LAFAYETTE IN PENNSYLVANIA

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Gilbert Marie Morter de Lafayette died in Paris, May 30th, 1834. The centenary of his passing is to be observed during the next few months by a universal commemoration in the land to whose cause he dedicated the services of an ardent and impetuous youth. This celebration is to be nationwide, but nowhere will the anniversary be more appropriately observed than in our own Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It was here that he first proffered himself as a volunteer soldier without pay to a suspicious and unsympathetic Congress. On a Pennsylvania battlefield he received his first wound and amongst the gentle Moravians of Bethlehem he spent the dreary weeks of convalescence. With Philadelphia he had more associations than with any other American city. Chronologies are uninspiring at best, but it is significant that out of approximately four years, nine and one-half months, which Lafayette passed in America on his four visits, one hundred and fifty-four days were passed in Philadelphia.

If, in those fateful spring weeks of 1777 the course of the ship Victoire, with its band of volunteers, all facing the penalty of desertion from the Bourbon army, had been directed towards the Delaware Capes the reception might have been more cordial. Chance and the fickle trade winds wafted the vessel to the rice islands of South Carolina. During those hot weary weeks in June and July while the Marquis was making his toilsome way northward, Independence Hall was besieged by a horde of dubious Gallic adventurers, each of whom, by his own account, carried a putative maréchal’s baton in his knapsack and was not to be placated by an offer of any rank less than that of colonel. Small wonder that the harassed Congress became suspicious. Our own supercilious Charles Biddle, afterwards Prothonotary of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and then tarrying at Georgetown, South Carolina, reflects the mood of the hour: “Morgan hearing that two French officers (Lafayette and de Kalb) had arrived,
requested me, as I spoke a little French, to go with him and speak to them, but I had seen and heard so much of the French officers who came over to enter into the American service that I had conceived a very unfavorable opinion of them and told him that these were only barbers or tailors and would not go with him.”

It may well be that Lafayette’s services were preserved for America only by the circumstance of his early meeting with Washington in Philadelphia, and their going together the next day on that mysterious expedition to the forts of Delaware, which resulted in the foundation of a mutual and an enduring attachment.

Lafayette went to camp and a few weeks later the army moved southward from Neshaminy to offer battle to Cornwallis. The Marquis rode up the High Street at Washington’s elbow resplendent in the new uniform of a major general. The dilapidated baggage train had been sent around to Gray’s Ferry. With it, so as not to shock the prudery of the citizens, went those dubious camp followers who seem to have attended our hallowed patriot army much as the enrolled courtisans followed in the rear of Alva’s forces when he marched from Italy to the subjugation of the Netherlands. The absurd Falstaffian army marched confidently, even gaily, carrying branches of trees to conceal the deficiency of uniform. If the patriot rank and file had any doubts as to the outcome of the approaching encounter with some of the best drilled veterans of Europe, they were not allowed to show them.

Anxious days intervened with recurring rumors of impending disaster to the southward, then on the morning of September 13th the erstwhile debonair Marquis was carried on a litter up the steps of the Indian Queen Hotel with others of the wounded from the disastrous field of Brandywine. He stated: “I was conveyed to the Indian Queen in Philadelphia, and was there waited upon by the members of Congress, who were all booted and spurred and on the wing for a place of greater safety to hold their sessions.”

It must have been obvious, not only to Lafayette, but to the disheartened delegates that Philadelphia was lost. Henry Laurens, who had promised to escort the wounded Marquis into the back settlements in the event of the enemy’s advance, tarried as long as he dared. There is an amusing suggestion of bravado in his
discourse of his departure: "I had sent forward my baggage, followed it that evening and next morning after many thousands had passed me I made my breakfast, filled my pipe and soberly entered my carriage, drove gently on to Bristol. Took in the wounded Marquis de Lafayette and proceeded to Bethlehem, then to Reading and Lancaster."

Once arrived at the Moravian settlements the Marquis wrote to his wife: "I am at present in the solitudes of Bethlehem of which the Abbé Raynal talks so much." In the "solitudes of Bethlehem" he was to remain for six weeks, first at the Sun Tavern and then at the Boeckel residence. Almost alone amongst the public men of his age no imputation of gallantry survives to sully his escutcheon and yet a pioneer romance might be woven about those days at Bethlehem under the care of the young and engaging Lisa Boeckel: "She (Lisa Boeckel) was the Marquis' nurse. Being very handsome and very lively, my grandfather became uneasy for fear of her forming an intimacy with the volatile and witty Frenchman."

