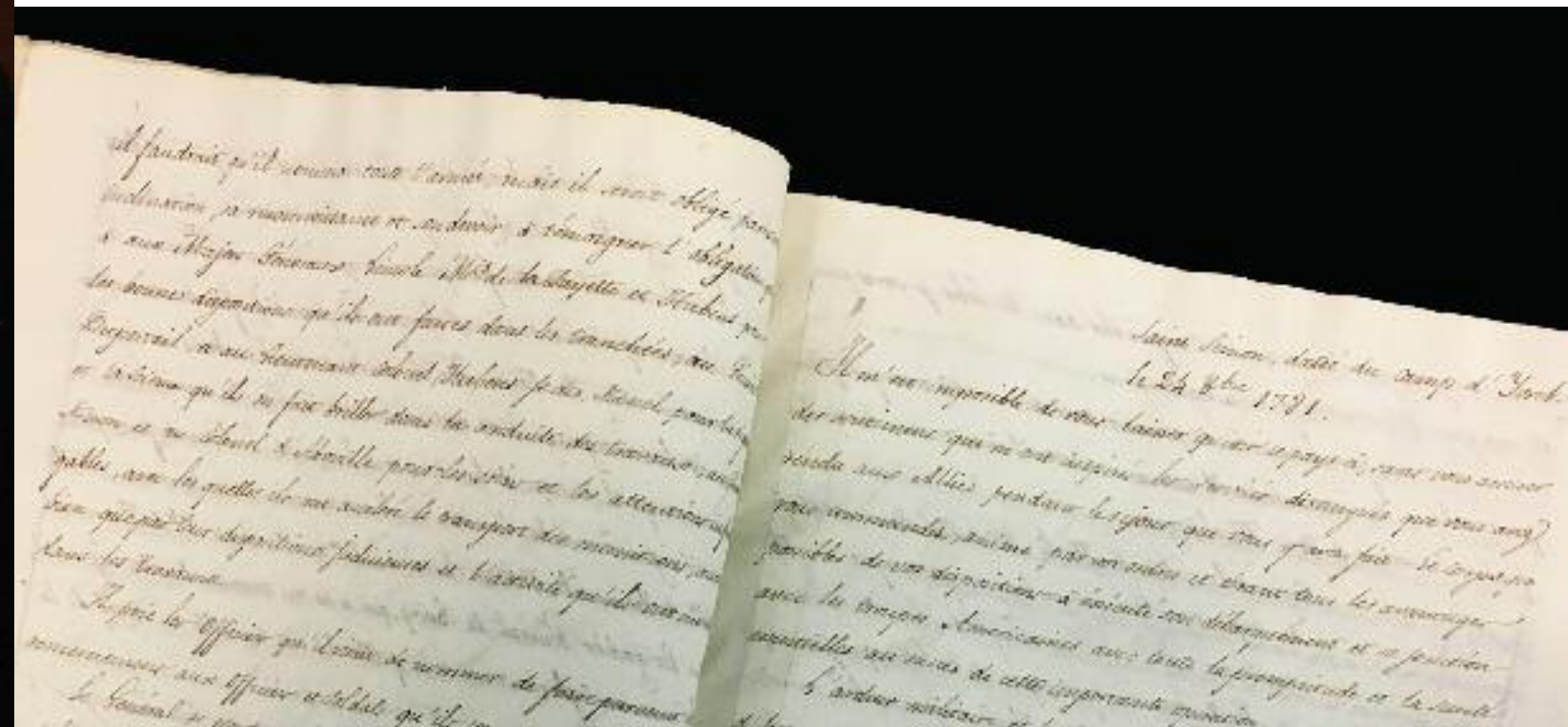
A fierce royalist, Saint-Simon emigrated to Spain in 1792 and organized a legion to fight the French revolutionaries in the Pyrenees. After the execution of Louis XVI, Saint-Simon served the Bourbon kings of Spain. He commanded his legion until he was severely wounded. Appointed a general in the Spanish army, he commanded Spanish troops in the defense of Madrid in 1808 and was captured when the city fell. Saint-Simon was released from prison in 1814 and was showered with honors by the restored Bourbon king of Spain, Ferdinand VII. He ended his career as captain-general, the highest rank in the Spanish army, and a grandee of Spain of the first grade, the highest rank in the Spanish aristocracy.

