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Lafayette in Boston 1824-25: Farewell to the Free World, Part 1

BY ROSANA Y. WAN

Long before Charles Dickens, the Dali Lama, Winston Churchill, and Nelson Mandela, no other “Guest of the Nation” was as anticipated in Boston as the Marquis de Lafayette. In the course of his four visits (1778, 1780-81, 1784, and 1824-25) Lafayette was inspired by Boston’s architecture, art, literature, music, food, and geography. Two of these visits were particularly crucial to the creation of the new nation – in 1780 at the turning point of the American Revolution; and in 1824-25 as the young nation anticipated its fiftieth birthday. How did Boston look through Lafayette’s eyes? How had the country changed from 1780 to 1824? These two visits provide evidence of both his affection for and changing perspective on the United States.

On April 28, 1780, when the French frigate *Hermione* arrived in Boston Harbor, it carried a 22-year-old officer named Lafayette, already known in both Europe and America for his bravery and services (he had spent most of 1777–1778 as a Major General in the Continental Army under the command of General George Washington, and had been wounded at the Battle of Brandywine). He also spent the previous two years (1778-1780) in France lobbying for the American cause. King Louis XVI finally agreed to assist the Americans. On March 11, at Rochefort, Lafayette boarded the *Concorde* class frigate to return to America. The 38-day voyage was challenging, especially as Boston had recently lost the lighthouse at the entrance to its harbor. Although Lafayette’s initial message upon arrival was “Here I am!” the larger message was that General Jean-Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau, was bringing additional forces to assist Washington. Rather than sailing directly to New Jersey, where Washington was, *Hermione* sailed north to Boston harbor. As the vessel passed

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the Boston Harbor islands, Fort William, later known as “the venerable grandfather of the Harbor’s forts” (established in 1634), and at one time commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Paul Revere, gave a 13-gun salute to the young Lafayette.

Early Life: Lafayette was born Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roche Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, into an aristocratic family at Château de Chavaniac, in Auvergne, France, on



Replica of the Hermione, the vessel that transported Lafayette from France to America in 1780. In 1992, at a “wine filled dinner” in Rochefort, France, a number of French and American sailing enthusiasts formed an association to recreate the vessel. Christened Hermione II, the replica, which took 17 years to complete, set sail for the east coasts of Canada and the United States in 2015. On July 10, 2015, Hermione II entered Boston Harbor and docked at Rowe’s Wharf for a weekend, where it drew thousands of visitors. Photo: Rosana Y. Wan

From the Executive Director...

This year has been a wild ride, especially the last few months. Getting our new Education and Visitor Center ready to open, launching a new website, and serving record numbers of visitors all at the same time is not for the faint of heart. Still, through it all, even on the days when it seemed nothing was going right, this organization always worked through the challenges and moved on.

In the days and weeks ahead there will be opportunities to say thank you to everyone who contributed to making this all happen. However, I feel special notice must be given to the Board of Directors, my staff, and our visitors. Over the years I have been encouraged and assisted by board members who have had my back, trusted my actions, and saw the great value in this effort long before we even purchased Lathrop Place. Thank you for your wisdom, hard work, and words of support.

Then there is my staff. You all put up with a courtyard

that was a mess for far too long, adjusted to last minute operating changes to accommodate deliveries of concrete and steel, shared your creativity as we developed exhibits and a new website, and always said “what can we do to help?”

All of this would have been unnecessary if not for our many visitors. The interest and enthusiasm of our visitors drives us to do better. Young and old from near and far continue to flock to the Revere House and we are pleased that we now are able to provide them an expanded and improved experience. How wonderful it is to have an eager audience for our hard work and our spiffy new facility.

So much of our success is due to all of you – board and staff – and I want you to know now before all the festivities begin, just how much I appreciate all you do!