Lafayette, scarcely convalescent, rode down to meet Washington on October 16, 1777. No monument commemorates the camp at Methacton Hill in Montgomery County where the Marquis rejoined Washington's army, yet few episodes in the history of our war for Independence have been more pregnant. While he in no sense represented the French monarchy, being indeed a technical deserter, still the ragged Continentals thought that he did and this cheering, if mistaken, conception was to be invaluable during the trying days at Valley Forge. When the soldiers saw the "Markie" riding at Washington's elbow or heard him giving orders in his curious clipped English, they were convinced that help from beyond the seas was near at hand. And oddly enough, their conjecture was nearer the mark than were the prophecies of our disheartened envoys at Versailles.

Lafayette left the soil of Pennsylvania once more in February, 1778, after his three days visit to the exiled Congress at York and went to Albany to lead the abortive expedition against Canada. "What a fiasco!" he wrote to Broglie shortly after his arrival, and by the first week in April he was back again amidst the melting snows of Valley Forge.

The monotony of camp life and of Steuben's eternal drills was broken by the mad expedition to Barren Hill where the Mar-
quis was nearly captured, and by his penetration under a flag of truce into the British lines at Chestnut Hill to confer with an officer whom he had known in the old days at London and by whom he sent letters to the anxious Marquise at Chavaignac.

Summer came; Sir William Howe had gone back home to proffer his embarrassed excuses to my irate Lord Germaine, when one hot June day the news came to Valley Forge that Cornwallis had abandoned Philadelphia and was marching over land to Staten Island. Lafayette knew that the hunt was up and eagerly assembled his squadron for the pursuit. Except for the weeks spent at Albany he had been at Philadelphia continuously for nearly eleven months, his longest continuous stay.

The long and singularly vulnerable English line was groping its way towards Mount Holly in the harassing heat as the Marquis crossed the Delaware at Corryell's Ferry. The enemy, "encumbered by baggage and mistresses," as a cynical Hessian observer described it, should have presented an easy mark. However, the lack of effective cavalry, which was too often fatal to Washington's plans, coupled with the insane blundering of Henry Lee, permitted Clinton to regain his transports with negligible loss. It was with a sense of lost opportunity that Washington and Lafayette discussed the episode as they lay in bivouac beneath the stars near the field of Monmouth.

Yet a few weeks and the American headquarters at Paramus heard of the arrival of D'Estaing's fleet off Newport. Lafayette, feverish at the thought of being amongst his compatriots and hearing French spoken again, had himself sent off immediately to Rhode Island. It seems never to have occurred to him that even though an alliance had been concluded between France and America, he was still a technical deserter from the French army and might be arrested as such the moment he set foot on the Languedoc in Narragansett Bay.

More disappointment, faulty liaison and half-hearted coöperation from the New England militia and then Lafayette and Manasseh Cutler stood in despair to watch the sails of the French fleet disappear beyond the southern horizon. "The French fleet left us today bound for Boston and I think they left us in a most Rascally manner," wrote the honest Cutler. Lafayette's protest, couched in more diplomatic language, was of equal vehemence. He posted up to Boston for one more and unavailing
interview with Admiral D'Estaing, and then suddenly made up his mind to return to Philadelphia to get permission from Congress to return to France. The diplomatic status of Congress had undergone a change. France was now our avowed ally. An American envoy need no longer hide from the protest of the indignant Lord Starmont, and the Marquis felt that for the moment he could best serve the cause in France.

Philadelphia, as the Marquis rode down the High Street on that October day in 1778, still reflected the rigor of the British sojourn. The "incredible filth," which the enemy had left behind them was partially cleared away, but the stumps of the noble shade trees, the broken windows and general dilapidation proclaimed the ruthlessness of the occupation.

At Independence Hall sat the portly, rubicund military governor, Major General Benedict Arnold, his leg still swathed because of the wound received at Saratoga. He was holding daily courts-martial for the trial of the luckless Tories accused of having given assistance to the enemy during the occupation. Crowds of curious citizens assembled daily about the gallows at Central Square or on the wharf below Arch Street for the execution of such of these unfortunates who had the death sentence pronounced upon them. The scandalized French envoy, Gerard de Reyneval, attended with the rest.

At length on October 21, 1778, Congress duly resolved "that the Marquis de Lafayette, major general in the armies of the Continental Congress, be granted leave of absence to go to France." Lafayette set out at once for Boston where the frigate Alliance—that approved revolutionary transatlantic ferry boat—awaited him. Nineteen momentous months were to elapse before he was to again set foot on the soil of Pennsylvania.