Claude-Anne de Rouvroy, marquis de Saint-Simon-Montbléru
Vicente López y Portaña (1772-1850)
ca. 1815-1818
Oil on canvas
The Society of the Cincinnati,
Museum Acquisitions Fund purchase, 2018

In this portrait, Saint-Simon wears a Spanish army uniform with the blue and white sash and star of the Order of Charles III, the highest Spanish military honor of the time, as well as a gold and silver medal suspended from a yellow ribbon, presented by Ferdinand VII to soldiers imprisoned by the French. He also wears the cross of the French military Order of Saint Louis and the insignia of the Society of the Cincinnati.

*"Journal de la campagne des états unis d'Amérique
dépuis le 5 Juillet 1781 jusqu'au 12 Avril 1782"*
Claude-Anne de Rouvroy, marquis de Saint-Simon-Montbléru
Covering the period 1781-1782
Courtesy of Comte Patrick de Rouvroy de Saint Simon

Saint-Simon's journal of his campaigns in America features an account of the Siege of Yorktown, recording statistics on the strength and casualties of French troops, a daily account of the allies' gradual advance on the British lines, and even footnotes to provide more explanation.



Champion of liberty

Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert Du Motier, marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834) devoted his life to the cause of liberty. Commissioned a major general in the Continental Army at nineteen, Lafayette soon established himself as one of General Washington's most trusted officers. He sailed back to France in 1779 to persuade Louis XVI to increase support for the United States, and returned to command the small army that pinned Cornwallis at Yorktown until Washington and Rochambeau arrived. He returned to France as an international hero.

Lafayette welcomed the French Revolution as an opportunity to secure the kind of liberty for France that he had fought for in America. He wrote the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, inspired by his experience in the American Revolution, and sent the key to the fallen Bastille to George Washington "as a missionary of liberty to its patriarch." Unable to contain the violent radicalism of the Jacobins, Lafayette fled France in 1792. Captured by the Austrians, he was imprisoned for four years. Many of his friends and members of his family died on the guillotine. He returned to France to find most of his fortune confiscated. Despite these misfortunes, Lafayette remained optimistic about the ultimate triumph of liberty, and never wavered in his devotion to it.

The Marquis de La Fayette Major General in the Armies of the United States of America
Charles Willson Peale, artist and engraver
Philadelphia, 1787
The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

Based on Charles Willson Peale's life portrait of Lafayette in 1780, this mezzotint captures the direct gaze of the idealistic young major general in his Continental Army uniform. Of the American Revolution, Lafayette wrote in his memoir, "Such a glorious cause had never before attracted the attention of mankind."

