LA VISITE DE LAFAYETTE
A STURBRIDGE

by Monique M. Panaggio

Quand Lafayette vint visiter l'Amérique en 1824-25, il fut reçu partout comme un héros. Sturbridge, un petit village de Massachusetts, l'accueillit le 3 Septembre 1824 avec toute la pompe d'une grande ville. Quoique sa visite fut de courte durée, ce fut, pour le grand homme Français et pour la foule qui l'attendait, une journée mémorable.

Quand les habitants de Sturbridge apprirent que Lafayette s'arrêtait dans leur village, cela causa beaucoup d'émotion. Hommes, femmes et enfants de Sturbridge et des environs s'amusèrent sur le "Common" devant l'hôtel Porter connu, alors et maintenant, sous le nom de "Publick House." L'artillerie et une fanfare militaire se rangèrent sur la colline près de l'église. Plus de trois mille personnes attendirent impatiemment l'arrivée du général regardant souvent la route bordée d'arbres ou avait été élevé pour l'occasion une magnifique arche de triomphe ornée de guirlandes de fleurs.

Enfin l'artillerie annonça l'arrivée de Lafayette et la fanfare joua un air martial populaire. Lafayette descendit de la diligence parmi les acclamations de la foule. On le décrit comme étant un homme fort, habillé simplement et d'apparence distinguée. Son fils, George Washington Lafayette, l'accompagnait. Le Grand Lafayette marqua quelque surprise et une grande satisfaction à la vue de tant de monde dans un si petit village.

Près de là se tenaient soixante-dix hommes agés qui avaient tous combattu sous ses ordres pour l'Indépendance Américaine. Combiné touchant cela a du être pour le héros! En très peu de temps, ils renouèrent connaissance et parlèrent des campagnes victorieuses. Ils montrèrent à Lafayette le petit cimetière ou d'autres compagnons d'armes maintenant reposaient. Après les avoir tous remercié pour le merveilleux accueil il avait reçu, le Marquis de Lafayette alla se reposer à la "Publick House" avant de continuer son voyage vers Boston.

Sources of information: Historical Sketch of Sturbridge and Southbridge by George Davis (1856); Sturbridge Bi-centennial Souvenir Program (1938).

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THE GARDNER COLLECTION

The Walter P. Gardner Lafayette Collection is well known to most of us, but perhaps few have realized its remarkable scope. Through years of patient search Judge Gardner, with interest and pleasure, assembled the collection, from European and American sources. Eventually it filled fifty-two large loose-leaf volumes. He fashioned an excellent index.

The collection was presented to Indiana University, with some additional material incorporated, by an anonymous donor. It consists of 8,500 items — 1,384 original letters and documents. Included are those of thirty-four signers of the Declaration of Independence and of thirty-three delegates to the Constitutional Convention; letters of the presidents from Washington to Jackson, of English rulers from Queen Anne to Queen Victoria; and French rulers from Louis XIV to Louis-Philippe.

There are 232 original letters and documents signed by Lafayette; 79 original letters written to or about him, and 24 written by members of his family. There are many pictures (some hand-colored by competent artists) including 240 of Lafayette himself, and hundreds of cartoons, engravings, prints, newspaper items, and countless facsimile letters.

Indiana University is fortunate to have this remarkable collection, devotedly and studiously assembled by an enthusiastic Friend of Lafayette.
The Annual Meeting, 1950
Fredericksburg, Virginia

The 19th Annual Meeting of the American Friends of Lafayette was held in Fredericksburg, Virginia, May 20th. An attractive program was prepared by Mr. Lawrence G. Hoes and the citizens of Fredericksburg. As Ambassador Bonnet was unable to be present, Major Roger LeGuay, Military Attaché of the Embassy, represented him. Our members had headquarters at the Princess Anne Hotel. The day began with the business meeting at the City Hall, built in 1813, where Lafayette was received and entertained November 20, 1824. There George Washington in 1783 attended the Peace Ball at Fredericksburg. In honor of our meeting a French flag was flown from the City Hall; miniature French and American flags flanked the desk of the presiding officer in the council room.