Nina Zannieri

September 6, 1757. As a young boy, Lafayette experienced the loss of both of his parents. His father, Michael Louis Christophe Roche Gilbert Paulette du Motier, Marquis de La Fayette, a colonel of grenadiers, died in 1759 at the Battle of Minden during the Seven Years War. In 1770, both his great-grandfather and his mother, Marie Louise Jolie de La Rivière died. With the inheritance from his mother, great-grandfather, and another relative of 145,000 livres yearly, Lafayette had no need to be concerned about money. He was more interested in establishing a military career and the family he desperately needed.

In 1773, at age 16, he married fourteen-year-old Marie Adrienne Françoise de Noailles, an association which allowed him to get a commission as a lieutenant in the Noailles Dragoons. By 1775, like many French citizens, Lafayette was caught up in the news of the rebels dissenting from the British Crown in America. Lafayette was recruited as an officer in the Continental Army by American agent Silas Deane, who was scouring Europe for foreign officers willing to serve in the woefully understaffed Continental Army. While the Continental Congress was initially disinclined to accept Lafayette's appointment, the news that Lafayette would not only serve without pay but also pay his own way to America eventually changed their minds. Lafayette was appointed a Major General in the Continental Army, but was given no command at first.

Like George Washington, who he viewed as something of an adopted father, Lafayette rose through the ranks in the Continental Army. Lafayette was eventually given command of a division, and used his own wealth to pay for supplies for his troops. He participated in several Revolutionary War battles, including Brandywine and Yorktown. Samuel Adams once described the Marquis de Lafayette as “a young Nobleman of Rank and Fortune” who left the “Pleasure and Enjoyment of Domestic Life” in his native land to assist the Americans.

Lafayette's greatest contribution to the American cause came in 1780, when he arrived on the *Hermione*, with the news that the Comte de Rochambeau would bring troops to fight on the American side. After the war, Lafayette continued to assist the Americans, as Thomas Jefferson succeeded Benjamin Franklin as Minister to France. In addition to diplomacy and international relations, both Lafayette and Jefferson expanded their interests in fine arts. They helped the young Boston-born Charles Bulfinch undertake two years of independent study in modern and ancient architecture in Europe. Bulfinch's work in Federal style architecture helped transform Boston in the early 1800s, an influence that was noticed by Lafayette in the 1820s.

By the mid-1790s, the French Revolution was underway. The French attempt at Constitutional Monarchy failed. Meanwhile, in America, the recently ratified Jay's Treaty was under attack. Mob violence broke out not only in Philadelphia and New York, but also Boston. The treaty was meant to settle any unresolved issues from the American Revolution between United States and Great Britain. However, French sympathizers felt that Washington, Jay, and the Federal government had betrayed them. They felt that Americans should assist the French in their own Revolution.

The deposition of King Louis XVI in 1792 and his execution in 1793, created an alarming international crisis. In America, George Washington had just begun his second term as President of the United States. While there was startling disagreement between Americans on whether or not to intervene in the war between France and Great Britain, many agreed that it was important to rescue Marquis de Lafayette and his family from France.

Lafayette and his family had already fallen into considerable danger. Despite Lafayette's early support for the French



Left) In honor of L'Hermione II's visit to Boston in 2015, the Shirley Eustis House in Roxbury unveiled its new Lafayette Bed Chamber gallery to commemorate the Marquis de Lafayette's historic visit to Boston in 1824. The Gallery includes the traditional period reproduction ingrain carpet in summer pattern and several loan furnishings including a four-poster bedstead from Historic New England. Courtesy of Shirley Eustis Mansion. Looking out of the window, Lafayette would have had a perfect view of the future Dorchester Heights Monument in South Boston and Bunker Hill Monument in Charlestown. (Right) Front façade of the Shirley Eustis House. Photos by Rosana Y. Wan.

Revolution, no one was safe. President Washington and Mme. Adrienne Lafayette secured a safe passage for Lafayette's son and George Washington's godson, Georges Washington de Lafayette, to flee to America.

However, Lafayette's wife and daughter were imprisoned in the Bastille. By then, Lafayette's grand-mother-in-law, mother-in-law and sister-in-law had already been guillotined. James Monroe, minister to France, who had recently succeeded Thomas Jefferson, sent his wife, Elizabeth, to demand the release of Lafayette's wife and daughter. Luckily she succeeded.

