

REKINDLING THE SPARK OF LIBERTY

Lafayette's Visit to the United States, 1824-1825

by William Jones

As the American War for Independence was coming to a successful conclusion, a group of senior officers in the Continental Army set about to establish an institution, that would serve, both to commemorate those brave men who had led the struggle for independence from the British Empire, and as a guardian of the fragile Republic that had just been won. The organization, the Society of the Cincinnati, named after the Roman citizen-soldier Cincinnatus, was formed on May 13, 1783. Its membership was open to any officer who had served in the Continental Army, both American and foreign. Indeed, the

following year, on July 4, 1784, a French branch of the Society of the Cincinnati was formed, with the Marquis de Lafayette elected as its first head. The American head was Gen. George Washington, who was succeeded, upon his death, by Col. Alexander Hamilton.

Beyond the formalities, the hereditary Society formed the core of a trans-Atlantic republican conspiracy, aimed at preserving the American Republic and spreading republican ideals around the world, particularly back into Europe. It was, in part, on behalf of the latter mission, that the Marquis de Lafayette made his historic return to America in 1824-25.

What Is an American Patriot?

This article is part of a series aimed at unearthing the real history of the American patriotic tradition, and causing its revival. The purpose is to create the political and intellectual climate in which a genuine American patriotic candidate can emerge for the 2008 Presidential elections—a candidacy which does not yet exist.

Of special relevance is the period of the early 19th Century, when patriots had to fight in the context of series of poor, or even treasonous Presidents. The fact that our greatest President, Abraham Lincoln, was produced from this political environment, testifies to the effectiveness of the network of republican forces from this period. The LaRouche movement has worked for decades to uncover the original writings and other evidence of this network.

This week we celebrate the Marquis de Lafayette's triumphant return to America in 1824-25, his meetings with former Presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, and the crucial role he played in the 1824 Presidential election of John Quincy Adams.

Lafayette established for himself a more stately column than that at Vendôme, and a better statue than that of marble or metal. Where is the marble as pure as his heart, and where is the metal as firm as the devotion of old Lafayette? Of course he was always partisan, but partisan like the needle of a compass, which always points to the North, and not once deviates to the South or to the East. And so Lafayette has daily said the same thing for forty years, and always points toward North America. For that is where the Revolution began with its universal declaration of human rights. Still in this hour he persists in this declaration, without which there can be no healing—that partisan man with his partisan heavenly Realm of Freedom!"

—Heinrich Heine, 1832

The visit to the United States in 1824-25 of the Marquis de Lafayette, the last surviving general of the Revolutionary War, was a landmark event during the first half of the 19th Century in America. The aging war hero (1757-1834), who had come to U.S. shores nearly 40 years earlier as a 19-year-old major general, to lead American troops in the battle for the nation's independence from Great Britain; who had been a key figure in the



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The Marquis de Lafayette was the last surviving general of the Revolutionary War. He is shown here, with his commander in chief, Gen. George Washington, at Valley Forge, 1777-78.

early days of the abortive French Revolution, and spent seven years in an Austrian prison; lived on in American lore and legend. But almost a half-century had passed since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and the generation that had been involved at the creation of the republic was passing from the scene; the memory of their deeds and their ideals was growing dim. For those who had been involved in that fight—the Revolutionary officers and those of the Society of the Cincinnati and similar organizations—the visit of their old chief would be the occasion to again light the torch and pass it to a new generation. The timing of the visit couldn't have been more propitious, as it would coincide with an election that would determine the fate of the American Republic.

The Monroe Doctrine

President James Monroe, in consultation with the Congress, wrote to Lafayette in February 1824, inviting him to visit the United States. Two months prior to Monroe's letter, the President had issued a declaration that became famous as the Monroe Doctrine. At the urging of the Holy Alliance, the restored monarchy in France invaded Spain in order to quell republican stirrings in that nation. Most of the countries of Ibero-America, in the chaos that followed, had declared their independence from Spain and were still in a fight to secure it. The U.S. had recognized, indeed encouraged, these new republics that had overthrown the colonial yoke. Not so the Holy Alliance, which had become the de facto policeman for the oligarchy in Europe. With the re-establishment of absolutism in Spain, there were fears that France, with the backing of the main powers of the Holy Alliance—Russia, Austria, and

Prussia—might try to restore the colonial order in the former Spanish possessions.

The British, who were playing a cat-and-mouse game with the Holy Alliance, which they had helped create, were interested in advancing their own claims on some of the South American colonies. British Foreign Secretary Lord Canning turned to the United States to seek a joint declaration that neither Great Britain nor the United States had any interest in taking over former Spanish colonies, nor did they look kindly on any third party doing so. Monroe, supported by former Presidents James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, was inclined to take up the British offer. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, however, was adamantly opposed. "It would be more candid, as well as more dignified," Adams told the President, "to avow our principles explicitly to Russia and France, than to come in as a cock-boat in the wake of the British man-of-war." The "principles" espoused were also vintage Adams: "non-colonization" and "non-interference" in the affairs on the American continent by *any* of the European powers. Monroe accepted the Adams proposal and issued a statement to that effect.

