



# 27 Reasons Why We Should Honor General Lafayette

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**Save the date – June 9 & 10, 2025-Rome, Oriskany, Whitesboro, Utica, Herkimer House and Little Falls**

1. He began his American military career at the precocious age of nineteen in Philadelphia on July 31, 1777 when Congress awarded him the commission of major general in the American Continental Army. As a volunteer he agreed to serve without pay. He thus became the youngest general of all others who fought on both sides of the War of Independence, and he would serve on active duty until the end of the war. In this point in time, he became a teenage role model.
2. General Washington, impressed with the youthful general's zeal and courage, officially accepted Lafayette as his aide-de camp while at the Moland House Headquarters near Hartsville, Bucks County, during August where the Frenchman took part in a council of war. This resulted in a stand made by the Americans at the Battle of Brandywine on September 11, 1777 in defense of the capital city of Philadelphia from a British invasion.
3. Here, Lafayette fought with dash and courage by risking his life. Coming to the aid of General John Sullivan and rallying his men during a fierce onslaught by the British and Hessian forces on their way to invade Philadelphia, the youthful general braved musket fire and bayonets, was shot in the leg, dismounted his horse, and kept on leading and fighting for as long as he was able. During his baptism of fire at this battle, he spilled his blood in the defense of the city of Philadelphia.
4. After the battle he was sent to a military hospital, today the Sun Inn, at Bethlehem where he recovered from his wound thanks to the Moravians who cared for him and nursed him back to health. His fellow officers, most of all General Washington, and all other soldiers expressed their admiration for his daring and courage. He had earned their respect that would last the entire war and even beyond.
5. Under General Nathanael Greene's command, he was sent to lead a reconnaissance mission. He ran into Hessians who outnumbered him and his men and drove them reeling into defeat at Gloucester, New Jersey, November of 1777.
6. He became General Washington's favorite foreign officer because of his fierce loyalty to the Commander-in-Chief especially during the Conway Cabal when some disgruntled American generals wanted to replace Washington. He also became the most popular foreign officer

7. He served with distinction at Valley Forge during the terrible winter of 1777-1778 when General Washington sent him on a reconnaissance mission to Barren Hill (now Lafayette Hill). It was here that the young lion and his 2200-man detachment on May 20, 1778 were completely surrounded by British Generals Grant, Grey, Howe, and Clinton, and Hessian General von Knyphausen with 16,000 of their crack British and Hessian troops. With the coolness of a superbowl quarterback, Lafayette--outnumbered 8-to-1--outfoxed the enemy and returned to Valley Forge with a minimum of casualties. His mission accomplished, the youthful general had pulled off one of the most astonishing escapes in the annals of military history. The enemy was stunned by their failure to capture him with the most powerful army on Earth. At Barren Hill Lafayette was the first Continental officer to trust, test and prove the value of General Baron von Steuben's masterful training and discipline of Washington's troops at Valley Forge by virtue of this stunning escape.

8. He again fought with courage and distinction at the Battle of Monmouth, New Jersey on June 28, 1778 where Washington and his forces attacked the British who had recently evacuated Philadelphia.

9. His generosity to his American troops--many of them Pennsylvanians-- was legendary. He spent \$200,000 of his own money to pay for their much-needed items such as clothing and weapons at a time when the American economy was on the verge of collapse.

10. He encouraged the French government to accede to Ben Franklin's brilliant diplomatic skills that led to the signing of the French Alliance on February 6, 1778.

11. Realizing Washington's dangerous military dilemma by late 1778 and still awaiting the military and financial help promised the Americans by his country, he returned to France and argued for a speedy delivery. He arrived in Paris and Versailles January 1779. Using his diplomatic skills, he made strong appeals to three influential ministers: Vergennes, Maurepas, and Montbarey and King Louis XVI himself to send Washington a French Expeditionary Force complete with all supplies as soon as possible. The king sent him back to General Washington at Morristown, New Jersey on March 1780 with a secret message: the Expeditionary Force was on its way. Thousands of crack French troops, marines, and battleships with massive aid arrived at Newport, Rhode Island July 1780. All historians agree that without this help, Washington would have lost the War for Independence. Washington and Franklin credit Lafayette with the effort behind the delivery of these desperately needed supplies.

12. Because of his proven military ingenuity, Lafayette was chosen by Washington in 1781 to command American troops for the purpose of preventing British General Cornwallis from ravaging the state of Virginia and driving a strategic wedge between the American forces already deployed in the South and the North. An outnumbered Lafayette, with the valuable aid of Generals Anthony Wayne and John Peter Muhlenberg and their Pennsylvanians, cleverly used guerrilla tactics to harass and corner the British commander and pin him down at Yorktown until he was defeated on October 19, 1781 by French and American armies under General Washington's supreme command. Lafayette had become one of the key players and a hero of Yorktown. Washington's patient yet brilliant military strategy paid off; he won the War of Independence.

13. After the American war, Lafayette became America's greatest foreign political supporter when he adopted The Declaration of Independence as a model for political reform in France and proposed his own version, with Thomas Jefferson's advice, which he called The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. Lafayette vehemently argued for its adoption in the French National Assembly July 11, 1789. Using American style democracy as his moral and political compass, he thus became a leader in another rebellion: the French Revolution of 1789. Knowing that if taxation without representation was tyranny to Americans, it was no less tyrannical to Frenchmen and women. He therefore defied the greed of his fellow noblemen whose riches accumulated over the centuries because they were seldom required to pay any taxes. Lafayette's Declaration would relieve this heavy burden on the backs of the common people by requiring everyone, including all noblemen and royalty, to pay their fair share.