Eighteen members were present. President and Mrs. Kendall, Mrs. MacIntire, Mr. Norton, Mr. and Mrs. Nolan, Mr. and Mrs. Jackson, Mr. and Mrs. Ford, Major and Madame LeGuay, Father J. A. Bainsnée of the French Institute in Washington, Captain Theodore Bergeron of the United States Foreign Liaison Service, Mr. Paul Franco, Mr. Harrison Deyo, Mr. and Mrs. Lyon Boston, Mrs. Connicke of Connecticut, Mr. Charles C. Wall, Superintendent of Mr. Vernon, and others.

Mr. Messmore Kendall presided. The publication by the Society of Lafayette and Slavery, by Melvin Kennedy, professor of history at Atlanta University, was authorized. The Executive Council held an election of officers. Mr. Kendall was re-elected president; Mrs. Alan MacIntire, vice-president, and Mr. Theodore Eli Norton, secretary-treasurer. Two new members were added to the Executive Council — Mr. Lyon Boston and Mr. Harrison Deyo, both of New York City.

From the City Hall, the members went to the Fredericksburg Masonic Lodge No. 4, Mother Lodge of George Washington, who was made a Mason, November 4, 1752. Lafayette was made an honorary member in its lodge room. On exhibit was the French china bust of Washington, made for Lafayette in Sévres (from the life mask taken by Jean Houdon, 1785), and brought here by Lafayette in 1824. James Monroe, General Hugh Mercer, General George Weedon and many other distinguished men were members of this lodge.

On the way up Charles Street to the James Monroe Law Office, the members paused at the Masonic Cemetery, the oldest Masonic Cemetery in America.

The moving spirit in the establishment of the James Monroe Memorial Foundation is our member, Mr. Lawrence Governor Hoes of Washington. The quaint storey and a half brick building where Monroe practised law was built in 1785; it still stands intact in every detail, save the brick floor and some plastering recently restored. It contains a fascinating collection of the Monroe possessions — lovely intimate belongings, such as Mrs. Monroe's wedding slippers, her jewels, her French fan, silver service, beautiful gowns worn at the Court of France, and the bonnet which she wore when welcoming Lafayette. President Monroe's brocades, worn at Napoleon's court, are on display, as well as his dispatch box, his duelling pistols, and in particular the handsome brass-bound mahogany desk on which he signed the message to Congress which established the Monroe Doctrine. The rooms are furnished with lovely pieces of French furniture bought by Ambassador Monroe and later used in the rebuilt White House, which the Monroes were the first to occupy after the burning by the British in 1814.

At the Monroe house refreshments were served. Outside in the delightful little garden Mr. Hoes made an interesting address on Lafayette and the Monroes. Our members then went to the Mary Ball Washington House, where lunch was served for the first time to a group other than the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, sponsors of the maintenance of this historic shrine. Tables were set up in the very room where George Washington received his mother's last blessing and farewell. "I am not surprised that George has done well," she once said, "for he was always a good boy." We walked out into the box-aisled garden where Lafayette found her raking, one day in 1784; and we saw the same kitchen where she baked the gingerbread he ate with the mint julep she concocted for him.

The Rising Sun Tavern was visited next. It was owned and operated as an inn by George Weedon long before the Revolution. George Washington, Lafayette, Jefferson and others spent many an evening in this cheerful inn. Here, spread before us on the dining-room table, was a wonderful exhibit of original Lafayette-Weedon letters from the collection of Mr. Allyn K. Ford of Minneapolis, long on our Executive Council. Happily for us, he was present to discuss and describe the manuscripts.