A relatively weak United States might now be pitted against the powers of the Holy Alliance and Great Britain if it chose to contest the issue. Monroe considered that a visit by that renowned hero of both continents, the Marquis de Lafayette, might be just the right thing to garner support for his policy both at home and abroad.

The time could not have been more propitious for Lafayette as well. By 1820, the French General was again at the center of a republican wave in Europe, with young people from Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, and even Brazil, gather-



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In 1781, Lafayette forced Lord Cornwallis into his ill-fated Southern campaign, which finally boxed him in at Yorktown, where the American forces under General Washington won the decisive battle of the Revolution. Shown, the British surrender at Yorktown.

ing at his door in Paris. That year, there was an attempt to overthrow King Louis XVIII. It failed, and led to increasing police repression in France. By 1823, Lafayette had lost his seat in the Chamber of Deputies, and had made known to friends in America his wish to return there for a lengthy visit. A successful tour in America, correctly reported back to Europe, would help promote those republican ideals which he wished to implant in his native soil. He therefore gladly accepted Monroe's and the Congress's invitation.

Again on Columbia's Shores

From the moment of his arrival in New York, it was clear that this visit would rekindle the spirit of the American Revolution for a new generation, and bring back into the public eye those veterans who had fought in that conflict.

Congress had been prepared to send a vessel to bring Lafayette to America's shores, but the Marquis felt that this would be too great an imposition. He left France on an American merchant vessel, the *Cadmus*, on July 13, 1824. French authorities were not at all happy at Lafayette's journey. Fearing that the Americans were preparing to seize the French colonies in the West Indies and make Lafayette governor, they sent troops to disperse the crowds that had gathered at the port of Le Havre to see Lafayette off. Lafayette travelled with his son, George Washington Lafayette, and Auguste Levasseur, who would serve as his secretary. Levasseur, himself a veteran of the European revolutionary movement, would send home reports and newspaper clippings, informing the French public of Lafayette's reception in America, and of the workings of the new republic. In 1829, Levasseur would publish a journal of the voyage to America, which, 20 years before Alexis de Toc-

queville, would give the French public a clear sketch of the new American republic and its representatives.

1824 was also an election year in the United States, and the first election in which none of the Revolutionary Old Guard would be running. There was a great deal of interest as to which direction the American Republic would go, now that the founders were dead or retired. The candidates would be John Quincy Adams, William Crawford, Henry Clay, and Andrew Jackson. The first three were serving together in the Monroe Administration, and the cagey Jackson, a product of the American backwoods, was trying to make his mark as the hero of the Battle of New Orleans, in which he defeated a superior British Army on the outskirts of the city, during the War of 1812. Unbeknownst to Jackson and to his British foe, the peace ending the war had already been signed in Ghent (communications were very slow in

those days), but the battle was fought nevertheless, and Jackson emerged the victor. His military "prowess" was used as a means of garnering support in the hinterland; his candidacy also won adherents among the former opponents of Alexander Hamilton in the Wall Street financial community, who hoped to use this populist "poster boy" to capture the White House, and from there, to dismantle the Hamiltonian system, which they hated.

The campaign had already become bitter by the time Lafayette arrived, but the trip served to temporarily put a damper on the partisan attacks. As Levasseur describes it: "For nearly two months, all the discord and excitement produced by this election, which, it was said, would engender the most disastrous consequences, were forgotten, and nothing was thought of but Lafayette and the heroes of the Revolution."

A Hero's Welcome

As Lafayette arrived in New York Harbor, the sea was filled with ships, containing admiring onlookers eager to catch a glimpse of the returning hero. When he landed at Staten Island to visit the home of Vice President Daniel D. Tompkins, the old General was surrounded by admiring crowds. The story of Lafayette's gallantry during the American Revolution, his wounds suffered at the Battle of Brandywine, his Virginia campaign that forced Lord Cornwallis into his ill-fated Southern campaign which finally boxed him in at Yorktown, the role he played in the initial phases of the French Revolution, an unsuccessful attempt to imitate on the European continent what had been done in America, were all part of legend.

In the welcoming ceremonies at Battery Park, the Marquis reviewed the Lafayette Guard, a regiment of young, elite volunteers clad in uniforms and wearing on their breasts the por-

trait of their General. Time and again, during the 13 months Lafayette spent in the U.S., he would review the local militias, be fêted by the local officials, and greeted by the people of the towns he traversed.

And at every town, he would again be greeted by the veterans of the Revolution. Men grown old and gray, some forgotten but now remembered, regularly turned out to see their old commander; chapters of the various states' Cincinnati Societies would arrange fests and parades wherever Lafayette would go.

Reliving the Glory Days of Revolution

From New York, Lafayette travelled to Boston, the scene of the first stages of the Revolution. The crowds wore "Lafayette ribbons," white ribbons engraved by local printers, in towns where Lafayette receptions were to be held. He dined with the Governor of Massachusetts and spoke at the State House. A welcoming speech was given by Edward Everett, who, years later during the Civil War, would precede Lincoln at the podium at the memorial to the fallen at Gettysburg. "Greetings! Friend of our fathers!" Everett said "May you be welcome on our shores! Happy are our eyes to look upon your venerable features! Enjoy a triumph, which is reserved for neither conquerors nor monarchs, the assurance that here in all America there is not a heart which does not beat with joy and gratitude at the sound of your name."

