

Recap of AFL Annual Meeting and Events held in Charlottesville, VA

Written by Janice Wolk

Friday morning dawned cloudy/bright, as we gathered outside to climb aboard our luxurious air-cooled coach. Our first stop would be Montpelier, home of James Madison. Madison served in the Virginia House of Delegates before and after a trip to New York with Lafayette. Together they went to Fort Schuyler in the Mohawk Valley to observe negotiations between the American commissioners and the Iroquois in 1784, and where Lafayette also befriended the Oneidas. And, in November of 1824, Lafayette visited Montpelier.

Having little prior information on the site, I became eager to learn more about the sprawling estate I saw from the bus window, replete with race horse facilities and splendid views, and also to learn of its illustrious former occupants – our fourth President, and his socially and politically astute wife, First Lady Dolley Madison. It was interesting to learn of the property's history, as it passed from the Madisons eventually to the Duponts, and the extensive renovations which brought the site back to its original Madison-era glory. I was especially enthralled by the collection of Dolley Madison gowns that spanned from the 1780s to the early

Lafayette in Space

Richard Benzel, a professor at MIT and member of the American Friends of Lafayette presented the Count Gilbert with a potentially timeless gift to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of Lafayette Day in Massachusetts.

Professor Benzel had an asteroid named after Lafayette, which was approved by the International Astronomical Union and orbits the sun between Mars and Jupiter.

The justification for naming Asteroid 23244 'Lafayette' is officially listed as: "Recognized as a symbolic figure in French-American friendship, Marquis de Lafayette, on his own initiative served as a General in the Continental Army during the American Revolution and as Commander-in-Chief of the Garde Nationale during the French Revolution."



photo courtesy: <http://www.fhsclassmates.com/images/Washington%20and%20Lafayette%20at%20Valley%20Forge,%201777-78.jpg>

1800s.

Michie's Tavern, a beautiful historic landmark restaurant with cozy wood-paneled walls, was a most welcome sight for our hungry group. This tavern, or in 18th-century terminology, "Ordinary," was built in 1784 by former corporal William Michie, who had served at Valley Forge.

Dark, ominous clouds, rumbles of thunder and pelting rain provided an appropriate backdrop as we queued for the shuttle under the enclosure, we were informed that they were suspended due to lightning from the storm "up at the house." The life-size statue of our third president offered no insight into this situation other than an uncanny, frozen likeness of the man himself. The decision to split the group into Friday and Saturday tours was agreed upon, and we in the Friday group were off.

Upon arrival at the House, we took the path to the side entrance for the first behind-the-scenes tour. The docent cautioned us about the stairs - narrow, steep, winding, and very much like those I encountered in Europe. I enjoyed the juxtaposition of the undersized alcove-bed rooms with the cavernous and fantastical Dome Room. I smiled at its vivid yellow walls, the odd round windows with views of the architecture from the level below, and the odd little room with the 6' drop floor. Later, I stood in the main hall and gazed at the primitive decorative elements from the Lewis and Clark expedition, the clock weights that had to be sunk into one side of the floor for a better fit, and beyond this, the tantalizing parlor room with the Garde Nationale portrait of Lafayette. Spending a few minutes in Jefferson's library provided an almost voyeuristic peek into the man's heart, as books were his true love. Next was the exquisite tea room with its sophisticated, fresh white walls that beckoned weary travelers to relax and take in refreshments. All in all, I found Monticello's style to be eclectic - Neoclassic with postmodern interior space functionality. During the day, we continually heard the tale regarding an excessive amount of wine consumed by Jefferson and Lafayette. While the verity of this incident cannot be proved, it is unquestionably a humorous anecdote. In reality, all historians would agree that Lafayette likely spent a joyful time with his dear friend in this most innovative and thought-provoking setting. I have never personally seen a historic home that so keenly reflects the sensibilities and personality of its former owner like this one does.

While our group toured Monticello, the other group went to view the collection of Lafayette Items at the University of Virginia. Of his own Friday afternoon experience, Secretary Phil Schroeder writes, "*On Friday afternoon we visited the University of Virginia campus, particularly two very historic and beautiful parts of Thomas Jefferson's original 'Academical Village.'* We enjoyed spending some time in

the impressive area known as the Lawn, a grassy area surrounded by the original academic and residential University buildings that comprise the historic center of the academic community that Jefferson designed.

