

Denise Dunbar
 Publisher & Executive Editor
 ddunbar@alextimes.com

Margaret Stevens
 Sales Director
 mstevens@alextimes.com

Caitlyn Meisner
 Managing Editor/Reporter
 cmeisner@alextimes.com

Wafir Salih
 Reporter
 wsalih@alextimes.com

Arwen Clemans
 Photo Intern

Sandra Smith
 Intern

ADVERTISING

Margaret Stevens
 mstevens@alextimes.com

Marty DeVine
 mdevine@alextimes.com

Patrice V. Culligan
 pculligan@alextimes.com

Tina Franco
 Office Administrator
 tfranco@alextimes.com

DIRECTOR OF ART & DESIGN

Jessica Kim
 graphics@alextimes.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Kerry Boyd Anderson
 Kim Davis
 Mark Eaton
 Mark Edelman
 Thompson Eskew
 Kim Gilliam
 Ryan Hopper
 Kim Jackson
 Lexie Jordan
 Louise Krafft
 Brianne McConnell
 Jim McGrath
 Kaitlin Murphy
 Erin Shackelford
 Dr. Vivek Sinha
 Dr. David Weintritt
 Amy Will

ALEXTIMES LLC

Denise Dunbar
 Managing Partner

The Ariail family
 Suzanne Brock
 William Dunbar

Marquis de Lafayette: A hero's return

On Oct. 16, 1824, the Marquis de Lafayette visited Alexandria at the city's invitation. Dubbed "The Nation's Guest" by President James Monroe, Lafayette returned to the country whose independence he had fought for almost 50 years earlier.

At the time of his visit, he was the last living general of the Continental Army. The October 1824 visit was on Lafayette's way from Washington, D.C. to Mount Vernon, and then on to Yorktown by steamboat to commemorate the decisive battle of the American Revolution. Lafayette's entourage consisted of himself; his son, George Washington; his private secretary, Auguste Levasseur; and his valet, Bastien. The Marquis extended what was originally planned as a visit for a few months into a thirteen-month stay, in which the group visited all 24 states.

On the morning of Oct. 16, Lafayette rode a carriage into town with a military escort, including local cavalry and 2,000 militia on foot. Alexandria had excitedly prepared for their guest of honor. Three ceremonial arches crossed Washington Street. Hundreds of Alexandrians greeted him, including two hundred young girls and boys dressed in white with blue and pink sashes. The mayor and City Council met the General at Claggett's Hotel, now known



PHOTO/MET OPEN ACCESS

Rembrandt Peale's portrait of Marquis de Lafayette, painted from life in 1825 at the height of Lafayette's fame.

as Gadsby's Tavern. They gave speeches extolling Lafayette's virtues while the militias performed drills for the Marquis' entertainment.

After this official welcome, Lafayette proceeded to his lodgings at 301 S. Saint Asaph St., the home of Mrs. Thomas Elizabeth Lawrason. At 5 p.m., Lafayette returned to Clag-

gett's for a large public dinner. Among the guests was John Quincy Adams, Secretary of State and future President. The dinner concluded with 33 toasts. Lafayette toasted to "The City of Alexandria: May her prosperity and happiness more and more realize the fondest wishes of our venerated Washington." The next day, he

boarded the steamship The Petersburg to visit Mount Vernon.

Lafayette visited Alexandria at least three other times during his stay in the United States, including participating in a Masonic ceremony in the City Hall of the time. He also passed Alexandria on his way to his ship The Brandywine, which returned "The Nation's Guest" back to France.

Lafayette's visit to the United States overlapped with the 1824 election, which included the contentious result of Henry Clay throwing his support to Adams in opposition to Andrew Jackson. Lafayette and Levasseur noted with joy that power transferred peacefully, in contrast to some of their experiences in France. Lafayette remained a true believer in the ideals he had fought for during the American Revolution. With the notable exception of slavery's continuation in the country, Lafayette's thoughts on the nation he helped found were overwhelmingly positive.

The City of Alexandria celebrates the 200th anniversary of the Marquis de Lafayette's visit this month. For more information on the celebrations, please visit alexandriava.gov/historic-alexandria/lafayette-in-alexandria.

Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.