At Bunker Hill, Lafayette sang the praises of the fallen General Warren. "It is with profound respect that I tread upon this hallowed ground, where the blood of American patriots, the blood of Warren and his companions, gloriously spilled, revived the force of three million and secured the happiness of ten million who live now, and of so many others to be born. This blood has summoned the American continents to republican independence, and has awakened in the nations of Europe the necessity of, and assured for the future, I hope, the exercise of their rights." Lafayette was asked to return to Bunker Hill at the end of his tour the following year, before parting for France, in order to lay the cornerstone for the planned Bunker Hill Monument.

Lafayette then travelled out to Quincy, to visit his old friend, the former President John Adams, now in quiet retirement. The aging statesman was filled with joy at the recognition that his fellow citizens were showing to Lafayette. In Lexington, where he visited the first battlefield of the war, a man approached Lafayette with a rifle, which he said was the gun that his father had used to return the first fire from the British soldiers on April 19, 1775. He wanted to give it to Lafayette as a gift. Lafayette examined the rifle, but returned it to the man saying that he should inscribe on it the date of the battle "April 19," and the name of the brave citizen who made so beautiful a use of it, and then place it in a box in order to preserve it from the ravages of time.

Returning to New York, Lafayette learned that the Society of the Cincinnati had prepared to celebrate his birthday on

Sept. 6. A procession of the aging officers preceded by a military band brought out the town as they made their way to the location where they would share a meal. The room was decorated with trophies of arms, and with 60 banners bearing the names of the principal heroes who died for liberty during the Revolutionary War. Towards the end of the meal, a curtain was raised suddenly, revealing a large transparency representing Washington and Lafayette hand in hand before the altar of liberty, receiving a civic crown from the hands of America. This was greeted by shouts of joy from the veterans. Gen. John Lamb then read a moving ballad, which had been composed in honor of Lafayette in 1792 during the years that he was incarcerated in an Austrian dungeon. Also, in February 1824, a play, "Lafayette, or The Castle of Olmutz," written by the American poet Samuel Woodworth, had been performed at the New York Park Theater.

While in New York City, he also visited the Free School of Young Africans, which was administered by the Society of the Emancipation of the Blacks. Lafayette's attempts to free the slaves in the French colonies had been cut short by the French Revolution.

At a dinner with French residents of New York to celebrate the 47th anniversary of the Battle of Brandywine, the hall was decorated with a gigantic model in relief of the planned Erie Canal. Toasts were given to Lafayette and to Rafael del Riego y Nuñez, a young Spanish colonel, who had forced the Spanish king to accept a constitution, and was later executed for his part in the revolt when the Holy Alliance came to the aid of the embattled monarch.

From New York, Lafayette travelled up the Hudson River to Albany and to the military academy at West Point, where he was greeted by the commandant Sylvanus Thayer. He travelled by carriage with the widow of his close ally Alexander Hamilton, to the plain where the cadets passed in review, after which he was introduced to each of them by Thayer. During the difficult times in Paris, Lafayette had sent his son to the United States for safety; the boy had stayed in New York with the Hamiltons, and then, when George Washington retired to Mount Vernon, he lived with the Washingtons for two years. When asked, by George Washington Parke Custis, for his reaction to the untimely death of Hamilton at the hands of Burr, Lafayette replied. "Hamilton was to me, my dear Sir, more than friend, he was a brother. We were both very young, when associated with our common father; our friendship, formed in days of peril and glory, suffered no diminution from time: with Tilghman and with Laurens, I was upon terms the most affectionate; but with Hamilton, my relations were brotherly."

From New York, Lafayette went on to Philadelphia, stopping by those scenes of old battles at Trenton and Princeton on his way there, with the usual flurry of toasts and celebrations.

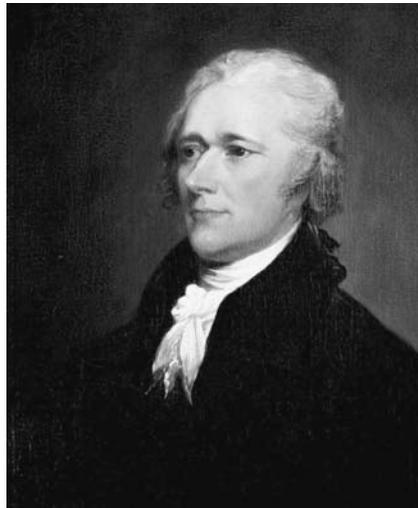
At this time, Philadelphia was still the most sophisticated metropolis in the country. The reception there was grand, and the procession reached about four miles, taking one hour and ten minutes to enter the city. Included in the procession were

150 Revolutionary War veterans, organized by the Society of Cincinnati, drawn in three great cars, each pulled by four horses, each trimmed with red and white bunting. On one side of the car was written "Defenders of Our Country," and on the other "The Survivors of 1776." In the front of the cavalcade was written "Washington," and at the rear "Lafayette." In an address at Independence Hall, Maj. William Jackson addressed General Lafayette on behalf of the Society of the Cincinnati of Pennsylvania. "The lapse of forty years has greatly reduced the roll of our original associates; but their descendants, inheriting the sentiments of their sires, and instructed by the faithful record of your worth, unite most cordially with the surviving few of your companions in arms to felicitate your arrival, and to cherish your residence in the land of your adoption, whose unrivaled prosperity must impart the most pleasing sensations to your sympathetic breast, and even enhance the grateful and unanimous congratulations of a free and happy people," Jackson said.

