

LIBERTY-LOVING LAFAYETTE

By Dorothea Jensen



**HOW "AMERICA'S FAVORITE
FIGHTING FRENCHMAN" HELPED
WIN OUR INDEPENDENCE**

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Cover adapted from Lafayette's Baptism of Fire by E. Percy Moran, 1909

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“America’s favorite fighting Frenchman”
—Hamilton © 2015 by Lin-Manuel Miranda

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How “America’s Favorite Fighting Frenchman”
Helped Win Our Independence

by

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Dedication

TO MAJOR GENERAL MARIE-JOSEPH PAUL YVES ROCH

GILBERT DU MOTIER DE LAFAYETTE,

FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE MARQUIS* DE LAFAYETTE, WHO WAS CALLED GILBERT**

BY HIS FRIENDS, AND WHOSE HELP WAS VITAL IN OUR REVOLUTIONARY WAR

* LAFAYETTE GAVE UP HIS TITLE DURING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

** PRONOUNCED "ZHIL-BARE"



The Marquis de Lafayette

by Charles Willson Peale, 1780
In the Uniform of a Major General
Independence National Historical Park

Liberty-Loving Lafayette

So listen up, my children, and I'll do my best to tell
How a teenaged French aristocrat served all of us so well.¹
Without his help, we might have lost our fight for Liberty,
And we'd still be lowly subjects of the British monarchy!



WILLIAM HENRY, DUKE OF GLOUCESTER

King George III's Younger Brother
by Thomas Gainsborough, circa 1775
National Army Museum (U.K.)

Young Lafayette had dinner with the British king's bro,

Who told him the Americans were "good to go."

Just as soon as he found out about our fight for Liberty

A flame was set alight inside this starry-eyed marquis.²

GEORGE III, KING OF ENGLAND

by Allan Ramsay, 1760
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation



GENERAL SIR HENRY CLINTON

Commander-in-Chief
British Forces in America 1778-1782
by Andrea Soldi, circa 1762-1765
The American Museum in Britain

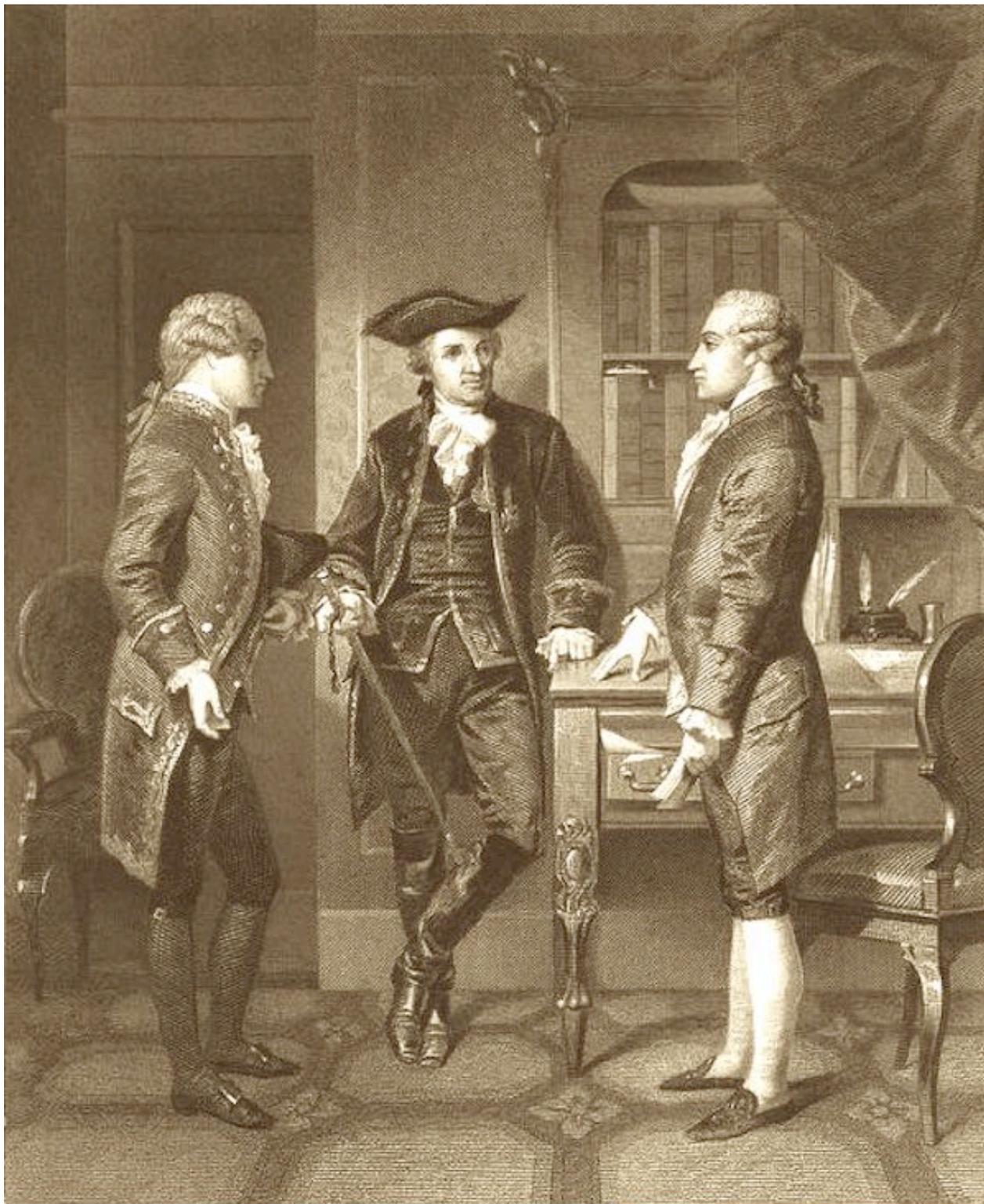
His risking life and fortune quite so very recklessly