On the 15th of May 1779 the Marquis who had disembarked at Boston only three weeks before, rode from Morristown to Philadelphia with dispatches from Vergennes to the President of Congress, the Right Honorable Joseph Reed. There were many new faces in Independence Hall. Gerard was still there, and Barbé de Marbois, whose English in the interval had attained to a weird fluency. Franklin remained abroad, and John Adams had gone back to console Abigail in Massachusetts. But Ellery remained, and Carroll and Henry Laurens. The city presented another aspect than when the Marquis had seen it last. New
shade trees were planted to take the place of those which Knyphausen's Anhalters had cut down for fire wood, and the thrifty Quakers had repainted their houses. The river was still partially blockaded for daring privateers who were continuously slipping out betwixt the Capes of Delaware to return when fortune was propitious with rich prizes. There was an awakening of social gaiety and the handsome young Marquis might dine at the Indian Queen, sup at Vauxhall, or attend levees at Mount Pleasant above the Schuylkill, presided over by Mistress Benedict Arnold whom he had admired on his previous visit as the engaging Peggy Shippen.

However, the situation in the war zone to the northward was too critical to permit a longer dalliance amongst the flesh-pots of Philadelphia and the volunteer once more rode northward to Washington's headquarters at Morristown.

All through the trying summer of 1780 he was drilling his Light Division by the Hudson. There was, however, a tacit and agreeable understanding in that artless age that hostilities should cease with the advent of bad weather. The leaves were falling and the troops at Totowa were preparing for their usual hibernation in cantonments when Lafayette was surprised by a visit from his friend the Marquis de Chastellux, landed a few weeks before at Newport. Chastellux was intent for Philadelphia and thither Lafayette followed him about the beginning of December 1780.

It seemed that every Frenchman of note then resident in America had planned to pass the holiday season in the Capital. Gimat was there, and Damas, and young Noailles, the brother of Madame Lafayette. There were fêtes, excursions to the battlefields of Germantown and Brandywine, and an assembly ball. The Marquis sat down to describe his stay to Franklin, then at Passy: "A number of Generals, Colonels and other officers from the American and French army have come together to this place and propose soon to rejoin their respective commands." Chastellux is more detailed and more eloquent. From his recital we learn how the group of Frenchmen supped with Justice James Wilson and dined with Tom Paine, how some of them were proposed at the American Philosophical Society, and how Lafayette was blackballed at the Academy and how the amusing Richard Peters sang a song of his own composition, "so jolly and so free
that I shall dispense with giving either a translation or an extract."

The tocsin sounded again and Lafayette rode northward to assemble and head the little army which Washington proudly hoped might capture the traitor Arnold, now a general in the British service and raiding in Virginia. A few more weeks and Philadelphia again greeted the Marquis as he rode through the town to rejoin his army at Head of Elk.

Now through the tense summer months of 1781 the citizens of Philadelphia lost contact with Lafayette. They vaguely heard that he was campaigning in the Virginia mountains and in the valleys of the James and Rappahannock, now harried by Tarleton and Cornwallis, now turning upon them to force them eastward to the investment at Yorktown.

In August the Philadelphians walked out to the Centre Square to see Rochambeau's army encamp there on its march to the southward, and speculated as to whether the French would arrive in time and as to whether Lafayette could hold the enemy at bay until De Grasse's fleet had sealed the Chesapeake. In the closing weeks of October their apprehensions were set at rest by the arrival of an exultant aide-de-camp with the captured colors and the glorious news of the capitulation.

A few days later the Marquis himself came riding northward and descended for the last time in his career as an American soldier at his favorite hostelry of the Indian Queen. He was accompanied by Gimat and by young James McHenry of Washington's staff. Hostilities were practically at an end, although the war was to drag its weary course for another two years, and Lafayette was bound for France. The two Frenchmen lingered some weeks in Philadelphia and the victorious chieftain himself came northward to attend a party at the residence of Robert Morris.

To Robert Morris had been entrusted the arrangements for the departure of Lafayette and the French officers who were shortly to leave on the Alliance from Boston. It might be supposed that the moment of victory would be marked by an exuberant generosity towards the allies who had made that victory possible, but the prudent Mr. Morris, ever conscious of the deficiencies of the Continental treasury, writes in a restrained, almost parsimonious, manner to Commissioner Brown at Boston:
“Arrangements for the embarkation on the *Alliance* should be made with propriety though ought not to be any profusion.” Republics, to be sure, are proverbially ungrateful.

Three years elapsed, the treaty of peace had been signed and the Confederacy began clumsily to function, when, one August day in 1784 the packet boat *Courier de New York* arrived off Staten Island and from it presently disembarked the Marquis de Lafayette, late major general in the service of the Continental Congress, accompanied by the Chevalier de Caraman. It was his first visit to the good town of New York, which he had only previously observed from a distance while it was held by the enemy.