14. He helped Thomas Jefferson in commercial ventures such as French importation of farm products from American farmers such as corn, flour, and tobacco.

15. President James Monroe invited him to America as the nation's guest of honor from August 1824 until September 1825. During those thirteen months he visited every state in the Union--all twenty-four of them. Americans treated him as though he were a superstar everywhere he went. He took Philadelphia by storm from September 8 until October 6, 1824. Inside the State House where the Declaration and the Constitution were signed forty-eight years ago, he gave a speech that became one of the most important in American history.

16. To honor this legendary figure and his visit, Congress, at the Capitol Building, placed a portrait of Lafayette on the right side of the rostrum of the House Chamber with Washington's portrait on the left side of the rostrum. The American flag is displayed between the portraits behind the Speaker's Chair. No other foreign dignitary has ever been so honored in any of the two Congressional chambers.

17. He named his son George Washington Lafayette to honor his spiritual father and military hero and named his daughter Virginie after Washington's home state.
18. Lafayette returned to France after his thirteen-month visitation in America with barrels of earth taken from Bunker Hill. Nine years later his son George scattered the earth around his casket when he was interred in 1834 at the Picpus Cemetery in Paris. His love for America was so great that his wish was to be buried in American soil.
19. An American flag has flown at his graveside since World War I when General John Pershing visited Lafayette's tomb with a large military entourage to show continued respect for America's greatest foreign volunteer.
20. As a result of his American influences such as Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson, Lafayette had spent the rest of his life in a political crusade fighting for the rights of man and the rule of law. He generously gave active financial and moral support to the Poles, Greeks, Irish, English, Scots, Italians, Portuguese, black slaves, women, South Americans and anyone else who needed refuge at his place at LaGrange near Paris, and he gave many speeches at the National Assembly on their behalf. He was especially vehement in denouncing the persecution of Protestants and Jews in France.
21. American pilots who fought with French air aces during World War I named their air force squadron The Lafayette Escadrille in honor of Lafayette's military reputation in America.
22. No other foreign dignitary has ever had so many places named after Lafayette. He ranks with Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson in the number of places named after him in the entire United States.
23. Lafayette College, founded 1826 at Easton, Pennsylvania, is a testament to the brilliant achievements of General Lafayette's successes as a soldier and diplomat. Thousands of Lafayette memorabilia are housed at the college library and its archives. The original intent of the founders of the college was to educate the citizens of Easton with no thought of America's greatest foreign volunteer, but when they traveled to Philadelphia to see Lafayette in person during his 1824 visit, they were so impressed that they decided to name the college in his honor. It was therefore resolved "That as a testimony of respect for the talents, virtues and signal services of General Lafayette in the great cause of Freedom, the said institution be named, 'Lafayette' ".

***"Heaven saw fit to ordain, that the electric spark of liberty should be conducted, through you, from the New World to the Old." -Daniel Webster addressing Lafayette, Bunker Hill, June 17, 1825***

24. Guided by Lafayette's record in racial equality and civil rights, Lafayette College set the standards for the integration in Pennsylvania Colleges by permitting Aaron Huff, an African American who was Lafayette's first black student, to enroll in 1832.

25. Fayette County in Pennsylvania is named as a tribute to Lafayette's crucial aid to the American cause.

26. The American Friends of Lafayette was founded at Lafayette College in 1932 by Stuart Wells Jackson and Judge Walter P. Gardner both of whom were admirers of Lafayette and who had collected many of this Frenchman's letters. These founders were inspired by Lafayette's career as an international humanitarian leader. To them, Lafayette stands also as symbol of the close ties between the United States and France.

27. The University of Pennsylvania, another great Pennsylvania college during the 18th century, awarded Lafayette an honorary doctorate in 1787 as a timely reminder of his service to the American cause.

Unfortunately, however, many of our present generation of young Americans have lost sight and interest in the foundations or the historical significance of American Revolutionary War history. We therefore need to remind them and future generations of this millennium that America for many good reasons is still the leader of the free world and that the freedoms we cherish today resulted from the sacrifices of our founding fathers and our foreign volunteers like Lafayette.

This life-sized portrait below was presented to Congress in 1824 by French artist Ary Scheffer. It remains displayed in the House of Representatives opposite a portrait of George Washington.



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13 months, 6,000 miles, 24 states - Lafayette's journey through America.

### Strategic Objectives of *Lafayette200*:

Build awareness about Lafayette's lifelong legacy as a champion of human rights.

Showcase Lafayette's role in establishing the Franco-American Alliance while promoting the traditional friendship between the U.S. and France.

Promote education, inquiry, and civic discussion about the relevancy of Lafayette's legacy within the context of the Nation's 250th Anniversary.

Make learning about history fun for both adults and youth by developing dynamic, inclusive, and engaging programming for Americans everywhere.

Establish long-lasting partnerships with public and private entities to expand the AFL's reach and membership, thereby supporting and contributing