In reply to remarks from the mayor of Philadelphia, Lafayette said: "Here, sir, within these sacred walls, by a council of wise and devoted patriots, and in a style worthy of the deed itself, was boldly declared the independence of these vast United States, which, while it anticipated the independence, and, I hope, the republican independence, of the whole American hemisphere, has begun, for the civilized world, the era of a new, and of the only social order, founded on the unalienable rights of man, the practicability and advantages of which are every day admirably demonstrated by the happiness and prosperity of your populous city." The hall, which was then in a serious state of disrepair, would receive a new lease on life as a memorial to the founding of the nation after the visit of Lafayette.

In Philadelphia, Lafayette was accompanied by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams. One of the contenders in the upcoming election, Adams' presence with the old Revolutionary War hero, and the numerous toasts and speeches Adams himself made in Lafayette's honor, which were dutifully reported in the local papers, certainly helped secure, in the eyes of the public, Adams' credentials as a suitable successor to that departing generation of Founding Fathers, a fact of which the wily General was quite aware.

Visiting Fort McHenry in Baltimore Harbor, where the British had been thwarted in their taking of the city, and where Francis Scott Key composed his "Star-Spangled Banner," Lafayette was greeted by veterans of the War of 1812, some of whom still bore their wounds. In the middle of the fort, the tent that General Washington had used in 1777 at Dorchester Heights, was set up to greet the "Nation's Guest," as Lafayette



When asked for his reaction to the murder of Hamilton by Aaron Burr, Lafayette replied. "Hamilton was to me, my dear Sir, more than friend, he was a brother."

had come to be designated. In it, the aging Col. John Eager Howard, a veteran of both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, greeted Lafayette on behalf of the Maryland branch of the Society of the Cincinnati. In the procession that followed the visit, the band played "The March of Lafayette," just one of the numerous ballads and poems composed in this period in Lafayette's honor.

The Election of 1824

Adams accompanied the General to the new nation's capital. First occupied by the government in 1800, the area had been a wilderness during Lafayette's first visit to the country. Designed by Maj. Pierre L'Enfant, a compatriot of Lafayette who had also served during the Revolution, and a founding member of the Society of the Cincinnati, the grand design of L'Enfant had hardly been realized by 1824, a fact that had been duly noted by Levasseur: "Drawn on a gigantic scale, the plan of Washington cannot be filled out for a century," he wrote. "Without its public monuments, one would take it for a newborn colony, striving to clear land for cultivation."

Lafayette was graciously received by President Monroe at the White House. He spent several days in the capital, visiting the university at Georgetown, the Navy Yard, Columbian College (now Gallaudet University), as well as all the living relatives of George Washington, dining with his granddaughter Eliza at the Law House near the river, at Martha Washington Peters' house in Georgetown, and with George Washington Parke Custis at Arlington House on the Virginia hill overlooking the city of Washington. Custis had built a great Greek-revival mansion on the hill, which served as a memorial to George Washington, the man who adopted him, Martha's grandson by a previous marriage, when the young man's father died serving on Washington's staff during the Revolution. Now, and on his return trip, Lafayette would spend much time speaking with Custis, a boyhood friend of his own son, who would then publish their talks in the local papers in a series entitled "Conversations with Lafayette."

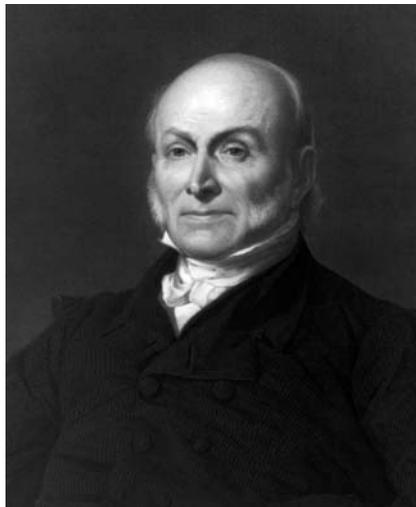
On Dec. 8, Lafayette visited the Capitol. He was presented in the Senate, after which the Senate adjourned so that its members could individually greet their visitor. On the following day, he was invited to the House of Representatives, where he was introduced by Speaker of the House Henry Clay. In his moving introductory speech, Clay noted: "Often we have formed the vain desire that Providence should permit the patriot to visit his country after his death, to contemplate there the changes to which time has given birth. Today, the American patriot of times passed would see forests cultivated, towns founded, mountains leveled, canals opened, great roads built, great prog-

ress made in the Arts, the Sciences and in the increase of population.” Clay praised the steadfast role that Lafayette had played in the recent turbulences in Europe. “The approbation of the American people for my conduct in the vicissitudes of the European Revolution is the greatest that I could receive,” Lafayette said in his reply. “To be sure, I can stand fast with head held high, when in their name and by you, Mr. President, it is solemnly declared that on each occasion I have stayed faithful to American principles of liberty, equality and true social order to which I have been devoted since my youth, and which, till my last breath, will be a sacred duty to me.” Congress also awarded Lafayette a payment of \$200,000 for services rendered to the American Republic.