Raised strenuous objections from his in-law family.

They sent him off to England so that he would change his mind

Where he met King George and Clinton and was richly

wined and dined.³



**BARON DE KALB (CENTER) INTRODUCING
LAFAYETTE (LEFT) TO SILAS DEANE**

Engraving from painting by Alonzo Chappel, 1879

New York Public Library Digital Collections

Gilbert came home with mind unchanged, proceeding purposefully.

He'd bought a ship in secret, and he named it *Victory*.

He met with agent Silas Deane⁴, and was delighted when

Deane gave him a commission as a Yankee major gen.⁵



GEORGE WASHINGTON

by unidentified artist, 1783
Copy after John Trumbull
National Portrait Gallery
Smithsonian Institution

**ADRIENNE,
MARQUISE DE LAFAYETTE**
by unknown 18th century artist
Christie's



Lafayette had feelings complicated at this point in life.

Should he go fight with Washington, or stay with dotting wife?⁶

But the chance of Glory beckoned (not to mention Liberty),

Compelling him to join our fray from far across the sea.

So when the King of France said he'd be subject to arrest,⁷

He sneaked aboard the *Victory* and headed to the West.

He endured the trip across despite some nasty *mal de mer*,

And learned a bit of English by the time he landed there.⁸



INDEPENDENCE HALL IN PHILADELPHIA

by Ferdinand Richardt, circa 1858-63

White House Collection

When he arrived in Philly, though, despite his famous charms,
Nobody welcomed him with even slightly open arms.
“Oh, not another foreigner, we have more than our share,
And such a young and raw recruit we simply cannot bear!
The gall of Mr. Silas Deane, gun-buying is his task,
But he gives lofty ranks galore to all of those who ask!”⁹



MARIE ANTOINETTE, QUEEN OF FRANCE

by Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, 1778

Kunsthistorisches Museum

But just in time some letters came from far across the sea,
From Deane himself, and Franklin¹⁰, who were stationed in "Paree."
"He is both rich and famous, this Marquis de Lafayette.
His friends are French aristocrats, and Queen M. Antoinette.
Just give him a high rank and let him bask in Glory's glow,
But keep him safe, for heaven's sake (and never let him know).
A dead marquis won't help us gain much-needed French support,
But this lad's service in our cause will wow King Louis' court!"¹¹



WASHINGTON AND LAFAYETTE AT THE BATTLE OF BRANDYWINE

by John Vanderlyn, circa 1825

Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art

So they made him major general for these diplomatic ends,
And Lafayette and Washington became the best of friends.¹²

END OF EXCERPT

* * *

About the Author

Dorothea Jensen is a former teacher who has lived all over the United States, as well as in Holland and Brazil. New Hampshire has been her home since 1991. She earned a BA in English at Carleton College and an MA in Secondary Education at the University of New Mexico.