The Society's general meeting was held at Kenmore, with Mrs. H. H. Smith a delightful hostess. Kenmore, built in 1752, was the mansion of Colonel and Mrs. Fielding Lewis, only sister of George Washington. Wonderful old trees shade beautiful gardens, now only a small part of the original 861 acres surveyed by Washington. He and his mother frequently visited at the estate. The beautifully arranged and appointed rooms enchanted us all. In the Great Room, with its elaborate ceiling and chandelier, the members and guests gathered with Mr. Kendall again presiding. Two highly interesting addresses were made by Mr. Boston and Mr. Ford, whose paper appears in this issue. After the meeting, tea was served in the old kitchen by the ladies of the Kenmore Association, some in Colonial costume. A group of young colored men sang at the door; in the huge fireplace, logs burned brightly. Then came the time for farewells and many expressions of gratitude to Mrs. Smith and the Kenmore Association, to Mr. Hoes and all the members and friends of our Society. So ended another delightful annual meeting in pleasant surroundings, beautiful and historical to the nth degree.
NEW ACTIVE MEMBERS

Mr. David Loth, New York City.
Mr. William F. Zeller, New York City.
Mrs. Lyon Boston, New York City.
Mr. Lyon Boston, New York City.
Mr. Arthur N. Pierson, Jr., Palm Beach, Fla.
Mrs. Paul d’Otreng Seghers, Huntington, L. I., New York.
Mrs. John H. Gibbons, Palm Beach, Fla.
Mr. William M. Chadbourne, New York City.
Mrs. Messmore Kendall, Dobbs Ferry, N. Y.
Mr. Charles C. Wall, Mount Vernon, Va.
Mrs. James Mackenzie, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Mrs. Alpheus H. Riddle, Brooklyn, N. Y.

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MISCELLANY

Dr. Gilbert Chinard, long a member of this Society’s Executive Council, this year retired from the faculty of Princeton University, which he joined in 1937, as Meredith Howland Pyne Professor of French Literature. Earlier he taught at City College of New York, Brown University, University of California, and, for seventeen years, at Johns Hopkins, in association with the Walter Hines Page School of International Relations.

Dr. Chinard has centered his attention on cultural relations between France and the United States in literature and philosophical and political thought. He is the author of more than forty volumes, many of them now rare. He has edited and contributed to *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, the publications of *Institut Francais de Washington*, and to the *French American Review* and others.

During World War I, he served in Washington with the French Mission for Foreign Affairs, and the French High Commission immediately thereafter. He holds degrees from the Universities of Poctiers and Bordeaux and the Sorbonne. He is an Officer of the Legion of Honor. For the present he continues to reside at Princeton.

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The 125th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone of Bunker Hill Monument was observed on June 17th. Dr. Samuel Atkins Eliot, president of the Bunker Hill Monument Association, its secretary, Dr. Frederick Lewis Weis, Dr. Clifford Kenyon Shipton, Rev. Richard Allen Day, and your editor, who represented the *American Friends of Lafayette*, made the pilgrimage to the top of The Hill, which, of course, means Breed’s Hill, and thence proceeded to the association’s Annual Meeting and luncheon, held at the Harrison Gray Otis House, Cambridge Street, Boston. Dr. Eliot read a paper “Lafayette and Bunker Hill” written by Mrs. Alan MacIntire.

Major General John Brooks, ex-Governor of Massachusetts, was the first president of the Bunker Hill Association, formed in 1823 by some twenty-five gentlemen. Ex-Governor Brooks was succeeded by Daniel Webster, the orator of the day at the great celebration of 1825, when Lafayette assisted in laying the cornerstone. The association has most happily endured with a distinguished membership, headed by Dr. Eliot, a son of Charles W. Eliot, one time president of Harvard University. As we go to press, announcement has been made of the death of Dr. Eliot on October 15.

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Mr. J. Bennett Nolan of the Executive Council represented, as usual, the *American Friends of Lafayette* on Bastille Day, July 14, at ceremonies held at the grave of Lafayette in Piptus Cemetery. The Marquis de Rochambeau spoke and General Aldebert de Chambrun also spoke, the latter speaking in place of his brother, Count Charles de Chambrun. Ambassador Bruce responded. The following day he communicated to Mr. Nolan his appreciation of this traditional gesture of the *American Friends of Lafayette*.