"We toured the Rotunda, prominently located on The Lawn. Inspired by the Pantheon in Rome, the Rotunda was designed by Jefferson to represent the "authority of nature and power of reason." It housed the University's library, among other things. In the Rotunda's Dome Room, our own Professor Robert Crout recited Lafayette's toasts to Jefferson given there during his grand tour of the United States in 1824-25. One of Lafayette's toasts referred to Jefferson as the "Father of the University of Virginia," which moved Jefferson such that he later arranged for the phrase to be inscribed on his grave.

"We also visited the University's Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library. Members of the Library staff had kindly arranged an exhibit of Lafayette-related documents and manuscripts from the Collection, which they presented and discussed with us."

Dinner was at the hotel, where we were treated to a speech from keynote speaker Philander Chase, the retired editor-in-chief of the Washington Papers Project, co-sponsored by the University of Virginia, and the Mount Vernon Ladies Association. In addition to the Washington Papers, Mr. Chase is one of the leading authorities on Baron Von Steuben, a foreign Revolutionary War hero as Lafayette was. Mr. Chase has worked hands on with the Washington Papers for 35 years, and his unique and extensive knowledge was fascinating.

Our Saturday morning meeting was informative and productive, where we discussed the Lafayette library collection, new ways to garner members, our website, Yorktown 2011, possible venues for 2012, and other miscellaneous topics. New appointments were made as follows: - President – Alan Hoffman; First Vice President – Rob Raffety; Second Vice President – Janice Wolk; Treasurer – Chuck Schwam, and Secretary – Phil Schroeder. At-large members of the Board of Governors: Caroline Lareuse, Benoit Guizard, and Jean Hultgren.

New Officers and Board for American Friends of Lafayette

President - Alan Hoffman

First Vice President - Rob Raffety

Second Vice President - Janice Wolk

Treasurer - Chuck Schwam

Secretary - Phil Schroeder

At-large Members of the Board of Governors:
Caroline Lareuse, Benoit Guizard, and Jean
Hultgren

Membership Co-Chairs: Drs. Almut and Paul
Spalding

Lexington Historical Society has Prized Banner

One of the prized possessions of the Lexington (Massachusetts) Historical Society is the banner that welcomed General Lafayette to Lexington on his American tour in 1824. Nearly 40 feet long, the banner is made of linen and bears the painted legend:

WELCOME, FRIEND OF AMERICA, TO THE BIRTHPLACE
OF AMERICAN LIBERTY

WELCOME FRIEND OF AMERICA
TO THE BIRTHPLACE OF AMERICAN LIBERTY



Photo courtesy: <http://www.ushistory.org/valleyforge/served/images/lafayette.jpg>

Contemporary accounts of Lafayette's visit to Lexington describe the banner, so it has excellent provenance. It is a unique artifact of Lafayette's visit. Although in remarkably good condition given its age, the banner requires significant conservation by a professional in order to preserve it for future generations. The Society is undertaking a fundraising effort to pay for this project, which will be carried out by Deirdre Windsor, a highly regarded textile expert. The conservation project is estimated to cost \$15,000.

A message from the President of The American Friends of Lafayette

In the wake of our annual meeting in Charlottesville, Virginia, which was attended by over 50 members and guests, we can review the past year with satisfaction and look forward to 2011-2012 with anticipation.

This July, Benoit Guizard represented The American Friends of Lafayette at the ceremonies at Lafayette's tomb in Paris. Just last month he undertook this responsibility again and attended the Picpus ceremonies with members Myriam Waze, Joyce Good, and Jean Marc Cresson. Please see their excellent report on pages 6 and 7 of the Gazette.

As you may know, AFL is one of 13 sponsoring members of the Yorktown Day ceremonies on October 18 and October 19. The number of our members attending this event seems to grow each year, and the cocktail reception at member Bill Cole's bed and breakfast in 2010 drew, perhaps, the largest crowd in memory! For those of you who have not participated in the "Surrender Day" events, please consider joining us this year. On a sunny day, the march of the 13 flags of the sponsoring members and the flags of the 50 states to the music of a military band is very special indeed.