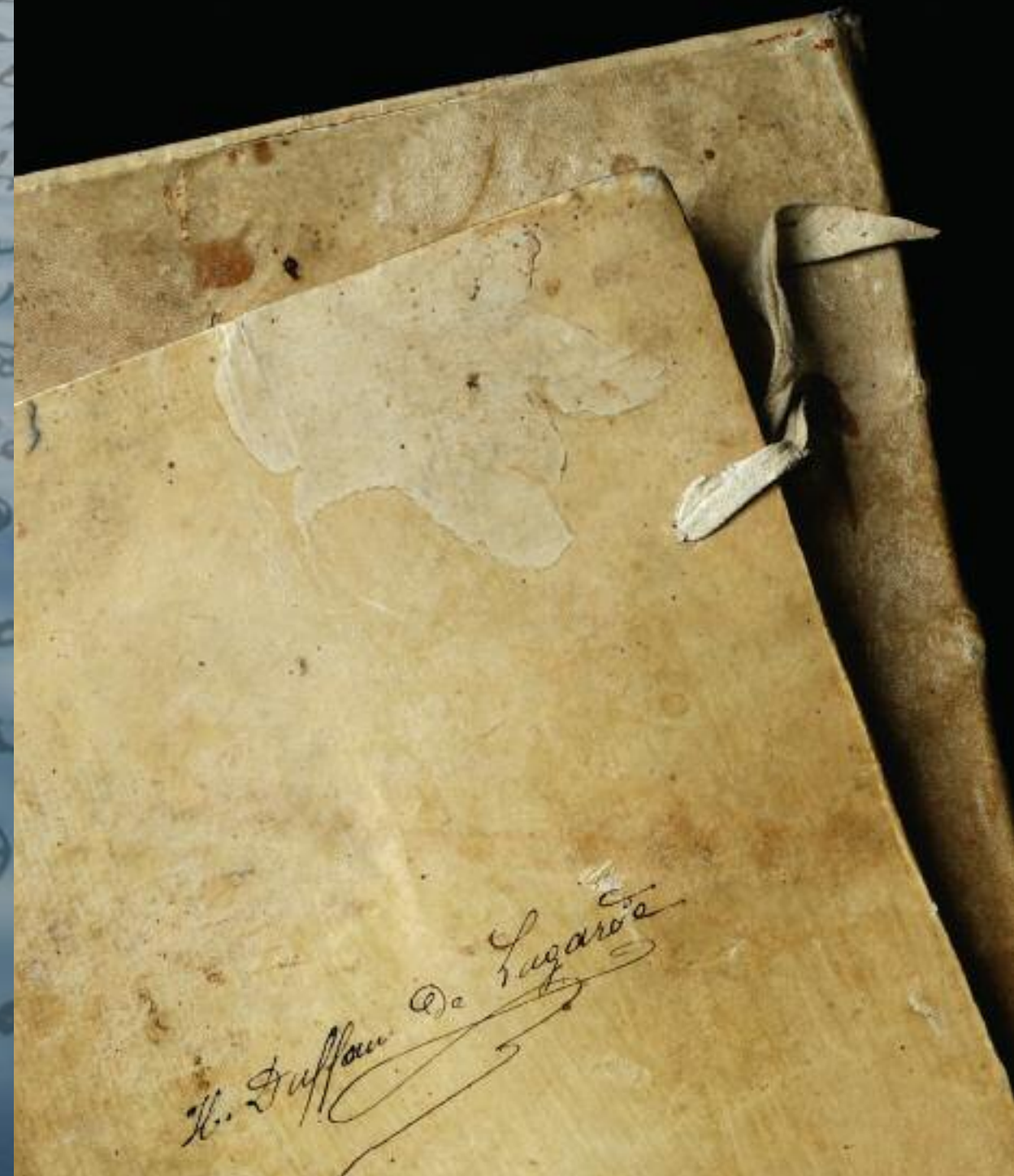


General Lafayette at the Anniversary of the Battle of York Town, Oct. 19, 1824
William Russell Birch (1755-1834) after Ary Scheffer (1795-1858)
ca. 1824-1834
Enamel on copper
The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of the Friends of the Boush-Tazewell House, Inc., 1991

This portrait celebrates Lafayette's return to Yorktown while on a tour of the United States in 1824 and 1825. A crowd of more than ten thousand greeted the French hero on the forty-third anniversary of the British surrender. Recalling their triumph decades earlier, Lafayette dined on the battlefield with fellow war veterans under George Washington's headquarters tent.

Society of the Cincinnati Eagle insignia
Paris, France
ca. 1830-1832
Gold and enamel
The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of
the estate of Mabel S. Daveis, 1950

During Lafayette's visit to Virginia in 1824, George Washington's adopted granddaughter Eleanor (Nelly) Parke Custis Lewis presented Lafayette with a distinctive Society insignia Washington had owned. Lafayette treasured the symbol of his participation in the American Revolution and his ties to its beloved leader. In 1830, Lafayette gave permission to Charles Stewart Daveis, a member of the Massachusetts branch of the Society, to have this replica made for Daveis to take with him back to America.



This exhibition brings together some of the greatest treasures of the American Revolution Institute's collections, in combination with several key items on loan from private individuals. The Institute is especially grateful to members of the Rochambeau family for their gift of General Rochambeau's manuscript memoir and to Rémy Galet-Lalande for his gift of the original journal of Robert-Guillaume, baron de Dillon. Several of the featured books, manuscripts, and works of art were purchased with special grants from a private foundation and through the generosity of donors to the Institute's acquisitions funds. Many of the other items exhibited are part of the Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection, which honors the memory of a member of the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Virginia who died of wounds sustained in combat in Vietnam.

In addition, the Institute gratefully acknowledges the lenders to the exhibition: Comte Patrick de Rouvroy de Saint Simon, The Schorr Collection, and a private collector who prefers to remain anonymous.

Special thanks go to Dr. Robert A. Selig, whose deep knowledge of the French officers and their experience in America during the Revolutionary War guided and informed this exhibition.



Detail of Le Général Lafayette
Achille Moreau, engraver, after Jean Auguste Dubouloz, artist
1825
The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection



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