Following their release, Adrienne and her daughter managed a secret arrangement between British Prime Minister William Pitt the younger and Austria to visit Lafayette who had been in solitary confinement at Olmütz since 1794. Olmütz was an Austrian fortress, in Moravia, in the present-day Czech Republic. Two years earlier, after the deposition of king Louis XVI, Lafayette had lost the support of the Army. In attempting to flee to a Dutch seaport, Lafayette was captured by Austrian troops. After being held prisoner in the dank Prussian fortress at Wesel, just north of Berlin, and another Prussian fortress at Magdeburg, he was eventually transferred to Olmütz.

Adrienne and her daughter reunited and stayed with Lafayette for the duration of his sentence. Their loving relationship served as a model for the characters of Leonore and Fidelio in *Fidelio*, the only opera composed by a Lafayette admirer, the celebrated German composer from Vienna, Ludwig van Beethoven. When Napoleon Bonaparte and his army conquered Austria in 1797, the ensuing Treaty of Campo Formio secured the official release of Lafayette. On the night of September 19, 1797, John Parish, the American consul in Hamburg, attended Lafayette's release. Lafayette and his family lived in exile just outside of Hamburg, Germany, for two additional years before returning to France.

Lafayette's post-Olmütz years were spent at home recuperating with his family. Both he and his wife suffered

traumatic health issues from their imprisonment. Adrienne died in 1807 at their home in the 8th Arrondissement in Paris and was buried at Picpus Cemetery. Spending time between Château de la Grange-Bléneau and his home in Paris, Lafayette was active in French politics in the early 1800s and in contact with Americans. Many visited Lafayette to seek his inspiration. William Eustis, the Secretary of War for President James Madison, noted in his diary the renewal of his friendship with Lafayette, the man with whom he once served during the Revolutionary War. Often a critic of Napoleon for his dictatorship, Lafayette was one of the leaders of the opposition that eventually contributed to Napoleon's downfall. The Bourbon Restoration brought former aristocrats like Lafayette back into power. In 1815 Louis XVI's brother ascended the throne as King Louis XVIII.

Preparation for Lafayette's American "Grand Finale."

By the early 1820s, many American revolutionaries had died, leaving only a few remaining, including James Armistead Lafayette (a former slave who served as a spy under Lafayette and eventually adopted his name), John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson. President James Monroe, who had served under General George Washington at the Battle of Trenton, saw the Marquis de Lafayette as "one of the last links to the Revolutionary past." He should be received as the "Nation's Guest." Monroe felt that Lafayette's visit would reflect well on America's success as a nation, but also serve as a convenient distraction from the upcoming and potentially controversial Presidential Election of 1824. In February 1824, Monroe wrote a warm-hearted invitation. Despite ill health from his imprisonment at Olmütz, Lafayette was, according to historian J. Bennett Nolan, a "tireless correspondent." Without hesitation, Lafayette accepted Monroe's invitation, with one condition, that he pay for his own passage to America, refusing Congress's offer of sending him a "ship of the Nation to transport him more securely and more comfortably."

When Lafayette departed for his American tour, France was in the midst of the Bourbon Restoration. King Louis XVIII died in 1824, and was succeeded by the more conservative Charles X. On July 11, 1824, Lafayette left his home in Paris for Le Havre, France. The next day he boarded the French merchant ship *Cadmus* and sailed to New York City.

Knowing that this would be his last visit to America, Lafayette prepared carefully for the trip and gathered a small group of friends to accompany him during the year-long journey. These included Auguste Levasseur, who served as his personal secretary, and his only surviving son, Georges Washington de Lafayette. His two surviving daughters, Anastasie (1777–1863) and Virginie (1782–1849) remained at home to receive his letters. Secretary of State and future Sixth President John Quincy Adams would be among many others to receive and accompany Lafayette. On this trip Lafayette encountered many who had crossed his path over the years, included those who tried to free him from the Austrian Prison in 1795 and his wife and daughter from Bastille in 1790s. Lafayette wanted to show America that he no longer lived in the past, but was looking towards the future by absorbing new American ideas: ending slavery, education for women, better government, a better health system, a reformed prison system, and new industries. He was to bring them back to a France that was struggling to define itself as a Constitutional Monarchy. On August 15, 1824, *Cadmus* landed at Castle Garden on Staten Island.

