



FETE

A French Hero's Tour of the American Republic

LAFAYETTE



Background: Detail of *Carte Générale des Etats-Unis et Itinéraire de Lafayette* (Paris, 1829).

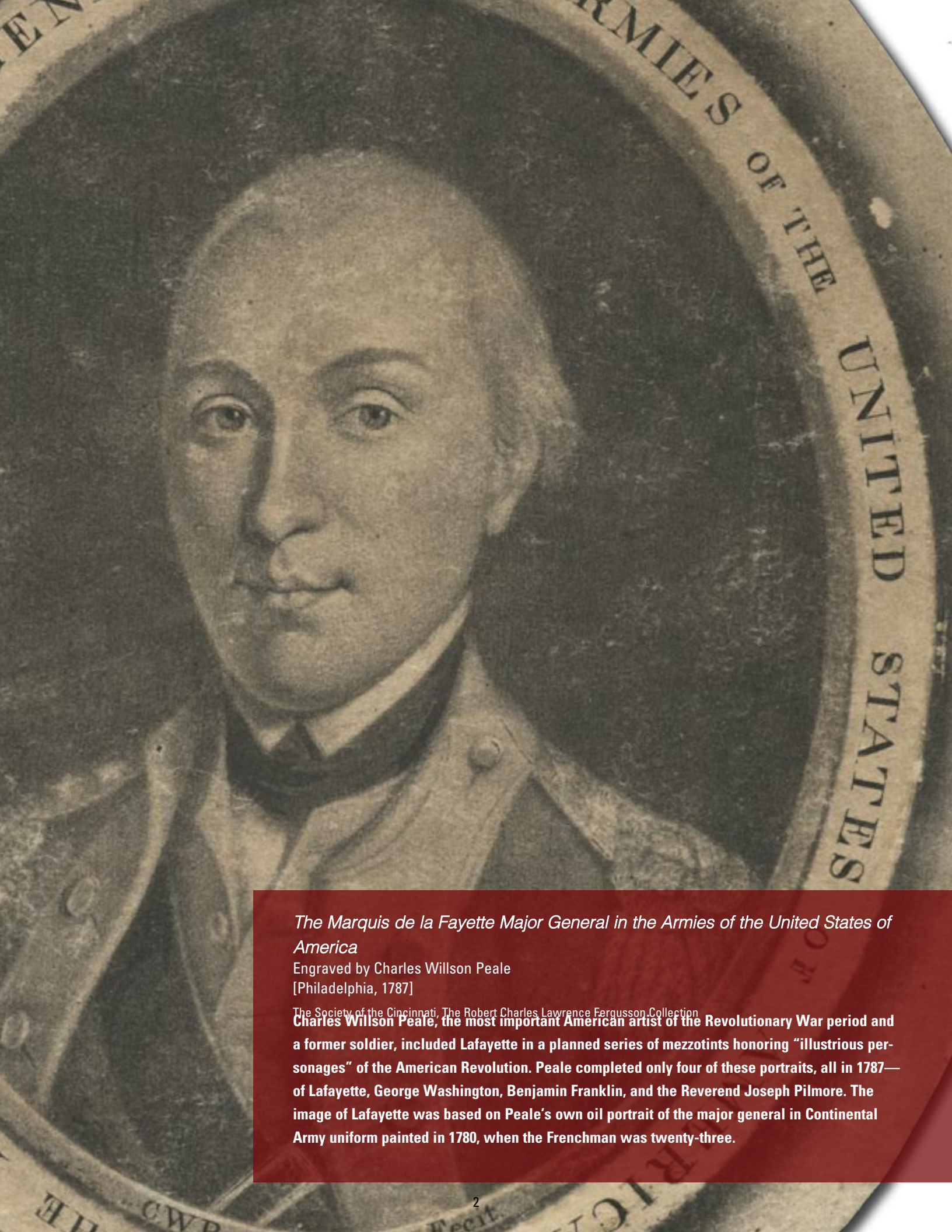
Lafayette College.

This French map of the route Lafayette took through America on his farewell tour charts his travels over land in red and on water in blue.



On the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the American Revolution, the marquis de Lafayette embarked on a tour of the United States, returning for a final time to the country he helped establish and whose republican form of government he saw as a model for the rest of the world. In August 1824, Lafayette sailed into New York Harbor, beginning a thirteen-month tour of the United States that took the Frenchman to all twenty-four states of the union. He was celebrated in each city and town, and the routes along the way, with processions, banquets and receptions, worship services, and visits to important sites—along with a flood of souvenirs that met the intense demand for a memento of the French hero.

Lafayette’s farewell tour highlighted the country’s revolutionary ideals and origins for a new generation. To Americans in the 1820s, Lafayette represented the French alliance that helped to win American independence and the soldiers who served in the Revolutionary War, providing a personal link to George Washington and other founders of the nation. His farewell tour revived an interest in and appreciation for the Revolution, its ideals, and its veterans in popular American culture. It celebrated the United States’ ongoing experiment in democracy, while exposing ways in which the ideals of the Declaration of Independence had not been fully applied in America, as Lafayette argued for an end to slavery and an expansion of civil rights for all citizens. Two hundred years after he last set foot in the United States, Lafayette remains a symbol of French-American friendship, universal liberty, and patriotic service.



The Marquis de la Fayette Major General in the Armies of the United States of America

Engraved by Charles Willson Peale
[Philadelphia, 1787]

The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

Charles Willson Peale, the most important American artist of the Revolutionary War period and a former soldier, included Lafayette in a planned series of mezzotints honoring “illustrious personages” of the American Revolution. Peale completed only four of these portraits, all in 1787—of Lafayette, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and the Reverend Joseph Pilmore. The image of Lafayette was based on Peale’s own oil portrait of the major general in Continental Army uniform painted in 1780, when the Frenchman was twenty-three.

Lafayette, A Life

Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert Du Motier, marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834), devoted his life to the cause for liberty. Born into an aristocratic French family, he was orphaned at the age of thirteen with a sizeable inheritance. Three years later, the young marquis married Adrienne de Noailles, the fourteen-year-old daughter of a powerful French family, who became a devoted partner in his life’s passions. Soon the American Revolution would offer Lafayette his first chance to fight for the principles of liberty and freedom that would guide the rest of his life. He served for more than five years in the Revolutionary War, proving to be a brave battlefield commander as well as an indispensable advocate of the Franco-American alliance. Once American independence was secured, Lafayette returned to France as an international hero. There he was instrumental in organizing the French branch of the Society of the Cincinnati, an organization founded to memorialize the principles of the American Revolution and the service of those who fought for American independence—on both the American and French sides.

Lafayette hoped to secure the kind of liberty for France and other countries that he had fought for in America. An early leader of the French Revolution, he was the

principal author of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and the commander of the Paris National Guard. But unable to contain the violent radicalism of the Jacobins, Lafayette fled France in 1792, was captured by the Austrians, and was imprisoned for five years. He returned to France to find that most of his fortune was confiscated and many of his friends and members of his family had died on the guillotine. Under the reigns of Napoleon, Louis XVIII, Charles X, and Louis Philippe, Lafayette continued to agitate for the principles of the early French Revolution, which he feared had been forgotten.



Lafayette’s most enduring legacy is his commitment to securing universal liberty for all men and women. His efforts to end slavery and the African slave trade set him apart from most of his peers. Lafayette participated in abolition societies in the United States and France, argued in the French National Assembly for the rights of free blacks, lobbied his slave-owning American friends on emancipation, and even purchased property in the Caribbean where he thought enslaved people could eventually be freed and given work. While he never lived to see his dreams of a republican French government or freedom for enslaved people realized, his impassioned calls for liberty echo through his successors over the last two centuries.