Janice Wolk, our newly elected Second Vice President, will be reporting on last month's Annual Meeting in Charlottesville so I will not steal her thunder.

AFL completed a major overhaul of its website this year which included streaming video, additional links to Lafayette-related websites and enhanced interactivity. We believe that our new and improved website is at least partially responsible for the recent growth of the organization. At the annual meeting, our membership chair reported that we have been joined by 18 new members in 2009 and 2010 and a whopping 21 new members in 2010-2011. Additionally, 13 existing members have upgraded to life memberships in the 2009-2011 period. Our census of 158 current members, representing thirty states and France, may well be the zenith for the modern era.

A number of these members are a generation or two removed from the "baby boomers" of which I am one. For example, our First Vice President, Rob Raffety, who teaches at George Mason University, is in his early 30's; and our Gazette editor, Daniel Fitzpatrick, who took over this important duty from Len Panaggio who decided to pass the torch this year, is in his 20's!

I truly believe that, despite the stagnant economy, 2011 finds AFL in a very good place as an institution poised to carry out its mission into the future.

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The planning for our 2012 annual meeting has begun. Rob Rafferty and our new Treasurer, Chuck Schwam have undertaken to plan and implement the meeting in “Washington City” with a side trip to Mount Vernon. They tell me that there are enough Lafayette-related sites to have three or four annual meetings there.

I want to give you advance notice of two additional projects that we are considering in 2011-2012.

1) A Scholarly Publication

According to the By-laws, one of the objects and purposes of AFL is to “promote historical research with respect to the life and time of General Lafayette, ...” Over the course of its existence, AFL has published pamphlets periodically containing original works by recognized scholars involving Lafayette and/or his time. The last one was published in 1999. It is time for another AFL publication. We have among our members a number of serious and nationally recognized Lafayette scholars including President Emeritus Robert Crout of the College of Charleston, Diane Shaw, Chief Archivist of the Skillman Library of Lafayette College, and Paul Spalding, of Illinois College (Jacksonville), the author of Lafayette: Prisoner of State, University of South Carolina Press, 2010. Each has agreed to contribute an article. The contemplated publication will, we hope, be another vehicle to “spread the word” and educate the American people about Lafayette, his work and his times.

2) Moland House Statue

The Moland House in Warwick, PA was Washington’s headquarters for a time in August of 1777 when Lafayette joined “Washington’s family” and started his military career in the American Revolution. It has been lovingly restored, at great expense, and is now a fitting monument to the friendship of these two great men. See www.moland.org

On July 5, 2011, Warwick township passed a resolution to permit Gregory Marra, a member of AFL, and a Bucks County Pennsylvania sculptor, to build a statue of General Lafayette to be sited on the Moland House property. The 6' tall bronze statue will be placed on the lawn of the Moland House. The designs are being finalized and perfected. To visit the artist’s website go to www.gregmarrastudios.blogspot.com.

Contributions to this project may be sent to the Warwick Township Historical Society at the Moland House. 1641 Old York Rd., Hartsville PA., 18974.

Alan R. Hoffman
President
American Friends of Lafayette

July 4th, 2011

Change of the American flag at Picpus cemetery

Report by Myriam Wazé, and Joyce Good

Please see page 7 for photos

In a quiet neighborhood in Paris there is a special private cemetery, dedicated to those who died during the French Revolution and their descendants. So on the 4th of July, the American Independence Day, at the Picpus Cemetery, there is a ceremony organized every year by the Sons of the American Revolution in honor of Lafayette. The Marquis wanted to be buried next to his wife, Adrienne, whose own mother and sister were victims of the guillotine. Also according to his last wishes, Lafayette requested to be buried under French as well as American soil which he had brought back from Bunker Hill during his last visit to the United States.

This year's ceremony was held in the presence of his honorable Charles H. Rivkin, the Ambassador of the United States of America in France. National anthems of both countries were played by the French Republican Guard and the changing of the American flag over the tomb "our Hero of two worlds" was accompanied by a roll of drums followed by a bugle playing taps.