The presence of Lafayette at the nation’s capital also corresponded with the most critical moment of the 1824 election campaign. Although he had invitations to visit all the Western states, he delayed his stay in Washington until after the elections. During the vote-counting, there were many celebrations in his honor. On Jan. 9, at an entertainment organized in honor of Lafayette, Quincy Adams and Clay were both in attendance. And it might have been on this occasion that these two worked out the plan by which they would prevent a Jackson victory. On Feb. 9, 1825, the electoral votes were counted. While Jackson had received the most votes, he had not received a clear majority, and the vote was thrown, for the first time, into the House of Representatives. The House then proceeded to elect John Quincy Adams President, as Henry Clay, who was also a candidate, according to their previous arrangement, swung his votes in favor of Adams, putting Adams over the top. Adams was inaugurated on March 4, and Henry Clay was named Secretary of State. This combination, together with Richard Rush at Treasury, would serve to anchor the principles of the American System firmly at the helm of state for the next four years. Whatever role Lafayette may have otherwise played in the election, it was clear that his tour had raised the patriotic fervor in the land that helped his friend get elected.

‘Much To Deplore, Much To Admire’

From the nation’s capital, Lafayette headed south to Williamsburg and to the battlefield of Yorktown, where there were to be held great celebrations. On his way he paid a visit to Mount Vernon to visit the tomb of his adopted father, George Washington. He was accompanied to the tomb by George Washington Parke Custis, who bore around his neck a Cincinnati ribbon on which hung a ring with a lock of Washington’s hair. The tomb was opened, and Lafayette entered. “The general descended the steps and kissed the leaden cells



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Lafayette’s triumphant return to America helped to secure the victory of his ally John Quincy Adams (left) as President in the 1824 election; Henry Clay became Adams’ Secretary of State.

which contained the ashes of the great chief and his venerable consort,” Custis later wrote, “and then retired in an excess of feeling which language is too poor to describe.” Custis then presented him with the ring as a gift and a memorial to his departed commander-in-chief. Custis then gave the ribbon on which the ring had hung to Major Ewell, a veteran of the Revolution, so that it might be divided among the veterans of that war. Lafayette visited the Mount Vernon house, and saw, still hanging on a nail above the door where Washington himself had placed it, the key to the Bastille prison, that foul den of torture and deprivation during the Ancien Régime, which Lafayette had sent to Washington when the Bastille was stormed in 1789 and its inhabitants released.

From Mount Vernon, he travelled south to Williamsburg and to Yorktown. At Yorktown, awaiting the ceremonies, Lafayette established his headquarters in the house where Lord Cornwallis had held court prior to the Battle of Yorktown. This would not have been the first time that Lafayette would have received satisfaction at Cornwallis’s expense. Lafayette related a story to Custis about how, on a visit to the court of Frederick the Great, the mischievous “Old Fritz” had placed Lafayette at dinner between Cornwallis and the Duke of York, expressing the hope that the General would not take it amiss. When Old Fritz inquired of Lafayette his opinion of George Washington, he referred him to Lord Cornwallis sitting next to him, noting wryly, “His acquaintance with the person of the Great Chief, was of longer standing than mine.”

A full day’s celebration was held to commemorate the battle and its hero Lafayette. At Yorktown, Lafayette had delayed making any attack on Cornwallis until Washington himself had arrived to have the honor of command at this, the final battle, in spite of urging from the French naval commander to proceed. From here, Lafayette travelled to Monticello where he spent several days with Thomas Jefferson, and to Montpe-



Lafayette greets the troops of the 2nd Battalion, 11th New York Artillery, in New York City, July 14, 1825. This unit later adopted the title "National Guard" in honor of Lafayette's Garde National de Paris.

lier to visit James Madison. Now traveling through the Southern states, Lafayette would be confronted with the ugly reality of slavery. He did not shrink from discussing its evils. Levasseur relates in his journal: "General Lafayette, who, while understanding very fully the troublesome position of the Slave-owners in the United States, and not being able to disregard most of the obstacles that stand in the way of a more speedy emancipation of the Blacks, nevertheless, never missed the occasion to defend the right that all men, without exception have to liberty, and to raise in the midst of Mr. Madison's friends the question of Slavery."