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The Sons of the Revolution of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations conducted impressive ceremonies in Newport, July 10, 1950, commemorating the landing of the French Army there in 1780. A wreath was placed at the statue of Rochambeau, on the shore, looking out over the bay where the French fleet anchored. Another wreath was placed on the grave of Admiral de Ternay in Trinity Church Yard on the hill. The wreaths were deposited by Brigadier General Jacques De La Boise, Military Attaché of the French Embassy. Mr. John H. Greene, Jr., was Master of Ceremonies and spoke at both places. Later that day a bronze tablet was unveiled by Mr. William Spencer on the North Battery of Fort Greene, in commemoration of the services of the men of Rhode Island in the Revolution. Mr. Spencer is a member of the Legion of Honor of France, the Society of the Cincinnati, and the Pennsylvania Society of the Sons of the Revolution. At these ceremonies our Society was represented by Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Panaggio and Mr. and Mrs. Alan MacIntire.

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(During World War II an unsuccessful attempt was made to discover what went on at Chavaniac and La Grange, two shrines beloved by all Americans. At this late date, brief news of La Grange comes to hand in an article of Zula Fricks, in the July number of *Antiques*, here reprinted in part. Your editor’s comment is, of necessity, only a profane silence.)

"The Marquis [de Lasteyrie] said the Germans occupied the house during the war. As he put it, he entertained eighty Germans and they were great actors, so they dressed up in Lafayette’s old clothes, which, being very old and frail, fell apart after being worn, and were completely destroyed. Only his three-cornered hat was left."

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On June 9th at Commencement at Lafayette College, the medal of the *American Friends of Lafayette* was awarded to Mr. Jan Peter Holscher of Johnston, Rhode Island. Annually the medal is presented to the student of the highest proficiency in the study of American history. Mr. Holscher served in the United States Army before entering Lafayette College in 1946. Dean Robert G. Crosen of Lafayette says, “He is a man of fine ability and we are proud of his achievements while at Lafayette.”
GAZETTE OF THE AMERICAN FRIENDS OF LAFAYETTE

BOOKS


R. M. Brace, Chicago Sunday Tribune, January 22.

Robert Palmer, Chicago Sun, January 25.


Charles A. Micaud, The Nation, April 15.

Robert Bertram Hill, American Historical Review, July.

Crane Brinton, William and Mary Quarterly, July.

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We pick from the four thousand words of these excellent reviews:

This book, with its three forerunners, deserves the highest praise; it adds to a better understanding of Lafayette and France before the Revolution; the author's scholarship is of magnitude and high standard and he is meticulously accurate and sharply critical in every detail, yet no debunker. He possesses real literary talent, and does not yield to the temptation of painting a canvas in broad sweeps. He has documentary exactness, extensive, reliable, and discreetly employed. At times his chronological method seems to limit opportunities to develop intellectual themes, yet the study, as the story of a developing career and personality, has intrinsic interest, is frank, in keeping with Gottschalk's earlier volumes, and part of a really definitive Life of Lafayette which future students will mine with great profit in several ways, for Lafayette's career was long and eventful and his interests many and far-reaching. Gottschalk now approaches the years of his hero which have already been thoroughly examined. Professor Brinton thinks the author as to new findings of facts of import, is now near the point of diminishing returns, despite all his research, and also judges, with others, that Gottschalk has made Lafayette more substantial and significant than he really was. Doctor Micaud's opinion is that our hero was not particularly brilliant or wise, and no great thinker, statesman or even soldier. But all agree, more or less explicitly, he was a courageous aristocrat who was keen for the cause of reason and justice, — a man of action whose associates were always well-intentioned.

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As all the reviewers are specialists in the study of the French Revolution, one wonders whether their present findings are nuanced by their studies of subsequent years, e.g., 1789-1792 and 1815-1834.