Several wreaths were laid by different associations in memory of General Lafayette:

Martin Boyer, Vice President of the SAR French Chapter (Sons of the American Revolution), representing Monsieur le Duc de Noailles, Monsieur le Duc de Choiseul for the Cincinnati, Madame M. Blumenthal, Mayor of the 12th arrondissement, representing Monsieur Bernard Delanoe, Mayor of Paris, General Marcel Kapfer, Military Commander of Palais du Luxembourg, representing Monsieur le Président du Sénat, Army Corps General Bruno Dary, Military Governor representing Monsieur Le Président de la République, Benoît Guizard representing the American Friends of Lafayette.

Then Ambassador Rivkin stepped up to speak:

He reminded us of what President Jackson said in 1834 at the death of our hero, "America mourns one of its own" and who then ordered that Lafayette be given full honors and the same funeral tribute as those that were given to President George Washington. The almost father-son relationship between George Washington and Lafayette was very close to the extent that the latter named his own son, George Washington La Fayette.

This was quite different compared to his native France where funeral services were forbidden for fear of demonstrations. The Ambassador continued recounting that John Quincy Adams spoke over three hours before Congress stating the debt America owed the young Marquis where at the age of 19 against the King's wishes, he set out for America to defend liberty and the ideas of our revolution.

During Lafayette's last visit to the United States in 1824-1825, Thomas Jefferson said, "I only held the nail, but Lafayette drove it". In his own country Lafayette, known as a general diplomat and legislator, directed the writing of the French "Declaration of the Rights of Man" supported by the ideas of Jefferson's "Declaration of Independence."

Today Lafayette's spirit is still very much alive in the United States where many towns, counties, universities and even a mountain are named after him. The French troops fighting along with the Americans in Afghanistan named a brigade in his honor. The French-American friendship is based on certain common values as stated very clearly by Chief Justice Brandeis referring to Lafayette "There is no happiness without freedom and there is no freedom without courage."

In conclusion, Ambassador Rivkin stated "Let the memory of Lafayette continue to guide us on this path of friendship".

Afterwards, Monsieur Boyer from the Sons of the American Revolution, spoke in particular about the more personal side of Lafayette who, having lost his own father at a very young age, felt a great affection for General Washington. Indeed, his passion, his idealism, courage as well as his military talents, all qualities recognized on both sides of the Atlantic, earned him the right to be called "Héros des deux mondes".

The ceremony ended with a military concert in the courtyard and the signing of the guestbook. A special youth delegation "People to People" from California and New Jersey attended the ceremony to represent the continued friendship between our countries.



American Friends of Lafayette wreath at Picpus



French Republican Guard (left)

Charles H. Rivkin, the Ambassador of the United States of America in France (right)



Special: AFL Member Recounts Tale of Visiting the Chateau de La Grange-Bleneau

Written by Jerry Meekins and his daughter Sue

As a preface to this journalistic account of our excursion, I would like to mention that my daughter Sue and I visited both Picpus and Chavaniac the previous summer (August 2010). We spent two days in Paris with other family members. This made the trip to Picpus not difficult. However, Chavaniac was another story. With the same family members we spent a week in St. Tropez, southern France. My daughter and I decided to travel one day, by car, to Chavaniac. We did exactly that. The trip was 13 hours round trip. We spent one and a half hours in Chavaniac. Although it was a short time, we were able to visit the town and get an audio guided tour of the Lafayette castle. The tour was in French with an English translation handout. We drove around the village and had lunch at what I would call the town deli. Even though it was a short visit, we thoroughly enjoyed both the trip around southern France and, of course, the visit to Chavaniac.

On a side note, my daughter is currently not a member of the AFL. She does share my passion. She has read one book about Lafayette, and is currently reading Andre Maurois' book "Adrienne". We are both fascinated by the role Adrienne played in the life of Lafayette.

While we were in Paris I inquired about visiting La Grange. At that time I was told the Chateau was not available to the public. By the way, during this time period, I was not a member of the AFL. I wasn't even aware of the organization. My interest was sparked by a book given to me by my mother in 1993, "Lafayette in America", Louis Gottschalk, First Bicentennial Edition. Unfortunately, I didn't start reading this book until after my mother's passing. I finished the book in July 2010, one month before going to France with my family. To this date I've read ten books about Lafayette. Although they are all very interesting and informative books, The Gottschalk book is still my favorite. As you may know, it's not only a masterpiece of research and writing (14 years of the author's devotion), but it took an additional one and a half years to print and bind. Because this particular book was given to me by my mother, it holds a very special meaning. It is the centerpiece of my Lafayette collection.