Commemorative plate

Enoch Wood & Sons, Burslem, England
ca. 1825-1830

Transfer-printed earthenware

The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of the Friends of the Boush-Tazewell House, Inc., 1991

Lafayette was born at the Château de Chavaniac in the rural Auvergne region of France, but he is most closely associated with La Grange, where he moved in 1800. The fourteenth-century château descended in the family of Adrienne’s mother. Situated forty miles outside Paris, it was a retreat for Lafayette, while also becoming a mecca for American visitors in the early nineteenth century. This transfer-printed plate pictures the northern view of La Grange, based on a lithograph done by American artist Alvan Fisher.

*"I OFTEN DREAM OF THE DAY WHEN
I WILL BE ABLE, WITHOUT REMORSE,
TO ENJOY THE HAPPINESS OF
FINDING MYSELF ONCE AGAIN ON
AMERICAN GROUND."*

MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE, NOVEMBER 25, 1823

The Farewell Tour

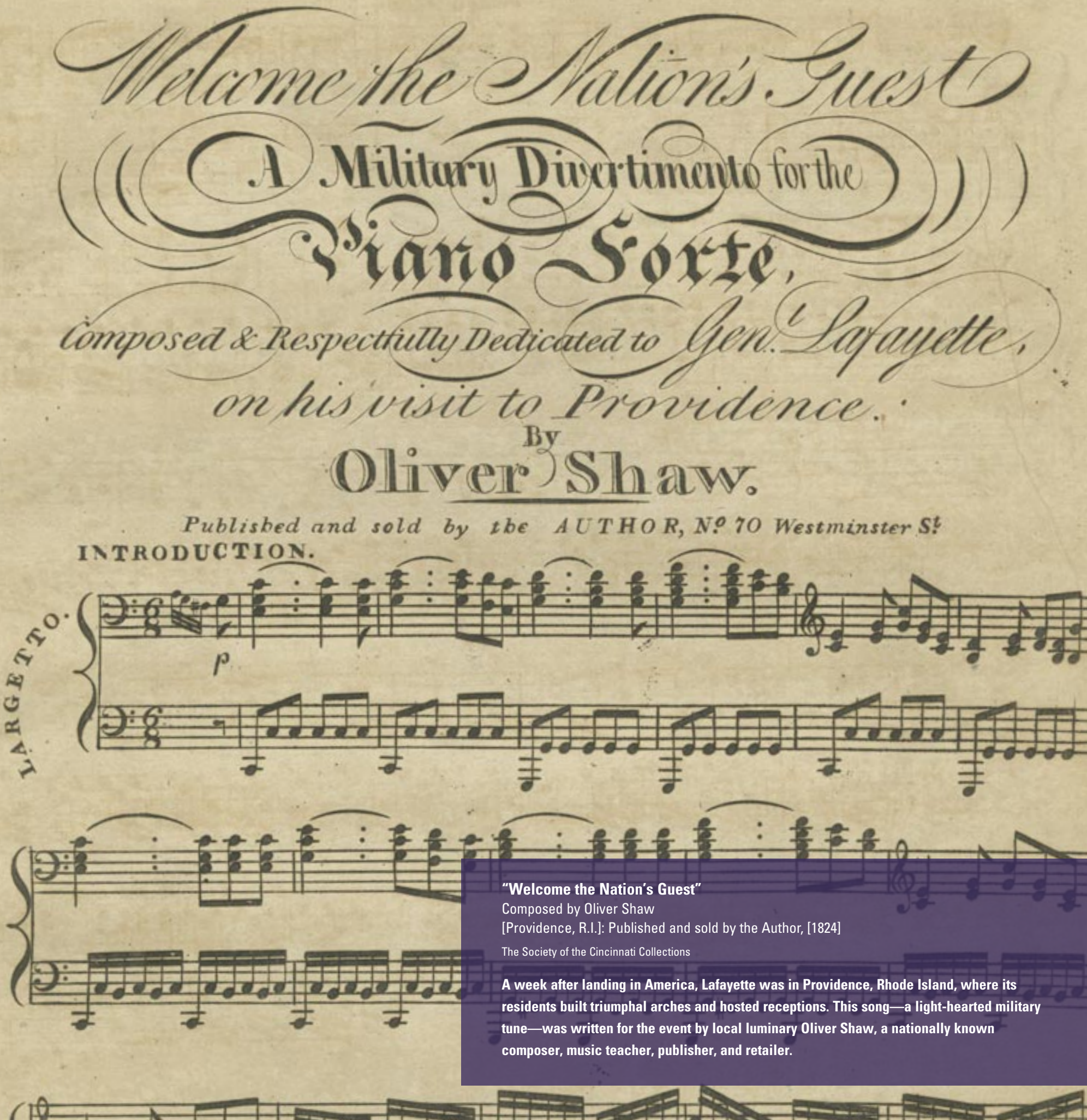
Lafayette's final visit to the United States—a farewell tour for the American hero—lasted for thirteen months, from his arrival in New York Harbor in August 1824 to his departure down the Potomac River in September 1825. The journey was Lafayette's idea. In late 1823, the sixty-six-year-old had written to President James Monroe of his desire to "visit the happy shores of an adopted land which has so filled my first and most presumptuous hopes." Following the passage of a joint resolution of Congress, Monroe wrote to his fellow veteran of the Revolution in February 1824, formally inviting him, on behalf of the American people, to return to his adopted country. Lafayette left France in July, embarking on his seventh transatlantic voyage.

Lafayette's farewell tour was the grandest celebration the young American republic had ever seen. Initially planned as a visit to the original thirteen states over four months, the tour grew to an exhausting journey through all twenty-four states and the federal city of Washington. Lafayette traveled across the country by carriage, coach, and boat, drawing unprecedented crowds to parades, speeches, dinners, balls, worship services, and ceremonies at important sites. Merchants and manufacturers on both sides of the Atlantic offered a dizzying array of souvenirs bearing Lafayette's name or face. Americans who were lucky enough to attend an event for the "Nation's Guest" kept mementoes from the day—a drum carried in a parade, a glass used at a dinner, a gown worn at a ball—often passing these treasures, and the stories they tell, down to future generations.

Welcome the Nation's Guest
A Military Divertimento for the
Piano Forte,
Composed & Respectfully Dedicated to Gen. Lafayette,
on his visit to Providence.
By
Oliver Shaw.
Published and sold by the AUTHOR, N^o 70 Westminster St.

INTRODUCTION.

LARGETTO.



"Welcome the Nation's Guest"
Composed by Oliver Shaw
[Providence, R.I.]: Published and sold by the Author, [1824]
The Society of the Cincinnati Collections

A week after landing in America, Lafayette was in Providence, Rhode Island, where its residents built triumphal arches and hosted receptions. This song—a light-hearted military tune—was written for the event by local luminary Oliver Shaw, a nationally known composer, music teacher, publisher, and retailer.



Commemorative plate

James and Ralph Clews, Staffordshire, England
ca. 1824
Transfer-printed earthenware

The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of Eugene W. Potter, New York State Society of the Cincinnati, 1991

On August 16, 1824, Lafayette made a triumphal landing at Castle Garden, a fort built to protect Manhattan before the War of 1812 that was converted into an entertainment center in the 1820s. Some thirty thousand admirers gathered at Castle Garden to watch Lafayette come ashore. The spectacle inspired engravings and transfer-printed ceramics of the scene, showing cannon saluting the ships in the harbor.