When later asked about his feelings on his trip South by Custis, Lafayette replied: "I am well aware of the cloud of evil which o'erhangs and shadows the South. Tis true she [the South] has much to deplore, but has much too to admire; for she still boasts of sons the most patriotic and enlightened, the most generous and hospitable, and contains in her soil, a grave most revered," referring to one of his former commanders and dear friend, Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene.

In South Carolina, Lafayette visited the tomb of Baron DeKalb, a young German officer killed at the Battle of Camden, who had accompanied him on his trip to fight in the Revolution. Lafayette dedicated a memorial to the Baron, just one of many monuments that would be raised to Revolutionary War heroes in the wake of Lafayette's trip. In Georgia, he laid the cornerstone for a monument to Greene, whose daughter had lived for a year with Lafayette's family in Paris. He also laid the cornerstone for a monument to Count Casimir Pulaski, the Polish general who had organized Washington's cavalry during the Revolution, and who was killed in the Battle of Savannah. Architect Robert Mills, who would later

design the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C., was intimately involved in the Southern monument projects that Lafayette had launched. Indeed, the following years would see a revival of monument-building unparalleled in American history.

On the Banks of the Mississippi

From Georgia, Lafayette went through Alabama and Mississippi. A large portion of these states were still a part of Indian territory, and here Lafayette encountered many of their representatives. Here too the name of Lafayette was well known, both by those who had fought on the American side, and by those who had fought against. Spending some time in one of the Indian villages, the guest of Captain Kendall Lewis, a former U.S. Army officer, who had married the daughter of a Creek chief and adopted the life of the Indians, Lafayette received a delegation from a neighboring tribe. In a peroration

given by the chief, he praised Lafayette's courage in the war against the English, then concluded: "Father, they will speak for a long time among us about how you returned to visit our forests and our cabins, you whom the Great Spirit had sent in days of old from the other coast of the great lake in order to chase out the enemies of men, the English, with their blood-red coats. The youngest among us will tell their grandchildren that they have touched your hand and seen your face; perhaps they will see you again yet, because you are the favorite of the Great Spirit and you do not grow old, you would still be able to defend us if we were ever menaced."

Later, while travelling to Kaskaskia, Illinois, Lafayette met an Indian girl, who had kept a memento from her father, a letter written by Lafayette in 1778, from his headquarters in Albany, thanking him for the courageous manner with which he had served the American cause. Her father had been chief of one of the Nations that lived on the shores of the Great Lakes, and had fought with 100 of his men under the command of Lafayette, when the General commanded an army on the frontiers of the North.

Lafayette would continue his way West, visiting Mobile, New Orleans, and St. Louis, and reminiscing with many of the numerous French emigrants who had first settled the area, many of whom remained when the area was ceded to the United States. Here too he ran into soldiers who had served under him at Brandywine, as well as one who had served in his French command in 1791, during the wars with the powers that had invade France during the French Revolution. In New Orleans, he was met by a delegation of resident and refugee Spaniards, expressing gratitude for the stand he had taken against the French invasion of Spain. In response, Lafayette

told them: “Already your beautiful language, the language of Padilla, has become, over an immense area of this hemisphere, a language of independence and republicanism; already, at two different times, in the country of the illustrious, preeminent Riego, it has made heard the most eloquent and most generous sounds in the bosom of the Cortes, and whatever

may have been the temporary success of a war detested, I like to think, by the French people, and of a deceitful influence about which the Spanish patriots have nothing more to learn, liberty will return soon to enlighten and to make fruitful this most interesting part of Europe.”

In St. Louis, he would spend time as the guest of Gen.

Lafayette in Congress: Bids Farewell to America

Lafayette addressed a joint session of Congress on Dec. 9-10, 1824, where he was greeted by Speaker of the House Henry Clay with the following words:

The vain wish has been sometimes indulged, that Providence would allow the patriot, after death, to return to his country, and to contemplate the intermediate changes which had taken place—to view the forests felled, the cities built, the mountains levelled, the canals cut, the highways constructed, the progress of the arts, the advancement of learning and the increase in population—General, your present visit to the United States is a realization of the consoling object of that wish. You are in the midst of posterity. Everywhere, you must have been struck by the great changes, physical and moral, which have occurred since you left us. Even this city, bearing a venerated name, alike endeared to you and to us, has since emerged from the forest which then covered its site.¹

Lafayette :

... You have been pleased Mr. Speaker, to allude to the peculiar felicity of my situation, when after so long an absence, I am called to witness the immense improvements, the admirable communications, the prodigious creations, of which we find an example in this city, whose name itself is a venerated palladium; in a word, all the grandeur and prosperity of those happy United States, who, at the same time they nobly secure the complete assertion of American independence, reflect, on every part of the world, the light of a far superior political civilization. What better pledge can be given, of a persevering national love of liberty, when these blessings are evidently the result of a virtuous resistance to oppression, and

1. Both the U.S. population and its territory quadrupled from 1775 to 1825, from 2.5 million people and 393,152 square miles in 1775, to 11.3 million people and well over 1.6 million square miles in 1825.

institutions founded on the rights of man, and the republican principle of self-government.