The *New York Evening Post* gives the arrival of the ship but says nothing about Lafayette. During the remainder of his stay his presence was entirely ignored by the entire metropolitan press. *Sic transit gloria mundi.* Perhaps the general felt the frigidity of his reception, for six days later we find him again in Pennsylvania on his way to visit Washington at Mount Vernon. In contrast to the coldness of his reception at New York, Philadelphia abounded in cordiality. The American Philosophical Society assembled in his honor; the revolutionary officers proffered him a banquet. And Barbé de Marbois, now almost an American citizen, welcomed him with open arms.

When the Marquis returned from his ten days stay at Mount Vernon he had picked up a travelling companion, a young Princeton student graduated from Nassau Hall only a few months before, James Madison, son of James Madison the elder of Virginia. The pair were bound northward to attend the Indian Conference at Fort Schuyler. “I fell in with the Marquis at Baltimore and had his company this far,” wrote Madison to his father. Little is known of the details of this trip of 1784 and our knowledge of the journey to the conference is gleaned mostly from the diary of Madison and that of Barbé de Marbois.

The general passed through Philadelphia again in the first week of December, but as the newspapers ignore his visit, we can only guess the date from his arrival at Trenton on December 10th. Here Congress was assembled to present him with a formal address of felicitation.

Forty long years now intervene before Lafayette set foot on Pennsylvania soil again, and these years were replete with vicissi-
tude, the Revolution, the Terror, Lafayette’s flight and long
imprisonment at Olmutz, the Napoleonic era, and the return of
the Bourbons under Louis XVIII. Then came the invitation
from President Monroe for a visit to America as the nation’s
guest, and finally, Monday, September 27th, a spare, bent veteran
under an auburn peruke crossed the long covered bridge at Morris-
ville and set foot on Pennsylvania soil once more.

The details of this visit are perhaps best to be gleaned from
a chronology recently published which purports to give Lafayette’s
movements in America day by day.¹

"Monday, September 27th, 1824.
Crosses the Delaware at Morrisville in Pennsylvania. Reception by Gov-
ernor John Andrew Shulze. After breakfast the company proceed with escort
of militia to Bristol. Ball in the evening at Holmesburg. Spends the night
in the arsenal at Frankford.

Tuesday, September 28th.
Arrives at Philadelphia. Leaves Frankford and proceeds to Rush’s field
near Kensington for the review of the Philadelphia militia. Takes up the
line of march at twelve o’clock and enters the city in triumphal procession.
Arrives at the State House at five o’clock. Repairs to the Mansion House
on Third Street above Spruce where he stays while in the city. In the
evening visits Mrs. Robert Morris. Attends a banquet at Washington Hall.

Wednesday, September 29th.
At Philadelphia. Reception at the State House. Dinner with the officers
of the Municipal Corporation. Evening at the house of Rev. Dr. Frederick
Beasley, Provost of the University of Pennsylvania, 289 Chestnut Street,
and at the house of General and Mrs. Thomas Cadwalader, southeast corner
of Ninth and Arch Streets.

Thursday, September 30th.
At Philadelphia. Reception to committee of the Philosophical Society,
the Bar, French residents, etc. Evening concert in Masonic Hall.

Friday, October 1st.
At Philadelphia. Reception to civic committee. In the evening meeting
of the American Philosophical Society and reception at home of Nicholas
Biddle, 273 Chestnut Street.

Saturday, October 2nd.
At Philadelphia. Breakfast with John Quincy Adams. Visit to the Navy
Yard in the morning with Governor Shulze. Review of the marines. Ban-
quett at the Navy Yard. Banquet in the evening by the Masonic Society.

¹ J. Bennett Nolan, Lafayette in America Day by Day (Baltimore, 1934).
Sunday, October 3rd.
At Philadelphia. Attends services in the morning at Christ Church and in the afternoon attends vespers at St. Augustine's Roman Catholic Church. Dines with Judge Richard Peters at "Belmont."

Monday, October 4th.
At Philadelphia. Reception to school children at the State House. Dinner with the Revolutionary officers at the Mansion House. State ball.

Tuesday, October 5th.
At Philadelphia. Dines with the Association of French citizens. In the evening at eight o'clock leaves Philadelphia for Chester by boat, accompanied by Governor Shulze and General Cadwalader. Arrives at Chester at eleven P. M. Parade and banquet. Lafayette sleeps at the home of Colonel Joseph Anderson."