Scottish Rite Lodge of Perfection Masonic apron

American
ca. 1815-1825
Silk, paint, and gold leaf

The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of Isabel Anderson, 1938

Freemasonry was a common bond for Lafayette and many of his comrades -in-arms in the Revolutionary War, as well as American citizens during his farewell tour. Lafayette probably first joined a lodge in Paris in December 1775. Fifty years later, American Masons held elaborate ceremonies for Lafayette, named lodges in his honor, and bestowed upon him honorary degrees. This Masonic apron was owned by Richard Clough Anderson, a former aide-de-camp to Lafayette and founder of the first lodge in Louisville, Kentucky. Lafayette is said to have worn the apron when he visited the city in May 1825.



Commemorative sash

American
1824
Silk and ink

The Society of the Cincinnati, Museum purchase, 2023

Lafayette spent less than a day in Newburyport, Massachusetts, in late August 1824, but its citizens still greeted him with crowds, cannon, bells, and parading soldiers. Sarissa Kimball, the six-year-old daughter of local merchant Moses Kimball, Jr., wore to the occasion this silk sash printed with “Welcome La Fayette” above his portrait.

Goblet

George Aiken, Baltimore, Md.
ca. 1790-1810
Silver

The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of Lt. Gen. Ridgely Gaither, Jr.,
Society of the Cincinnati of Maryland, 1973

Over the winter of 1824-1825, Lafayette resided in the city of Washington, making frequent trips to nearby towns and friends’ homes in Virginia and Maryland. On one of his visits to the Baltimore area he called on the Ridgely family at Hampton mansion. This silver goblet, which bears the Ridgely crest, was used to toast Lafayette. Owned by Charles Carnan Ridgely, a former governor of Maryland, Hampton was one of the largest private homes in America at the end of the eighteenth century. It was also the home of more than three hundred enslaved people, some of whom were manumitted in Ridgely’s will.



Accounts of the Tour

Recognizing the importance of Lafayette's farewell tour, thousands of newspaper reporters, authors, and private individuals wrote about the events they witnessed. Their accounts of the Frenchman and his activities—some filling in lost details and others offering commentary and perspective—shared news of the tour with friends and family, as well as readers across the country and elsewhere in the world. Those who penned personal letters described the scenes of the tour, Lafayette's appearance, and their emotions upon seeing the general, while some bemoaned what they considered adulation that was unbecoming of true republicans. George Washington Parke Custis, the adopted grandson of George Washington, turned his numerous private meetings with Lafayette during the tour into a series of sixteen essays, collectively known as "Conversations of Lafayette," which first appeared in newspapers in 1825. Four years after Lafayette returned home, his secretary, Auguste Levasseur, published his journal of their visit to America, which remains the most extensive account of this historic event.

"SOMETIMES THE TEARS RAN FROM MY EYES & SOMETIMES I LAUGHED, SO CARRIED AWAY WAS I ..."

AMASA WALKER OF BOSTON, MASS., JUNE 18, 1825



Elizabeth Crosby to Emily Abbot August 27, 1824 The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of Catherine C. Abbot, 1999

Elizabeth Crosby wrote this account of Lafayette's visit to Charlestown, Massachusetts, in late August 1824 in response to an acquaintance's request for a contribution to an album. Referring to Lafayette as a "distinguished stranger," Elizabeth initially questioned her countrymen's adulation for him: "But why run mad for this; there is as much due to La Fayette as to any other general of equal merit, and no more." The emotions of the day overtook her, though, and she "could not help joining in the general feeling of the people." She closed her letter with the inscription on the triumphal arch erected in town: "We bow not the neck, We bend not the knee, But our hearts, La Fayette, We surrender to thee."

Lafayette en Amérique, en 1824 et 1825, ou Journal d'un Voyage aux Etats-Unis Auguste Levasseur Paris: A la Librairie Baudouin, 1829 The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

In preparation for the farewell tour, Lafayette hired Auguste Levasseur to accompany him as his private secretary. Levasseur's charge was to keep an account of the tour in order to send dispatches back home for publication in French newspapers, highlighting the achievements of the American experiment in democracy for European readers. Levasseur wrote his journal on quiet evenings and even during some of the events themselves. He eventually published his journal in full in 1829, first in Paris with a two-volume work and later that year with single-volume English editions released in New York and Philadelphia. Levasseur believed his journal's merit rested in its truthfulness and reminded his readers of the power of his first-hand knowledge of the tour: "All that I tell I have seen."



New-Hampshire Patriot & State Gazette August 16, 1824 Concord, N.H.: Published by Isaac Hill The Society of the Cincinnati, Library purchase, 2005

On the same day that Lafayette landed at Castle Garden on Manhattan, the Concord-based New-Hampshire Patriot & State Gazette published a front-page article on the Frenchman's tour. In anticipation of Lafayette visiting Boston later in the month, the newspaper offered its readers a short biography of the marquis, noting that, "from the time he left this country, after having assisted in establishing its independence, [he] has never ceased to take an interest in its fortunes."

*“THE MOMENT I HEARD OF AMERICA,
I LOV'D HER. THE MOMENT I KNEW
SHE WAS FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM, I BURNT
WITH THE DESIRE OF BLEEDING FOR HER.”*

MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE, SEPTEMBER 23, 1778

Baron de Kalb Introducing Lafayette to Silas Deane

Alonzo Chappel
1857
Oil on canvas

Museum of the American Revolution, Philadelphia

To join the war in America, Lafayette had to secure permission from Silas Deane, a secret envoy from Congress to France. The marquis was introduced to Deane in the fall of 1776 through Johann de Kalb, a Bavarian-born military officer who spoke French and English and was negotiating his own passage to America. After frequent meetings between the three men, Lafayette and Deane signed a letter of agreement on December 7, 1776, promising the Frenchman the rank of major general in Washington's army owing to Lafayette's nobility, connections at court, wealth, reputation, and "above all his Zeal for the Liberty of our Provinces." In the mid-nineteenth century, American artist Alonzo Chappel imagined their first meeting in this painting, which became an illustration in the book *Life and Times of Washington*.

The American Revolution

The American Revolution offered Lafayette his first chance to serve the cause of liberty. He learned of the American war in the summer of 1775 and, like other French nobles, responded to the rebels' calls for republican principles inspired by ancient Rome, the opportunity to avenge France's defeat by the British in the Seven Years' War, and the chance to further his military career. In December 1776, the nineteen-year-old marquis formally pledged to join the American cause and was promised the rank of major general in the Continental Army, despite only having a few years of experience in the French military.

Lafayette landed in South Carolina in June 1777, then made his way to Philadelphia to present himself to Congress. He impressed George Washington from their first meeting, joined the general's military family, and became one of his most trusted officers. Lafayette was wounded the first time he saw action, at Brandywine, and went on to command American troops at Barren Hill, Monmouth, Newport, and Yorktown. He also helped solidify French support for the revolution, returning home in 1779 to lobby King Louis XVI and his ministers to send an army to aid the Americans—a successful effort that resulted in a large expeditionary force setting sail for America the following year.