The day before Lafayette left to return to France, on Sept. 6, 1825, he again appeared before a joint session of the Congress. President John Quincy Adams spoke:

... Go, then, our beloved friend—return to the land of brilliant genius, of generous sentiment, of heroic valour; to that beautiful France, the nursing mother of the twelfth Louis, and fourth Henry; to the native soil of Bayard and Coligni, of Turenne and Catinat, of Fenelon and D’Aguesseau. In that illustrious catalogue of names which she claims as her children, and with honest pride holds up to the admiration of other nations, the name of Lafayette has already for centuries been enrolled. And it shall henceforth burnish into brighter flame; for if, in after days, a Frenchman shall be called to indicate the character of his nation by that one individual, during the age in which we live, the blood of lofty patriotism shall mantle in his cheek, the fire of conscious virtue shall sparkle in his eye, and he shall pronounce the name of Lafayette. Yet we, too, and our children, in life and after death, shall claim you for our own. ...

Lafayette, in his last speech on American soil, responded:

... I have had proudly to recognize a result of the republican principles for which we have fought, and a glorious demonstration to the most timid and prejudiced minds, of the superiority, over degrading aristocracy or despotism, of popular institutions founded on the plain rights of man, and where the local rights of every section are preserved under a constitutional bond of union. The cherishing of that union between the states, as it has been the farewell entreaty of our great paternal Washington, and will ever have the dying prayer of every American patriot, so it has become the sacred pledge of the emancipation of the world, an object in which I am happy to observe that the American people, while they give the animating example of successful free institutions, in return for an evil entailed upon them by Europe, and of which a liberal and enlightened sense is everywhere more and more generally felt, show themselves every day more anxiously interested....

William Clark, of the Lewis and Clark expedition, who fascinated the visitor with the many exotic items that he had brought back with him from that trip. Here he also was a guest at the house of old Auguste Chouteau and his son, Pierre, Auguste having founded the city of St. Louis. Lafayette was also visited here by the son of Alexander Hamilton, which gave him great joy.

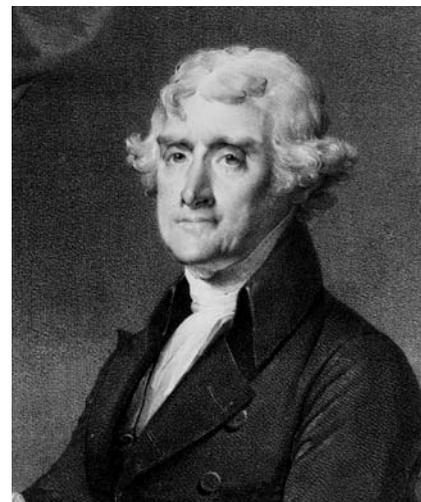
From St. Louis, he repaired up the Ohio and Cumberland Rivers, being forced to abandon ship when his boat hit a snag in the river. He visited Gen. Andrew Jackson, now licking his wounds after his defeat, and plotting a comeback, at his home in Tennessee, and stopped by Lexington, Kentucky, where he was astounded by the new institutions of higher learning being established in this wilder-

ness area, and Ashland, the home of Henry Clay, who remained in Washington in his new post as Secretary of State. In a speech in Kentucky, Lafayette singled out Clay for praise: "To your interesting remarks on the progress of knowledge in the States of the West, I shall add that already the western stars of the American constellation have shone with the greatest brilliance in the national councils. South America and Mexico will never forget that the first voice that made itself heard in Congress for recognition of their independence was a Kentuckian voice; just as they can never forget that it is to the wise and vigorous declarations of the Government of the United States that they owe the disappointment of certain hostile schemes against their independence, and their most speedy recognition by the European powers."

Then he was off to Ohio, where he was greeted by Gen. William Henry Harrison, a hero of the War of 1812, and later President of the United States. From there, he followed the Ohio River to Pittsburgh, and then up to New York and to Boston, travelling part of the way on the still uncompleted Erie Canal, where he, on June 17, the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill, laid the cornerstone for the Bunker Hill Monument. With him were Daniel Webster, who gave one of his finest orations, praising the General for having conducted that "electric spark of liberty" from the New World to the Old. After the dedication, Lafayette left for New York by way of New Hampshire and Vermont, where he celebrated the Fourth of July, and then proceeded to Washington for final adieu and the voyage home.

A Final Farewell

On his arrival back in Washington, Lafayette was asked to stay as Adams' guest in the White House, to rest before his final voyage, and for intimate conversations in the evenings. Adams accompanied the General for a visit to Monroe at his home in Oak Hill, and to Leesburg and Loudoun County, Vir-



Library of Congress

In Quincy, Mass., Lafayette visited his old friend, former President John Adams. He also travelled to Monticello where he spent several days with Thomas Jefferson. Adams and Jefferson both died on July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

ginia, where celebrations had been prepared in his honor. Lafayette and his son also paid a final farewell to Jefferson at Monticello.