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Brinton's article is most trenchant: he thinks Lafayette a third or fourth-rate figure, except for the accidents of history, yet he is willing to be convinced otherwise, but, of all living men, only by Gottschalk. Fayettistes will confidently hope for a conversion, especially as Chinard deems Gottschalk the best qualified scholar upon Lafayette in the years of the French Revolution. And if Gottschalk does not convert Brinton Fayettistes will have solace in studying Brinton's durable The Anatomy Of Revolution (1938) where Lafayette is described as a first water revolutionist, eager for fame, an intellectual aristocrat, virtuous, a paragon of knighthood — a "paladin."

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If Brinton's opinion has been altered by Gottschalk's Lady in Waiting, a study of the relations between Lafayette and Countess d'Hanalstein, 1782-1783, Brinton's opinion (and that of others) may or may not be further affected by Gottschalk's new notes upon his star witness, Louis de Bachamount, whose death in 1771 precluded his observations made in 1782-1783, and detailed in that by-blow of Gottschalk, whose main thesis, however, will hold unless it should appear that its chief letter, which lacks provenance, was not written by Lafayette, and if written, was intended for Mme. de Lafayette.

Fayettistes have been happy to see Gottschalk's monumental work grow steadily. It will not be perfect, for no human endeavor is; but whether it will be in twelve volumes (as Brinton dreads) or from six to eight, it will be, as Brinton generously intimates, a treasury for students of late eighteenth century France, of its rulers, people, public men, and its finances; of its myriad springs of action and reaction, and, perhaps, of the eternal problems of the production, consumption and distribution of material things. And one feels certain that though Lafayette did not "come to hold the golden keys and mould a mighty state's decrees," yet in the treasure-trove for students will be confirmation of a tradition that has deservedly made Lafayette one of the symbols of orderly and resolute liberalism in the modern world. Now facing for himself, Lafayette and France, dangerous years, so to speak, Gottschalk should be heartened by the critical acclaim he has so far had from those most competent to judge. One need not add that in all ways the American Friends of Lafayette wish him well.

Jersey City John Francis Gough Sept. 6, 1950 Harvard, 1902

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Lafayette and Slavery, by Professor Melvin D. Kennedy, details Lafayette's connection with slavery and the settlement of Liberia, heretofore but lightly treated in biographies of Lafayette. The brochure, based largely upon original letters in the Stuart W. Jackson Lafayette Collection, will be sent to all active members of our Society.

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The first volume of The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, edited by Julian P. Boyd (of the Executive Council of the American Friends of Lafayette), has been published by Princeton University Press, and will be followed by fifty-one other volumes, all making "the greatest treasure house of historical information ever left by a single man." As to Mr. Boyd's superb editorial performance, we suggest a reading of Datus C. Smith, Jr.'s article in Saturday Review of Literature, May 6, 1950.
Brigadier General Weedon is, in a way, a man of mystery. Where and when he was born, just when he died, and where he was buried, are unknown; but we do know that he lived here in Fredericksburg, in the "Sentry Box," a house that is still standing; that he kept an inn or tavern here; and that he performed important services in the French and Indian Wars, as well as during the American Revolution, which culminated on October 19, 1781, when Cornwallis capitulated to Washington at Yorktown, and at the same time surrendered to Brigadier General Weedon all his troops and equipment that were at Gloucester, just across the river from Yorktown.

One of Weedon's early letters, now in the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia, was written by him during the French and Indian War from Presque Isle on Lake Erie, September 20, 1760. It was addressed to his friend, Charles Lewis of Fredericksburg, and to give you an idea of the way he expressed himself, I quote from one paragraph of that letter:

"My only enemy as yet has been the musketoes which have surrounded me, flanked me, attacked me in front and rear, but by the help of a little smoke I as yet keep my ground. My table is made of birch-barke, my ink is gunpowder mashed and mixed with Lake Erie water, my pen is made of the Quill of Lake Ontario Flocking Foul, and all these Difficulties do I surmount to write to my much Esteemed Friend C. L."