Marquis de Lafayette to Nathanael Greene

August 25, 1781

The Society of the Cincinnati, Library purchase, 1965

In the spring of 1781, General Washington gave Lafayette command of Continental forces in Virginia, to slow British general Cornwallis' campaign through the state. By the time Lafayette wrote this letter in late August, he was at Ruffin's Ferry on the Pamunkey River about fifty miles north of Yorktown awaiting the arrival of the joint French-American forces under Washington and General Rochambeau. Writing to Gen. Nathanael Greene, the commander of the southern army, Lafayette lamented the hardships his troops had endured: "Militia, arms, ammunition, accoutrements, and corn provisions are wanting to a degree which from the measures adopted and the stores provided I had no reason to expect. Our men are naked and barefooted."



Carte du Théâtre de la Guerre dans l'Amérique Septentrionale, pendant les Années 1775, 76, 77 et 78

Michel Capitaine du Chesnoy

Paris: Chez Perrier ..., Et Chez Fortin ..., [1779]

The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

To illustrate his case to Louis XVI and his ministers for more French troops and support for the American rebels, Lafayette had his cartographer, Michel Capitaine du Chesnoy, prepare this map, which was probably published while Lafayette was in Paris in 1779. Charting the battles and events of the first four years of the war in the middle states and New England, with a timeline at the lower right, this map conveys the achievements of the Continental Army in what had become a drawn-out conflict with the most powerful military in the world. Urging immediate action, Lafayette warned France's prime minister, the comte de Maurepas, that if "our clocks are slow, we shall see the operation fail for lack of diligence or of time." The king ultimately agreed and gave Lafayette, who set sail for America in March 1780, the honor of conveying the news to General Washington.

Welcome to the Land of Liberty

During his farewell tour, Americans celebrated Lafayette for his role in the revolution that had secured their independence fifty years earlier. The address given by Mayor Stephen Allen upon Lafayette's arrival in New York City highlighted this sentiment: "I bid you a sincere welcome to the shores of a country, of whose freedom and happiness you will ever be considered one of the most honored and beloved founders." Lafayette returned to the battlefields of the Revolutionary War for large ceremonies marking their anniversaries. Other events featured triumphal arches bearing symbols of the revolutionaries, displays of Revolutionary War relics, and reunions with fellow veterans of the war. Lafayette's presence reminded Americans of the struggle and ideals of the revolution. "Its history has been revived in our memories, and its patriotism rekindled in our bosoms," as a toast at a public dinner in Lexington, Georgia, proclaimed. It also pushed Americans to renew their appreciation and respect for the nation's first veterans, including expanding pension benefits for all the soldiers who helped win independence.



Commemorative pitcher

Staffordshire, England
ca. 1824
Copper lusterware

The Society of the Cincinnati, Museum purchase, 2016

General Lafayette at the Anniversary of the Battle of York Town, Oct. 19, 1824

William Russell Birch after Ary Scheffer
ca. 1824
Enamel on copper

The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of the Friends of the Boush-Tazewell House, Inc., 1991

On October 19, 1824, Lafayette attended a day-long ceremony marking the forty-third anniversary of the British surrender at Yorktown, Virginia. The battlefield was adorned with George Washington's headquarters tent and a triumphal arch located on the site of Redoubt Ten, which Lafayette had stormed with several hundred American troops. After several speeches, Lafayette responded: "I am happy to receive such honorable evidences of the friendship of my old companions-in-arms in these places where American and French arms were so gloriously joined in a holy alliance in favor of the independence of America." Goods such as this enamel portrait of Lafayette and copper lusterware pitcher bearing a scene of Cornwallis' surrender were sold to commemorate the day.



*"HEAVEN SAW FIT TO ORDAIN,
THAT THE ELECTRIC SPARK OF
LIBERTY SHOULD BE CONDUCTED,
THROUGH YOU, FROM THE NEW
WORLD TO THE OLD."*

DANIEL WEBSTER, JUNE 17, 1825

La Grange November 10th 1825

Having been called upon by the Representatives of the late Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens of South Carolina to express my Opinion of the Merits and Services of that distinguished Citizen and Soldier, I must first return my thanks for the opportunity they give me to pay a tribute to the Memory of an Heroic Companion in Arms and Bosom friend, who, as I was not long ago publicly expressing it in His Native State, has been an Honor to His Country, and Honors to Mankind

The brilliant, devoted, and steady services of Col Laurens in our Revolutionary struggle are so conspicuously connected with the History of American Independence and Freedom that a minute Account of His Civil, military, and political career would be superfluous; I shall only observe that either as the Champion of a Cause, and the Citizen of a Country both of which He loved with enthusiasm, or as a most valued Aid de Camp to the Commander in Chief, as a gallant Leader in the field of action, as an intrepid Volunteer, or also as a Representative of Congress, and by their direction an organ of the Army and Head Quarter to the Coast of France where pressing matters were to be provided for, and important plans were to be arranged, He has display'd such eminent Qualities, and patriotic virtues, as must impress every well informed mind with the Highest Sentiments of Admiration and Respect.

„ That His Disinterested Love to Liberty and was a distinguished trait

Memoir of John Laurens
Marquis de Lafayette
November 10, 1825

The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

Soon after returning home from the farewell tour, Lafayette wrote this memoir of a “Heroic Companion in Arms and Bosom friend,” John Laurens of South Carolina. An aide-de-camp to George Washington, Colonel Laurens served in many of the same battles as Lafayette, before the American was killed in action at Combahee River in August 1782. The two men also shared an interest in abolition. Writing from La Grange, Lafayette briefly summarized the “Brilliant, devoted, and steady services of Col. Laurens in our Revolutionary struggle” and declared him “entitled to every feeling of Regard and affection in the Hearts of a republican posterity.”



“Genl. La Fayette’s Grand March and Quickstep”

Composed by Christopher Meineke
Baltimore: Published by John Cole, 1824

The Society of the Cincinnati Collections

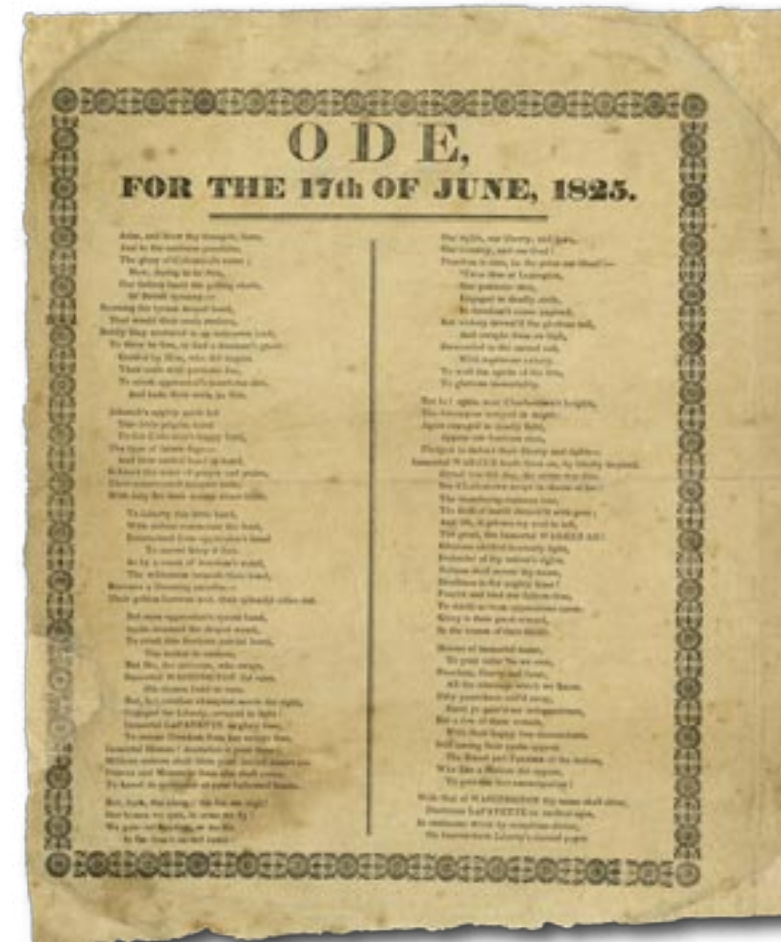
More than sixty musical compositions were created to honor Lafayette during his farewell tour. This one, written for a full military band by German-born composer Christopher Meineke, was “Respectfully dedicated to the surviving Officers and Soldiers of the Revolution.” The sheet music was published in Baltimore, which Lafayette visited for the first time during the tour in early October 1824.