The stage was set for our visit to LaGrange, and I guess it's about time to relate my story concerning our La Grange trip. Shortly after I joined the AFL (September 2010) I met Alan Hoffman, as well as many other wonderful people at the 2010 Yorktown celebration. I contacted Alan a few times in late December, early January 2011. I told him that I was interested in going to La Grange. He gave me the POC at the Josee and Rene de Chambrun Foundation (Isabelle-Sophie Grivet). It took months of communication before I was given the ok to visit La Grange. Since Rene passed away in 2002, the Foundation manages La Grange.

I think the only thing unique about our visit was the fact that we flew there and back just for that purpose. We spent one night at an airport hotel. The entire trip was less than 48 hours, New York time.

We arrived in Paris late Saturday morning, May 14, 2011. We had made prior arrangements with our lovely and hospitable tour guide, Yasmine, to meet her at a Paris metro station. Although we had rented a car, she graciously offered to take us there. We humbly accepted the private tour arrangements. The Foundation is very particular about visits. No more than five people are allowed, and it's between 2:30 and 4:30 on Saturday. As others who have toured the Chateau, we were fortunate to be alone. After reading so much about this famous place, you can only imagine the anticipation and excitement upon our arrival. It is truly located in what appears to be a perfect countryside setting. My daughter and I were both in awe. We were very overwhelmed by the Chateau, its contents and the grounds. It was so much more than we expected. Because we weren't allowed to take pictures inside the Chateau, we had to rely on notes and memory. We both agreed that with as much memorabilia, artifacts, pictures, documents, etc., we could have spent the entire day there. We did take pictures outside the Chateau. The amount of material inside is amazing. The entire story about the history of LaGrange and how the material survived is incredible. Thanks to the Chambruns and their Foundation, the once run down Chateau, with its stored away treasure chests, is now a well taken care of museum. It is a testimony to the life and times of the Marquis and Adrienne Lafayette. Without going into detail about everything we saw in the Chateau, suffice to say, there are so many treasures to feel the presence of the Lafayette family. Each and every room was better than the next. I have a journal (notes) listing many of the items we were so fortunate to see. The castle was filled with not only the Lafayette family memorabilia, but so many articles, letters, books and gifts from former Presidents and other famous people. The grounds and garden were beautiful and serene. It is truly a great location. Unlike most museums, a lot of the articles were touchable. Our guide, Yasmine, touched many. After about an hour or so, we signed the visitor's log and proceeded to an adjoining dining room for tea and deserts. We were served by the French caretaker. He gave us two types of cookies and round toast made on a wooden fire.

There was also homemade preserves made from fruit grown on the property farm. Over the dining room table was a chandelier made of Murano glass (Venice). We toasted my mother.

From there we went to another building. I'll call this building the boat house, because it housed one of the many very special gifts given to Lafayette during his 1824-1825 "Guest of the Nation" tour. It was the Whitehall gig, called the "American Star". This also is another story unto itself. We took a few pictures outside and returned to Paris. We couldn't thank Yasmine enough. We gave her and Sophie gifts we brought from the States, Pandora bracelets with a charm of the Philadelphia liberty bell. We ended the day with dinner in the Lafayette room of a restaurant called Le 1728. This building was once the Paris residence of Lafayette. He died there.

This may have been one of those once in a lifetime experiences. As much as we want to revisit again, in order to see and absorb more, we may never get a chance. I was told that it could be as much as five more years before we are afforded the opportunity. Only time will tell. If I had it all to do over again, I would also take a tape recorder, if allowed.

For all of us interested, as we are, in the life and times of the Marquis and Adrienne Lafayette, I highly recommend this trip and visit.

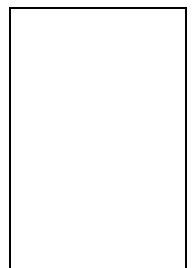




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Dedicated to the memory of Major General Gilbert Motier, Marquis de Lafayette

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