Whether Weedon was English, Irish, German or Scotch, as has been stated by different writers, is of minor importance. Dr. John F. D. Smythe, made a "Tour of the United States of America" just before the Revolution, possibly as a British spy. He published a book about it shortly afterward, from which I quote:

"After passing through a small town named Falmouth, at the falls of the Rappahannock, we crossed the river in a Ferryboat, and arrived at Fredericksburg, putting up at an Inn or Public House kept by one Weedon, who is now a general officer in the American Army, and was then very active and zealous in blowing the flames of sedition."

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Weedon’s Tavern was the headquarters for all the “neighborhood” which extended from Mount Vernon to Yorktown. Washington often spent an evening there and it was the gathering place for all the notables of northern Virginia.

In Washington’s diary from 1769 to 1774 are several references to meetings of “Ye Club,” and of officers of the militia at Weedon’s Tavern. In one entry his cash account shows: “By expenses at Weedon’s 1s 6d.” It was not a very expensive night club!

Others who frequented Weedon’s Tavern included George Mason and his political pupil Thomas Jefferson; Light-horse Harry Lee, and Charles Lee; Charles Carter of Cleve; John Marshall; young James Monroe; Fielding Lewis, and half a hundred other young men who later became famous. Even John Paul Jones, then a lad of thirteen years, may have heard them discussing there the topics of the day when he came for the mail, for the tavern was the post office, too. Truly, this may be called the cradle of American liberty!

John Davis, a Welshman who came to America to teach, has left us a sketch of the tavern of that day and of the people who frequented it, a part of which may be worth quoting now: “On the porch of the tavern,” he says, “I found a party of gentlemen of the neighboring plantations sitting over a bowl of toddy and smoking cigars. On ascending the steps to the piazza, every countenance seemed to say, ‘This man has a double claim to our attention, for he is a stranger in the place.’ In a moment, room was made for me to sit down, and a new bowl of punch called for, and everyone addressed me with a smile of conciliation. The higher Virginians seem to venerate themselves. I am persuaded that not one of that company would have felt embarrassed at being admitted to the presence and conversation of the greatest monarch on earth.”

When the Revolution started, Weedon closed his Tavern and offered his services to the country. Among these papers are his appointment as Lieutenant Colonel dated February 13, 1776, and as Colonel June 19 of the same year. Both are signed by John Hancock and John Thom-
Before Had Sent in a Summons that No property on Board the Remaining Vessels Destroyed, thought proper to Retire to their former position at Albans — from there they Have Marched through that Neck of the land Called the Hundreds, and Have Immediately Reimberked — They Have Spoke with Surprise of the Rapidity of our March — Their force is above 2300 Regulars which is Near three times our present Number of Regular Troops. . . .

"From every Circumstance I am apprehensive that Having Been frustrated in their tentative against Richmond, the Enemy will now Proceed to Fredericksburg. . . . I wish therefore you will Remain in that part and Collect a Number of Good Riflemen, four or five Hundred if you can, with Mounted Militia and Such troops as you may Conveniently Arm. I would not like the men to Be taken from the fields where their Labors May Be Necessary. . . .

"From the time I know that the Enemy Appear at the Mouth of Potomack, I Can in a few days Be with you. I therefore Request You will Have the grounds well Reconnoitered By Yourself, and Beg you to Form your judgment on the Best position where the Enemy Could Be fought to Advantage. . . ."

From William Grayson on May 14th comes this:

". . . Yesterday we had advice that Cornwallis and Philips were on the point of forming a junction: if this is the case, I tremble for the fate of Poor Greene; Wayne I expect will set out in five or six weeks, but when joined with the Marquis, this force will be inadequate, Poor America! . . ."

On May 16th General Peter Muhlenberg writes: "General Phillips went the way of all flesh yesterday. The Marquis refuses to correspond with Arnold who succeeds Phillips in the command."

On June 21st, 1781, Lafayette writes Weedon:

". . . Your exertions have been of infinite Service, and although I wish you with us, yet we must suffer greatly should we lose the assistance to be derived from your remaining a little longer where you are. . . ."