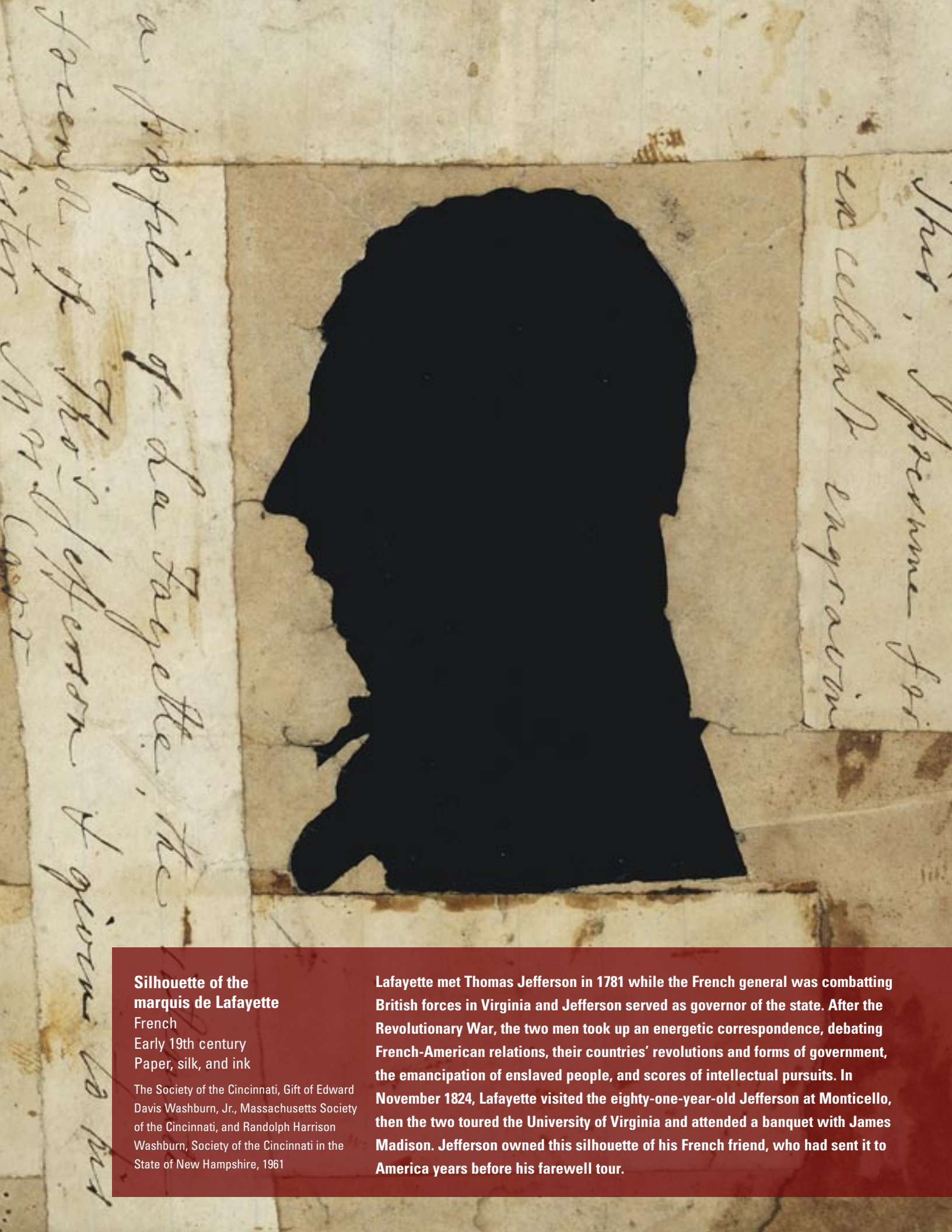
Ode, for the 17th of June, 1825

[Boston, 1825]

The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

The commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill in June 1825 highlighted the ambitious effort to build a large monument to the American victory. Thousands of people from Boston and the surrounding region attended the ceremony, at which the surviving veterans of the battle and other veterans of the Revolutionary War were placed in the front ranks of the audience. Lafayette, wearing a Masonic apron, laid the cornerstone, and Daniel Webster, the son of a Revolutionary War veteran, gave the formal oration. This ode commemorating the event declared, “With that of Washington thy name shall shine, Illustrious LaFayette to endless ages.”





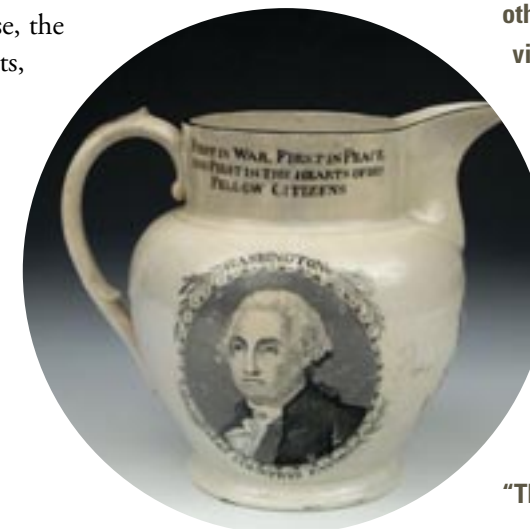
Silhouette of the marquis de Lafayette
French
Early 19th century
Paper, silk, and ink

The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of Edward Davis Washburn, Jr., Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati, and Randolph Harrison Washburn, Society of the Cincinnati in the State of New Hampshire, 1961

Lafayette met Thomas Jefferson in 1781 while the French general was combatting British forces in Virginia and Jefferson served as governor of the state. After the Revolutionary War, the two men took up an energetic correspondence, debating French-American relations, their countries' revolutions and forms of government, the emancipation of enslaved people, and scores of intellectual pursuits. In November 1824, Lafayette visited the eighty-one-year-old Jefferson at Monticello, then the two toured the University of Virginia and attended a banquet with James Madison. Jefferson owned this silhouette of his French friend, who had sent it to America years before his farewell tour.

Five years of service in the Revolutionary War bonded Lafayette and many of the men who would go on to establish the American republic—men like George Washington, James Monroe, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin. Together they suffered through the horrors of battle and the loss of friends; debated how to approach alliances, foreign policy, and other political matters; and shared an unwavering commitment to liberty and independence. Lafayette had a particularly special relationship with Washington, who cared for the young Frenchman as a son. After Lafayette returned home from the war, he kept a frequent correspondence with his friends in America, through the growth of the new nation, the turbulence of the French Revolution, and the years of retirement that followed.