Dorothea has been writing historical fiction for many years. Her first novel about the American Revolution, *The Riddle of Penncroft Farm*, has been in print since 1989. A Teachers' Choices selection of the then International Reading Association, it is used in schools around the country. Her second historical novel, *A Buss from Lafayette*, released in 2016, centers on a clever but troubled 14-year-old girl, Clara, whose life is profoundly changed by meeting General Lafayette during his 1824-5 Farewell Tour. During the course of the story, Clara learns all about what the young Marquis de Lafayette did to help us win the American Revolution. Dorothea also co-authored *A Buss from Lafayette Teacher's Guide* for classroom and homeschool use.

In addition, she writes award-winning modern Christmas stories, the *Izzy Elf Series*, in verse (for kids aged 6+) about Santa's twenty-first century, high-tech elves: Bizzy, Blizzy, Dizzy, Fizzy, Frizzy, Quizzy, Tizzy, and Whizzy.

Combining her passion for history with her delight in composing rhymes, Dorothea started finding couplets forming in her head about Lafayette. Inspired by the musical *Hamilton* and by Longfellow's poem, "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere," (which she had to memorize in the fifth grade) she ended up writing this rhyming history of Lafayette's key role in our Revolution.

End Notes

¹ Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier de Lafayette was only nineteen when he first arrived in America in 1777. A marquis, which is a middling aristocratic rank, his family inheritance made him one of the richest men in France. This portrait was painted by Charles Willson Peale at the request of Lafayette's friend, General Washington, before the young Frenchman left for France in January 1779 to seek more aid for America.

² On August 8, 1775, Lafayette had dinner in Metz, France, with William Henry, Duke of Gloucester, the younger brother of George III, King of England. Gloucester disagreed with his older brother on his treatment of the American colonies (and many other things). Lafayette later said that hearing about the colonists' rebellion on this occasion "enlisted his heart" in the American cause.

³ In an effort to change Lafayette's mind about helping America in its fight for independence, his rich and powerful father-in-law, the Duc d'AYen, sent him to visit England. As the Duc's uncle was the French ambassador in London, Lafayette's participation in the American war could cause personal and political embarrassment for the family. At any rate, while there, the young marquis was presented to King George III himself. He also went to the opera with General Henry Clinton, later the commander-in-chief of all British forces in America (from 1778 until 1782). (Lafayette was also the guest of honor at a ball given by Lord George Germain, British Secretary for the Colonies.)

⁴ Silas Deane was an American agent for the Continental Congress in Paris seeking aid from France. Sent to recruit military engineers, he ended up recruiting many experienced (and some inexperienced) officers to join the Continental Army.

⁵ The rank of major general, which Deane promised to Lafayette, was the highest of any in the Continental army except for that of General George Washington. Although Lafayette had had military training, he had no battle experience at all. This lofty rank, even without troops to command, would have been completely unattainable under normal circumstances.

⁶ Gilbert married the 14-year-old Adrienne de Noailles, daughter of the Duc D'AYen, when he was only 16. Although this was an arranged marriage, Gilbert and Adrienne became a devoted couple.

⁷ King Louis issued an arrest warrant to stop Lafayette from leaving for America. The French government feared having a "celebrity" like Lafayette join the fight on the side of the Americans. This might bring secret French support for the Americans into the open. (Actually, the British already knew about all this.)

⁸ Baron de Kalb, a Prussian officer who had fought in the French army, had been to America previously as a French agent to assess how committed the Patriots were to the cause of independence. He taught Lafayette some English during their voyage to America on the *Victory*. The two men became good friends.

⁹ A number of unqualified European soldiers received promises of high rank in the Continental Army from American agent Silas Deane. Some arrogantly demanded exorbitant pay when they arrived in America. Many of these men were not accepted by Congress and went back to Europe.

¹⁰ Ben Franklin, America's "minister" (ambassador) to France, had the challenging task of trying to persuade an absolute monarchy to support a rebellion against another monarch—that of its old enemy, England. Ironically, this support of America, payback for the Seven Years' War (French and Indian War), nearly bankrupted France. This turned out to be a contributing factor for the later revolt against its own king.

¹¹ Deane and Franklin did write letters stating these views (with slightly different wording).

¹² The extremely close friendship between the fatherless Lafayette and the childless Washington is evidenced by numerous accounts and letters.