"This morning the Enemy evacuated Richmond, and by the last accounts were near Bottoms Bridge. It is not perfectly clear from this movement that Cornwallis intends for Williamsburg and yet it is most probable he does. The army is under way; tomorrow perhaps we may know where he is going, when I shall write you. If he looks towards Potomack, you will of course take your measures.

"If the corps of horse has not left you, they may be ordered to Bottoms Bridge, where I expect they will be in my rear. They will move however, upon good intelligence only."

Well, Lafayette passed Bottoms Bridge as he said he would, for on July first at "Headquarters 20 miles from Williamsburg," he wrote:

". . . We are near the enemy you will perceive, and I am sorry to inform you that the militia are daily going off, without any relief coming in. Under these circumstances, your influence is of the greatest consequence, to engage the people to turn out, and hurry on to camp. Every reinforcement, particularly horse, should receive pointed instructions to come as fast as possible. . . ."

And now comes what seems to me the most interesting Lafayette letter in the group. It was written from his camp near Charlottesville when his force and that of the British were dodging each other on their excursions to western Virginia. It is dated Mechunkes Creek, 13th July, 1781, and he says:

"I have received your favor of the 11th and Request you will superintend and direct the distribution of the Troops North of Rapponak — While the Enemy have nothing but plundering parties, it is certainly better to divide the Militia in defence of their own Counties—Should any considerable force appear your troops must be collected to a point either for attack or retreat — I am still of opinion that the Conquest of Virginia Requires a Cooperation of force up Pottowmack; and Untill the Enemy’s intentions are better explained I think it very important to the public that you direct matters in that quarter — When it is determined there is nothing to fear for Fredericksburg I shall be very Happy to be favored with your Company at this Army, where I am very impatient to avail myself of your aid, your friendship and your Services — A few days may determine the matter.

"We Have Happily got between the Enemy and our Stores — Nothing has been destroyed But what Had Been, Contrary to my directions, Brought to Charlottesville and What Has not been looked over from the point of Fork — everything at Albemarle old Court House, the south side of James River and the other places is entirely safe — it does not appear the enemy expected us so soon — they are opposite to the island — a part of their army was yesterday at Byrd’s ordinary 13 miles Below us — the Baron Steuben looked over James River, Has, it is said, Retreated to the South Side of Staunton River — His force Regular and Militia about 7500 with artillery — so at least I am informed.

"Some Clothing Coming from Headquarters for the light infantry detachment Has been stopped by the Board of war — the Reason I don’t know — I request you will acquaint them that we are entirely destitute particularly of shoes and if they do any longer detain those 1200 pairs of overalls 1200 shirts 1200 pairs of shoes and some other articles coming on purpose from Hqrs. want of those and of every necessary will put it out of our power to move — the Consequences of this inability is easily to be foreseen.

On August 6th Lafayette reports Cornwallis is at Yorktown, and that the Americans are in great want of arms. He particularly needs 50 light spears for volunteer horsemen.

On August 18th he again writes for cartridges and arms. One paragraph from a letter written by Weedon on August 27th, 1781, which I secured later, is of interest here. Writing to the War Office in Richmond, he said:
"I very highly approve of the plan for arming the counties according to their situation. . . . Indeed could you establish every county in the form of a little republic, it would be the means of making us formidable in the eyes of the world and the only sure stop against invasions. The enemy knowing us prepared, then would not be so lavish of their visits." 

On September first Lafayette triumphantly writes Weedon:

"I have been honored today with dispatches from the Count de Grasse who has arrived in the Bay with 28 line of battle ships and a fine body of land forces. Some of the ships had entered York River and I hope others were in James River. I am taking precautions to prevent his lordships retreat to Carolina should he be disposed to make the attempt." 

The last letter in the group written by Lafayette is dated September 11, 1781, asking Weedon to command the militia at Gloucester, and adds:

"... In the mean time, you will render us the most essential service by giving what assistance may be in your power to Mr. Livingston who has engaged to supply the French troops with flour. — To give it a rapid transportation will be principally wanted. We have not one ounce at present, nor do I see without great private exertions any prospect of a speedy supply.