Adams had outfitted a new frigate, built in the Washington Navy Yard, which was christened *The Brandywine*, which would carry Lafayette back to France. As the United States did not yet have a naval academy, young midshipmen were assigned directly to ships to learn their craft. Ordinarily, there would be seven or eight such midshipmen on any ship. Adams, however, was receiving requests from all over the Union from parents who wanted to place their sons on the ship that would take Lafayette back to France. Instead of the usual eight midshipmen, the *Brandywine* thus carried 24, one from every state of the Union. In addition to their training, these young sailors would hear the stories from Lafayette, who was delighted to be surrounded by these young men, of the glories and trials of the Revolution and the courage of the men who had fought in it. Lafayette was scheduled to leave on Sept. 7, the day after his birthday. His birthday was celebrated in one of the most magnificent White House dinners ever held there.

On the following day, as the time for parting arrived, both Adams and Lafayette were extremely moved and saddened. Adams offered a tribute to the General. "In the illustrious catalogue of names, which [France] claims as of her children, and with honest pride holds up to the admiration of other nations, the name of Lafayette has already for centuries been enrolled. And it shall henceforth burnish into brighter fame; for if, in after days, a Frenchman shall be called to indicate the character of his nation by that of one individual, during the age in which we live, the blood of lofty patriotism shall mantle in his cheek, the fire of conscious virtue shall sparkle in his eye and he shall pronounce the name of Lafayette."

The regime of the new king, Charles X (Louis XVIII having died in the meantime) looked with trepidation at the return

of the republican hero. A Royal Guard was sent to disperse any large public manifestations. In Rouen, crowds were dispersed by the Guard when they met to greet him. When Lafayette retired to his hotel, however, a large group of young people gathered there to protect him from further incursions by the Guards. While the Guards increased their pickets, no further incidents were perpetrated.

Lafayette was greeted in his home town as a conquering hero, with great celebrations in his honor. The following year he would again be returned to the Chamber of Deputies, and his house in Paris would again be a gathering spot for republicans from all over the world.

In the United States, the visit of Lafayette had long-lasting consequences. Now arose an interest in creating monuments in every city to the heroes of the American Revolution. A committee to design a monument to Washington in the nation's capital was soon to be established. The souvenir industry was born in the United States, with plates and teacups and pitchers and gold medallions emblazoned with pictures of Lafayette and memorials in his honor; 1824 saw the publication of several new biographies of Lafayette, several editions of his memoirs, numerous descriptions of the year he spent here, and hundreds of lithographs and paintings depicting scenes

from the Revolution and from his visit. Indeed, the visit of the General also served to pave the way for the next major celebration of the United States: the 50th anniversary, in 1826, of the founding of the Nation, the "Jubilee of Freedom," and a day on which, most astoundingly, the last two Founding Fathers, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, would depart this life, leaving the fate of the nation in the hands of the new generation, but one that had been so fortunately touched by the visit of the noble Lafayette.

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Cooper, Poe, Lafayette, And the Cincinnati

In a recent visit to the Society of the Cincinnati headquarters in Washington, D.C., this author was shown a directory of all of the known Revolutionary War officers who were qualified for membership in the Society. Among the names on the roster were David Poe and William Cooper.

David Poe was the Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General of the Continental Army. He served for much of the Revolution as the Quartermaster General for the Marquis de Lafayette. David Poe was also the grandfather of the famous American republican writer and intelligence officer, Edgar Allen Poe.

When Lafayette returned to America in 1824-25, he sought out his old Revolutionary War friend, David Poe, during his visit to Baltimore. Although David Poe had died, Lafayette visited his gravesite with his widow. Weeks later, while visiting Richmond, Virginia, Lafayette met David Poe's grandson, Edgar.

After spending three years in the U.S. Army, Edgar Allen Poe entered West Point in June 1830. Gen. Winfield Scott was one of the officers who recommended Poe for the Academy. In Feb. 1831, Poe resigned from West Point, but not before receiving a letter of recommendation from the Commandant, Sylvanius Thayer, to be commissioned as an

officer in the Polish Army. An 1832 letter from the French patriot and writer Alexandre Dumas to a friend in Italy, reports: "It was about the year 1832. One day, an American presented himself at my house, with an introduction from... James Fenimore Cooper. Needless to say, I welcomed him with open arms. His name was Edgar Poe. From the outset, I realized that I had to deal with a remarkable man..."

William Cooper, another Revolutionary War officer qualified for membership in the Society of the Cincinnati, was the father of another famous American republican writer and intelligence officer, James Fenimore Cooper.

When Lafayette arrived in the U.S.A., the young Cooper was asked by the Frenchman to catalogue his observations of America during his year-and-a-half long visit. At the time, Cooper was part of a republican circle in New York City, known as the Bread and Cheese Club, which also included Washington Irving and Samuel Finley Breeze Morse. Morse, a painter, won the New York City competition to do the official portrait of the Marquis de Lafayette, commemorating the visit to America.

Within a year after Lafayette's return to France, Cooper and Morse travelled to Europe. In Paris in 1831-32, Cooper and Morse were leaders of the American Polish Committee, patronized by Lafayette, and supporting the republican revolution then under way in Poland. Poe, of course, according to the Dumas account, was there as part of the same effort.

—Jeffrey Steinberg