By late August, Lafayette departed New York for Boston by land. Although long carriage rides were tedious and exhausting in early nineteenth-century America, the General and his party were overjoyed, making stops at towns and cities in upstate New York, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. As they departed Providence, Rhode Island, they were escorted by the Society of Cincinnati to the Massachusetts border, where they proceeded through Walpole and Dedham, Massachusetts. Holding torches to “illuminate” the General’s route, many spectators stayed up past midnight to witness the sensational event.

At one o’clock AM on Tuesday, August 24, 1824, Governor William Eustis of Massachusetts and his wife received Lafayette at their Roxbury mansion. Governor Eustis’s wife had decorated the upstairs front bedroom with a French theme for the General’s stay (see illustration on page 3).

Although Lafayette had little sleep, he woke up at ten o’clock for an all-day visit in Boston. Mayor Josiah Quincy III, members of the Common Council, the Society of Cincinnati, service members from the Army and Navy, and a cavalcade of twelve hundred horsemen met him at the Boston Neck and escorted him into Boston. Along the way they passed beneath a “triumphal arch” created by Charles Bulfinch. Passing through streets in the downtown area, including Washington, Milk, Broad, State, Court, and “Common” (now Tremont) Street, the procession also passed “between two lines of children, of both sexes, belonging to the several schools in the city. Their ages were from about eight to twelve, and nearly three thousand in number. Their dress was neat and uniform; the

misses in white, and the masters in white pantaloons and blue suspenders.” They “wore ribands on their breasts, stamped with a miniature likeness of Lafayette” according to one observer. Major streets were decorated with “arches;” one was inscribed “1776—WASHINGTON and LAFAYETTE. Welcome Lafayette – A Republic not ungrateful.”

The procession finally ended at the Marlborough Hotel, on the corner of Beacon and Park Streets, where Lafayette stayed. At that time, the procession was considered the largest in Boston. During Lafayette’s stay, businesses in Boston were closed, thousands went out to see Lafayette, and ladies waved their white handkerchiefs. “Seated in a barouche drawn by four white horses,” Lafayette slowly paraded down Tremont Street. Hundreds of spectators waved at him, cheering, and voices filled in the air.” He halted his carriage as he quickly recognized the former Dorothy Quincy, twice a widow, first of Governor John Hancock, and later of Captain James Scott, sitting on the balcony of her home on Colonnade Row, and paid a visit to her. Dorothy Quincy still had clear memories of Revolutionary days. In 1852, Historian James Spear Loring recollected the 1824 meeting in his *Hundred Boston Orators*: “Those who witnessed this hearty interview speak of it with admiration. The once youthful chevalier [Lafayette] and the unrivalled belle [Dorothy Hancock] met as if only a summer had passed since they had enjoyed social interviews in the perils of the Revolution.”

On August 25, 1824, Boston Mayor Josiah Quincy III escorted Lafayette to Cambridge to attend the Mayor’s son’s commencement at Harvard College. The younger Josiah Quincy IV, another future Boston Mayor, was a new acquaintance of Lafayette. He was graduating from the

Continued on page 6



Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, lithograph published by Seraphin Delpech, 1832, showing Lafayette as a young man. © National Portrait Gallery, London, UK.



Winter Events

From November 1 to April 14, the Revere House is open daily from 9:30 am to 4:15 pm, except Mondays in January, February, and March. The Museum is closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

AT THE
PAUL REVERE
HOUSE

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CELEBRATE TRADITIONS OF THE SEASON

*at the Paul Revere House &
Our New Education and Visitor Center*



Saturday, December 3 & Sunday, December 4, 2016

9:30 am – 4:15 pm; Admission: adults \$5.00,
seniors and college students \$4.50, children ages 5–17 \$1.00
North End Residents are admitted free at all times.