"You will pardon me for troubling you with these matters — but you will excuse it when you reflect on our situation. . . ."

From these letters one begins to realize the difficulties under which Lafayette conducted his campaign. At first he was short of rifles and ammunition, then short of troops, the men leaving every day; next he needed clothing and shoes, and finally there was no flour or food. Think of operating a campaign under such handicaps!

The situation, though desperate, was not so serious as Lafayette feared, for only a few weeks later Cornwallis surrendered. Two of these letters to Weedon are definitely connected with it, and although they do not mention Lafayette, you will, perhaps, be interested in them. The first, dated just two days before the Surrender of Cornwallis, is from Headquarters before York, 17th October, 1781. It is written by Johnathan Trumbull, Jr., one of Washington's aide-de-camps, who has franked it with Washington's name. After a short paragraph of minor importance, comes this thrilling news:

"... the General this Day received a Letter by Flag from Lord Cornwallis, proposing a cessation of Hostilities for 24 hours — & that 2 officers from each Side might be appointed to meet at Moors House to consult on proposals for his surrend.e of the Ports of York & Gloucester — An answer is gone in — & we shall soon know whether the whole is a farce — or if his Lordship is in earnest."

And then, two days later, on October 19th, the very day of the surrender, Washington dictated and signed this letter to Brigadier General Weedon at Gloucester, just across the river:

"Head Quarters 19, October 1781

"Dear Sir,

"I am extremely apprehensive that if great care is not taken the Arms and Accoutrements which the British are to lay down this day at Gloucester will be embezzled or exchanged. I shall therefore expect that the strictest Guard may be placed over them from a Corps on which you can depend, the Officer commanding it to be answerable for the number surrendered, until a Commissary of Stores shall take regular possession of them — In the mean time, let them be put in as secure a place as possible.

"I am

Y.r most ob.t and hbl serv.t
G. Washington"

And now that the surrender was accomplished the country looked forward to peace. Less than a month later, on November 11, 1781, the great Peace Ball was held at Weedon's Tavern in Fredericksburg. All the French and American officers were here during that memorable week, including Governor and Mrs. Nelson, Baron von Steuben, Anthony Wayne, the Marquis de Lafayette, the Counts de Grasse, Estainq and Deux Ponts, General Choisney, John Laurens, and all the leading families of Virginia. Washington's mother entered the room on the arm of her illustrious son; and when the grandfather clock chimed ten, Mrs. Washington made a courtesy to all present and said: "It is time for old ladies to be in bed," whereupon, it is said, Lafayette stepped forward and offered his arm. He escorted her home, returning for the remainder of the party.

And now here in this historic city of Fredericksburg, on the 116th anniversary of Lafayette's death, we honor his memory and that of his close friend, Brigadier General George Weedon, whose unmarked grave is probably in the Masonic Cemetery here, in the city he loved, and in truth saved, through his preparedness. On this particular day, which has been designated "Armed Forces Day," it is well for us to remember that.

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Our Collection

Twenty-nine volumes were added to the Collection of the American Friends of Lafayette in the past year. The most important is Professor Gottschalk's latest volume, Lafayette Between the American and the French Revolutions. We received from Mr. Jackson the typescript of this volume. He also sent us typescripts of the Gottschalk earlier volumes. Other works worthy of mention are Dumouriez' La vie et les mémoires (Paris, 1822-23, 4 v.) and Mathieu Dumas' Souvenirs de 1770-1836 (Paris, 1839, 3 v.). We are happy to note that our fellow-member and former president, Mr. John Francis Gough, continued his Viéménil studies with The Last Days of Baron de Viéménil. Also worthy of note is the book by Fruma Gottschalk, wife of Professor Gottschalk, The Youngest General (New York, 1949). This is written for children but will hold the interest of adult readers.

Cataloged volumes ............... 1,515 

8 Mss: Oscar Lafayette (Gift of J. Bennett Nolan) 

T. E. NORTON