By Lafayette's farewell tour, many of the other American founders had died, leaving the Frenchman to be celebrated as the embodiment of the revolutionary generation. Lafayette provided a tangible link to the country's heroes now gone—a "living Washington," one admirer exclaimed. The Frenchman seemed to embrace this role. At a ceremony for laying the cornerstone of a monument to Continental Army general Nathanael Greene in Savannah, Georgia, in March 1825, Lafayette said, "I present myself before you, before the new generations, as a representative of this Army and of the deceased or absent friends of General Greene, to applaud the honors rendered to his memory." To commemorate sentiments like these, the tour generated prints, plates, gloves, and other goods featuring portraits of Lafayette and Washington side by side, as well as scenes of the Frenchman visiting Mount Vernon and other sites.



Commemorative teapot
James and Ralph Clews, Staffordshire, England
ca. 1824-1825
Transfer-printed earthenware

The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of the Friends of the Boush-Tazewell House, Inc., 1991

During an eight-day stay in Philadelphia in October 1824, Lafayette visited Christ Church, where Benjamin Franklin and other luminaries of the Revolution were buried. It is not clear if Lafayette stopped at Franklin's tomb, as the imagined scene on this commemorative teapot suggests, but it is plausible given their close relationship, especially in matters of French-American diplomacy, before Franklin's death in 1790.

The American Founders

Commemorative jug
Richard Hall & Son, Staffordshire, England
ca. 1824
Transfer-printed earthenware

The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of the Friends of the Boush-Tazewell House, Inc., 1991

The last time Lafayette and George Washington saw each other was in December 1784 during the marquis's first return visit to the United States. Of their emotional final parting Washington wrote, "I felt all that love, respect & attachment for you, with which length of years, close connexion & your merits, have inspired me." Lafayette responded, "Adieu, adieu, My dear General, it is with Unexpressable pain that I feel I am Going to be Severed from You By the atlantick ... in your friendship I find a Delight which words Cannot Express." The pair was reunited during Lafayette's farewell tour on goods like this jug, which named Washington "His Countrys Father" and his adopted son "The Nations Guest."

The Society of the Cincinnati

The marquis de Lafayette was among the more than 2,200 veteran officers of the American Revolutionary War who became original members of the Society of the Cincinnati, a hereditary organization founded in 1783 to ensure that the ideals of the American Revolution would not be forgotten. Its members served in both the American and French militaries, honoring the alliance that helped to win the war. Lafayette was instrumental in establishing the French branch of the Society, which had preliminary meetings in January 1784. The Society became incredibly popular among French officers, as a familiar military order recognizing their service to the king, a unique patriotic organization celebrating the defeat of Great Britain, and a connection to the illustrious George Washington, who became the Society's first president general.

As Lafayette began his farewell tour of the United States, the Society's membership had dwindled to a fraction of its original number, as the revolutionary generation died and interest waned. Only six of the fourteen constituent societies—the Society was founded with one branch in each of the original thirteen states and one in France—were still active. But the visit of one of their own energized Society members, who hosted dinners for Lafayette, marched in parades wearing their distinctive Eagle insignia, and were special participants in other events. An address from members of the New Jersey branch of the Society during the tour recalled their service together: “We glory to have borne with you in the bloody contest, the heat and burthen of the weary day, and now indulge in the hope that in this evening of life you will find rich repose under the wide spreading boughs of that tree of Liberty.”



Marquis de Lafayette

Charles Fraser

1825

Watercolor on ivory

On loan from the City of Charleston, South Carolina

Replica of the 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 November 1824, George Washington's adopted granddaughter Eleanor (Nelly) Parke Custis Lewis gave the Frenchman a distinctive Society insignia Washington had owned. Made especially for Washington in 1784, the Eagle's design with a laurel wreath surrounding the entire bird is unique among examples of the Society's insignia. Lafayette treasured the symbol of his participation in the American Revolution and his ties to its beloved leader. When he traveled to Charleston, South Carolina, several months later, Lafayette sat for this portrait wearing the same Eagle. 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.





Louis XVI, Roi des Français; Né le 23 Août 1753. Mr. de Lafayette; Comdt. Génl. de la Garde Nale. Parisienne; Né le 6 7bre 1757
ca. 1789

The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of George Platt Waller, Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Virginia, 1955

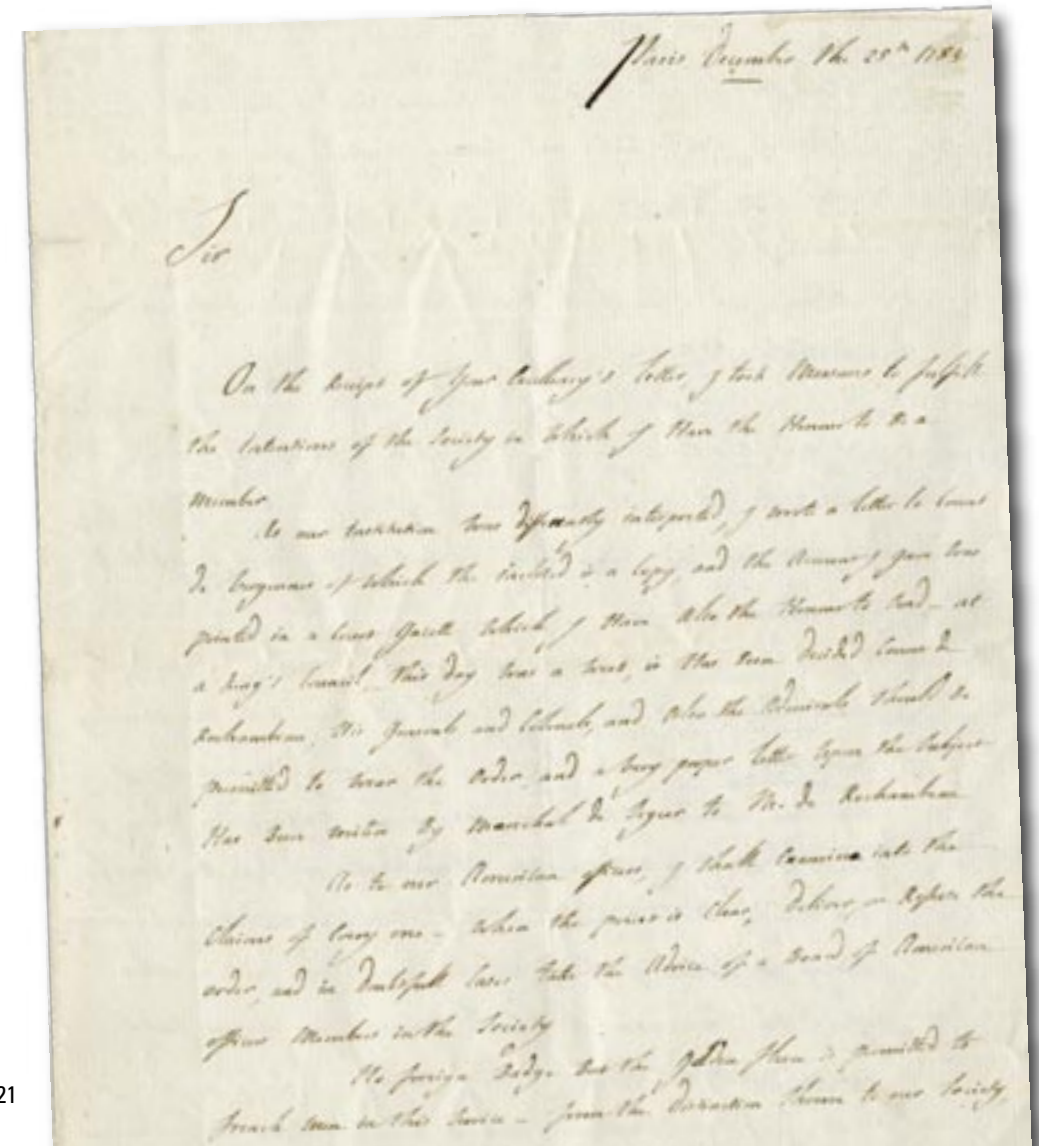
As head of state, Louis XVI became patron of the Society in France and approved all claims of membership from French officers. Through the rest of the 1780s, the king and Lafayette were the most famous men in France. The unidentified creators of this engraving celebrated them in this double portrait, which depicts Lafayette wearing the Society's Eagle insignia alongside other orders on his lapel. But the French Society's association with the king and the nobility would force its demise. The organization went dormant by 1793 during the French Revolution, which abolished all royal orders and trappings of nobility.



Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington
December 25, 1783

The Society of the Cincinnati Archives

Lafayette led the early efforts to organize a branch of the Society of the Cincinnati in France. In this letter written on Christmas Day 1783, he updated George Washington on his activities. The previous week, Lafayette had secured approval from King Louis XVI for the Society to organize in France and for its members to wear the insignia on their French uniforms—only the second foreign order to receive this distinction. “The Nation have been very much pleased by the Attention our Society has paid to the Alliance,” the marquis relayed. He also reported on Pierre L’Enfant’s work to have the first insignias made and his own intentions to host an organizing meeting the next month.



Address to General Lafayette by the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of New Jersey
1824

The Society of the Cincinnati Collections

The day Lafayette arrived in Trenton, New Jersey, in late September 1824, he dined with members of the state branch of the Society of the Cincinnati, led by their president, Aaron Ogden, who had served in Lafayette’s light infantry company during the Revolution. They presented an address to Lafayette, of which this is a draft. “Altho’ the great military achievements by means whereof this glorious triumph was obtained, in which you bore a distinguished part, are written on the tables of our hearts yet in words we are only able to offer to your acceptance this further testimonial of our most cordial affection, of our most perfect respect, and of our most profound veneration marked however with our ... unqualified regrets that your efforts in the great cause of mankind have not always been crowned with as complete success.”



Lafayette returned home from the Revolutionary War eager to secure the kind of liberty for France that he had fought for in America. He became a leader of the early, moderate years of the French Revolution, proclaiming a new era of tolerance, equality before the law, and respect for natural rights. After the storming of the Bastille in July 1789, he sent the key to the prison to George Washington “as a Missionary of Liberty to its Patriarch.” Lafayette’s popularity in France declined after he fled the country during the Terror and was imprisoned, but for many of his countrymen he remained a symbol of liberty and republicanism. Admirers during his farewell tour of America celebrated these efforts, hailing Lafayette as the “Hero of Two Worlds” and the “Friend of Freedom.”

Lafayette fought just as vehemently for personal freedoms. He advocated for women’s rights in America and civil rights for Protestants in France, and promoted respect for the identity and sovereignty of American Indians. His most extensive efforts in support of human liberty were his work to end slavery and the African slave trade. While Lafayette respectfully nudged his slave-owning friends to embrace emancipation, he became increasingly disturbed by the contradiction of the American republic, a beacon of liberty for the world, continuing to endorse the practice of enslaving other human beings. He is said to have told an English abolitionist, “I would never have drawn my sword in the cause of America, if I could have conceived that thereby I was founding a land of slavery.” Lafayette’s farewell tour reflected a similar dichotomy. He visited an African Free School and a meeting of the American Colonization Society, and reunited with black participants in the Revolutionary War, but cities in the South barred black residents from attending events honoring the “Champion of Liberty.” With its foundation in the ideals of liberty and natural and civil rights, the American nation had more work to do to realize its promise of freedom for all men and women.

Universal Liberty

Conclusion de la Campagne de 1781 en Virginie
Engraved by Noël Le Mire after Jean-Baptiste Le Paon
Paris: Chez le Mire, [1789]

The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of Trafford Partridge Klots,
Society of the Cincinnati of Maryland, 1964

Based on an oil painting completed by Jean-Baptiste Le Paon in 1782, this engraving of Lafayette at Yorktown celebrates his role in the decisive French-American victory. Almost as prominent as Lafayette is the elaborately dressed man of African descent at the right of the scene. The man is often identified as James, an enslaved Virginian who served with Lafayette at Yorktown as a spy. As a reward for his service, James petitioned for his freedom in 1784, accompanied by a testimonial from Lafayette. When he was emancipated three years later, James took the last name Lafayette. The two men met again in Richmond during Lafayette’s farewell tour, embracing after the Frenchman recognized his friend in the crowd. A broadside printed in 1824 reproduced a portrait of James and Lafayette’s testimonial, sharing their story with the nation.

Franklin Herald and Public Advertiser

September 13, 1825

Greenfield, Mass.: Published by Denio & Phelps

The Society of the Cincinnati, Library purchase, 2008

Beyond the United States and France, Lafayette also encouraged national independence movements in Poland, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and South America.

A few days before his farewell tour of America ended in September 1825, Lafayette met with representatives of Colombia to present messages and gifts to “the Liberator” Simon Bolivar, who led former Spanish colonies in the Americas to independence. Lafayette conveyed “the personal congratulations of a veteran of our common cause” to Bolivar, who he proclaimed “carries in his heart the love of Liberty, without any exception.” The Frenchman also gave to Bolivar a portrait of George Washington and a lock of the American president’s hair. This Massachusetts newspaper reported on the meeting, referring to Bolivar as the “Hero of the South,” and printed Lafayette’s letter as well as one from George Washington Parke Custis.

CLASSIC NUMBER OF ADVENTURERS TO THE
new establishment.—*N. Y. Com. Adv.*

From the *National Intelligencer*, Sept. 3.
Delivery of the presents for Bolivar.
Yesterday at three o’clock, Gen. Lafayette received Senor Villenilla, of the Colombian Legation, the gentleman whom we announced as having been sent to the metropolis by M. Salazar, the Minister of Colombia, for the special purpose of taking charge of the presents. The General, holding in his hands the memorials of olden times and of old, but never changing affection, perused, with deep and feeling interest, the medal* and portrait,† commenting upon the recollections of the one, and the resemblance of the other, and then presented them to M. Villenilla, with a letter for the Liberator, addressing at the same time a few words of compliment to the Hero of the South.

Translation of a letter written by Gen. Lafayette to the President Liberator Bolivar.

President Liberator: My religious and filial devotion to the memory of



Marquis de Lafayette commemorative medal
Struck in France after designs by Rambert Dumarest
1789
Silver

On loan from Dr. Robert Lewis Fagaly, New York State Society of the Cincinnati

Lafayette became commander of the Paris National Guard the day after the storming of the Bastille in July 1789. This medal commemorates his leadership of the city’s militia—a position he held for the first two years of the French Revolution. The obverse bears a portrait of Lafayette wearing a French military uniform, and the reverse features the coat of arms of Paris and a banner above with the motto, “Vivre Libre ou Mourir” (Live Free or Die).

Franklin Herald and Public Advertiser.

No. 762.

GREENFIELD, (MASS.) TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1825.