In the eight months which ensued, the Marquis made his historic and toilsome journey southward to Georgia, across the Creek Reservation to Mobile, across the Mississippi to Ohio, and up the Ohio to Wheeling, which he reached on Wednesday, May 25th. Here again we may revert to the chronology for the Marquis' movements during his memorable dash through western Pennsylvania in May and June of 1825.

"Wednesday, May 25th.

Thursday, May 26th.

Friday, May 27th.
Leaves Uniontown at six A. M. with Albert Gallatin and escort. Proceeds to Mr. Gallatin's estate near New Geneva. Reception at the Gallatin estate. Lafayette spends night there. 'Mr. Gallatin's best liquors were strewn in profusion on the tables.'

Saturday, May 28th.
Returns from New Geneva to Uniontown. Reception at Mrs. Walker's Hotel. 'The evening was spent in gaiety and hilarity.'

Sunday, May 29th.
Proceeds to Elizabeth for luncheon. Takes a barge and is rowed down the Monongahela River to Braddock Field where he spent the night at
the home of George Wallace, Esq. Reception to the Committee of welcome from Pittsburgh.

Monday, May 30th.

Tuesday, May 31st.

Wednesday, June 1st.
Leaves Pittsburgh in the morning, escorted by committee. Arrives at Butler. Luncheon at Mechling's Inn. Review of Revolutionary soldiers. Leaves Butler at four P. M. and arrives at Mercer Thursday morning at one A. M. 'Farewell my friends, this is the last time you shall see me.'

Thursday, June 2nd.
Spends the night at the Hacket House in Mercer. Leaves Mercer in the morning and arrives at Meadville at one P. M. Luncheon at Samuel Torbett's Hotel. Visits Allegheny College. Leaves Meadville at three P. M. and reaches Waterford in the evening. Banquet. Spends night at Waterford.

Friday, June 3rd.
Leaves Waterford and is escorted into Erie by cavalcade. Address of welcome by John C. Wallace, Burgess of Erie. Banquet beneath sails of the British vessels captured by Commodore Perry. Leaves Erie at three P. M. for Dunkirk.

After the exercises in connection with the dedication of the Bunker Hill monument, Lafayette turned southward again and spent Saturday, July 16th, with Joseph Bonaparte, ex-king of Spain, then resident as a country gentleman at Bordentown under the title of Comte de Survilliers. In the afternoon he said good-bye to Joseph, whom he was next to see in those fateful July days of 1830 while the barricades were being erected on the boulevards of Paris, and took the boat for Philadelphia.

"Saturday, July 16th.
Arrives at Trenton. Breaks with the Governor and staff. Visits Joseph Bonaparte, ex-king of Spain, at Bordentown. Embarks on steamboat Delaware for Philadelphia. Goes to Franklin Hotel.

Sunday, July 17th.
At Philadelphia.
Monday, July 18th.
   At Philadelphia. Lafayette elected an honorary member of the Phila-
delphia Athenaeum. Addressed by members of the William Penn Society.

Tuesday, July 19th.
   At Philadelphia.

Wednesday, July 20th.
   Visit to Germantown. Reception and procession. Visit to Chew house
and Mount Airy College. Visit to Battlefield of Barren Hill and German-
town Academy. Returns to Philadelphia to attend the dinner to Richard
Rush.

Thursday, July 21st.
   At Philadelphia. Escort by Committee of Common Councils to inspec-
tion of water works at Fair Mount.

Friday, July 22nd.
   At Philadelphia. Reception to ladies of Philadelphia at Independence
Hall.

Saturday, July 23rd.
   At Philadelphia. Reception at Independence Hall by Society of the
Cincinnati. Lafayette attends exhibition of fireworks at Vaux Hall.

Sunday, July 24th.
   At Philadelphia.

Monday, July 25th.
   Leaves Philadelphia on steamboat Delaware for Wilmington. Dines with
Masonic fraternity. Leaves for the seat of Mr. Dupont on the Brandywine."

This was Lafayette's twelfth and last visit to Philadelphia. As
a final testimonial of a grateful nation, the frigate Brandywine
was making ready in the Chesapeake to convey him back to France
and he spent the intervening weeks at the White House as the
guest of John Quincy Adams.

They escorted him down the river on a radiant September day,
past the portico of Mount Vernon and under the tomb of the
great Chief who had loved him like a son. He embarked almost
opposite the battlefield where he had stood with Washington and
Rochambeau on a certain glorious day long gone when Corn-
wallis marched out to the tune of "The World Turned Upside
Down." As the escort rowed away from the frigate they looked
up to the quarter-deck and saw a tall spare figure in frock coat,
handkerchief in hand and ribbon of the Cincinnati in his button-
hole, silhouetted in the rays of the autumnal sun as it sank behind
the heights of Yorktown.