Visit the Paul Revere House during the first weekend in December and be amongst the first to experience our new Education and Visitor Center at Lathrop Place. This restored 1835 rowhouse, built on property that once belonged to Paul Revere, seamlessly incorporates original historic features – foundations, fireplaces, and stairways – with modern museum amenities, exhibits, a museum shop, and public restrooms.

Enjoy complimentary refreshments of mulled cider and delicious treats based on 18th century recipes in the Pierce-Hichborn House. Museum interpreters the Paul Revere House explain the sometimes surprising colonial observances of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

Each afternoon from noon to 4:00 talented musician R. P. Hale plays overtures, melodies, and Anglican Advent songs on a harpsichord and hammered dulcimer and local artisans Fred Lawson and Larry Leonard demonstrate their respective colonial trades and sell examples of their beautiful, handmade baskets and tinware in our new education center.



FEBRUARY SCHOOL VACATION PROGRAMS

Drop-In Family Activities: Exploring Home
Wednesday, February 22, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm
& Friday, February 24, 1:30 to 3:30 pm



What makes a house a home? Come explore some materials, techniques, and designs used in three centuries of construction in Boston. Facilitated by a staff member, families will have a chance to see historic building materials up close and learn about the architecture found in and around the Paul Revere House. Free with admission to the Revere House.

Hands-on Tours of the Paul Revere House
Thursday, February 23

at 10:00, 11:00, 1:00, & 2:00

Designed to bring our oldest historic house to life by offering opportunities to engage with reproduction objects in each room and to consider 17th and 18th century life from a kids-eye-view, the approximately 30 minute tour is aimed at families. Free with admission to the Revere House.

*For more information, contact the
Paul Revere House at 617-523-2338.*

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My additional donation of \$ _____ is enclosed to support the museum's educational programs.

I don't care to join at this time but would like to make a contribution of \$ _____ to the museum.

Please make check payable to the Paul Revere House and mail to: Paul Revere House, 19 North Square, Boston, MA 02113.

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The PAUL REVERE MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

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Lafayette in Boston *continued from page 4*

Law School and gave the commencement address in Latin. With the distinguished guest present, Quincy spoke with eloquence about Lafayette's military service in American Revolution.

On August 26, 1824, Lafayette attended a ceremony at the recently rebuilt and expanded Faneuil Hall. It was another Bulfinch modification, which Lafayette noted as the "consecrated cradle of America, and I hope, of universal liberty." As Ellen Susan Bulfinch wrote in her biography of her grandfather, "Here has echoed the eloquence of John Hancock and of the older and the younger [John and John Quincy] Adams; and here in the lower hall Lafayette was received."

On the morning of August 28, 1824, Lafayette attended a reception at the Massachusetts State House. Later, Lafayette traveled to Savin Hill in Dorchester to inspect a military camp of New England Guards (formed in the War of 1812, and later renamed the "Fourth Battalion"). Lafayette's final visit to Dorchester Heights was, without a doubt, an emotional and personal tribute to his beloved surrogate father and brother, Generals George Washington and Henry Knox.

On Sunday, August 29, 1824, Lafayette attended a service at the Brattle Street Meeting House. Sitting in John Hancock's former pew, the sermon was given by Rev. John J. Palfrey. In the afternoon, Lafayette briefly left Boston to see John Adams at Peacefield, in Quincy. The reunion was filled with joy and tears. The former president would soon be 90 years old. Like

Lafayette, he was physically deteriorating, but mentally he was still sharp. Dining at the French-made mahogany table purchased by Adams' wife, Abigail, in Paris, the two old patriots recollected their time as young men witnessing the birth of a new nation. As the meeting ended, John Adams reportedly said, "That was not the Lafayette I remember." Simultaneously, Lafayette reportedly said, "That was not the John Adams I remember." Both men were struck by how the other had aged. ❖

This article will be continued in the next issue of the Gazette.

The new web site is coming!



Our new site will launch on December 2, 2016.
Check it out at www.paulreverehouse.org