VOL. XXXIV.

Moral & Religious.

THE BRIEF REMARKER.

Of virtuous poverty.

“Man needs but little here below,
Nor needs that little long.”

And yet to possess but little, though it be quite enough for the real wants of nature, is deemed wretchedness. Poverty is, to many a delicate ear, one of the most frightful words in the whole vocabulary of our language; but it should be remembered that the word has several degrees of signification, and is really frightful in the extreme degree only.

It is true, the rags and filth, and the corresponding ignorance and depravity, so common in the abodes of squalid poverty, are objects of disgust and horror; as they exhibit human nature in its utmost deformity, without sought to

character that has ever appeared on the stage of this fallen world, was MADE PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERING.* Even He could not have exhibited the sublime virtues which he did, had he not taken upon him the form of a servant, and passed his life under the sharpest trials of suffering humanity.

11th. 11. 10.

Nautical Sermon.—When Whitfield preached before the seamen at New-York, he had the following bold apostrophe in his sermon:

“Well, my boys, we have a clear sky, and are making fine headway over a smooth sea, before a light breeze, and we shall soon lose sight of land. But what means this sudden lowering of the heavens, and that dark cloud arising from beneath the western horizon? Don’t you hear distant thunder? Don’t you see those flashes of lightning? There is a storm gathering! Every man to his duty! How the waves rise and

should proceed or be delayed. A question so trying was, perhaps, never put under similar circumstances; and after communing with their own hearts, the bride expressed a wish to close her eyes as an affectionate wife, the bridegroom to discharge the duty of a sorrowing widower, by laying the head of his betrothed in the grave. This resolution added not a little to the agony of the scene; the mournful party approached the couch of the dying woman; the Divine favor was most pathetically invoked, amidst many interruptions from hearts that seemed ready to burst from the bosoms they agitated; the bridegroom grasped the burning hand that was languidly extended in token of assent; the worthy clergyman pronounced a blessing, and in faltering accents made those our whom, in less than twelve hours, death had severed and sundered for ever. We cannot dwell on what followed. The eyes that affection had for a moment lightened, were again waxed dim and dim;

the edge of the rafters of the ceiling, to which it adheres, it looks like a small ball, or more properly, like the slug coiled up. It is frequently known to drop from its hold without being molested, and wherever it falls it throws out from its body five or six fangs, which are barbed like a fish-hook, and into whatever softer material than brick or stone it chanced to fall, these fangs enter; nor can it be removed unless by cutting the animal off, and picking the prongs out of the substance into which they are so firmly fastened.—When they fall on the persons of those who happen to sit or stand underneath, the consequence is dreadful. I saw one man, says a traveller in this part of the world, who an hour or two before had one of these devils alight on his hand, and he was obliged to have it cut off, and the claws and fangs removed by picking them out with the point of a large needle. His hand was immediately swelled and very painful; but an immersion in warm oil or fat removed

The Grand Jury readily submitted to the order of the Judge, and went in a body to jail. The panel was made up of some of the most respectable men in Chatham, some of whom are now probably residing in Savannah, and who, it is hoped, will correct any inaccuracy which this statement, made from recollection, may contain. The Grand Jury were supplied in jail, with every necessary by their friends, for the short time they remained there, as the whole community were in sentiment with them, while the Judge was viewed both with pity and contempt.

These transactions, produced, as might be supposed, no little excitement, and as the business of the Court could not progress, the term was soon ended. The Judge continued to hold his office till the next meeting of the Legislature, when, without the formality of an impeachment, he was, on the address of the two houses, removed from office by the Governor. He not long after went to the North, where stronger indications of a disordered mind than what had ap-

Legacy

The marquis de Lafayette died in Paris in May 1834 at the age of seventy-six. At his burial at Picpus Cemetery, his son, George Washington Lafayette, sprinkled soil from Bunker Hill brought back from the farewell tour on his grave. Otherwise, mourning for Lafayette in France was relatively brief and quiet. Word of Lafayette's death inspired a much more emotional national response in America. President Andrew Jackson declared a national period of mourning, John Quincy Adams delivered a three-hour-long funeral oration in Congress, and cities across the country held processions and other ceremonies marking the French-American hero's death.

In the years since Lafayette's death, he has become a symbol of French-American friendship and the cause of liberty. Across the United States, towns, schools, and other locales were named for Lafayette and his iconic home, La Grange. American artists celebrated Lafayette—especially his Revolutionary War service and relationship with George Washington—with paintings, prints, books, medals, and monuments and other sculptures. In 1884 his portrait adorned the top of the elaborate deed of gift formally donating the Statue of Liberty from the French nation to the United States. During World War I, images of Lafayette took on even greater significance as the French-American alliance was renewed on the battlefield—and the phrase “Lafayette, we are here!” became a rallying cry for the two countries. Lafayette was formally proclaimed an honorary citizen of the United States by Congress in 2002.

Marie Joseph Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette

Modeled by Paul Wayland Bartlett, ca. 1899-1908; Cast by an unidentified foundry, 1924
Bronze

The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of Mrs. Armistead Peter III, 1958

Beginning in 1898, various groups of Americans worked to erect a monument to Lafayette in Paris, reciprocating France's gift of the Statue of Liberty to the United States the previous decade. Created by the prominent American Beaux Arts sculptor Paul Wayland Bartlett, the equestrian statue of Lafayette was finally completed and unveiled in July 1908. It was largely paid for with the donations of nearly five million American schoolchildren, who gave pennies to the cause. The fifteen-foot-high statue originally stood in the front courtyard of the Louvre. Smaller versions like this one—not even a foot and a half tall—were made as presentation pieces as well as for sale.

“I SHALL PROBABLY NOT LIVE TO WITNESS THE VAST CHANGES IN THE CONDITION OF MAN, WHICH ARE ABOUT TO TAKE PLACE IN THE WORLD; BUT THE ERA IS ALREADY COMMENCED, ITS PROGRESS IS APPARENT, ITS END IS CERTAIN.”

MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE, NOVEMBER 1825





Uncle Sam Shaking Hands with the Marquis de Lafayette

Eugène Courboin

Paris: Cornille & Serre, [1917]

The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

The French embraced Lafayette as a symbol of American support in World War I. His face appeared on medals, buttons, handkerchiefs, prints, and posters like this one—all meant to stir popular support for the war effort. The message conveyed by this image of Uncle Sam shaking hands with Lafayette needed no words—the American army had arrived.

Ribbon commemorating funeral obsequies for the marquis de Lafayette

American

1834

Silk and ink

The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

Americans marked Lafayette’s death with memorial parades, eulogies, and other public events. On July 21, 1834, two months after the Frenchman’s death, the city of Philadelphia held a funeral ceremony for Lafayette.

Ribbons like this one were sold to commemorate the somber day, with a black star sewn at the top of the printed design, which declares the souvenir “A Grateful Nation’s Mournful Tribute.”



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Front and back cover: *Le Général Lafayette*, engraved by Achille Moreau after Jean Auguste Dubouloz [Paris, 1825]. The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection.

This engraving imagines Lafayette's journey home from his farewell tour of the United States, accompanied by the spirits of American revolutionaries.

This catalog accompanies the exhibition *Fete Lafayette: A French Hero's Tour of the American Republic*, on view March 2 - December 31, 2024, at Anderson House, headquarters of the American Revolution Institute of the Society of the Cincinnati, Inc., 2118 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20008.

Curated by Emily L. Parsons.
Designed by Glenn A. Hennessey.

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