

MARGINALIZED MEMORIES: LAFAYETTE, AMERICAN OTHERS, AND THE
REVOLUTION'S LEGACY

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by

JORDAN PELLERITO

Dr. Jay Sexton, Thesis Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

MARGINALIZED MEMORIES: LAFAYETTE, AMERICAN OTHERS, AND THE
REVOLUTION'S LEGACY

presented by Jordan Pellerito,

a candidate for the degree of master of history,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Jay Sexton

Professor Christa Dierksheide

Professor Jay Dow

DEDICATION

I owe much to many people. My Master's program was one of the most challenging, yet rewarding, parts of my life. Without these people, I would not have successfully completed my degree. Thank you to my grandparents for constantly encouraging me to pursue what I love and supporting me in every possible way. The texts, phone calls, visits to Columbia, and my visits home made an incredible difference. Thank you to my mom, aunt, and uncle for supporting me from Florida and always being proud of me, no matter what. Thank you to Abby Ivory-Ganja, Xavier Lukasek, Carley Johansson, and Jessica Fiol for being the best friends and support system I could ask for. Their total faith in me, consistent check-ins, and love got me through the hard times and made the good times even better. To Uprise Bakery, where I spent countless hours reading, writing, and drinking coffee. Finally, I'm thankful for Pico, my bearded dragon, who spent many nights watching me read and write into the late hours.

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ABSTRACT

In American history, the Marquis de Lafayette is predominantly remembered for his military service in the Revolution, his lifelong friendship with the Founders, and his triumphal farewell tour of the United States from 1824-1825. Native Americans in the 1820s are mostly studied as part of the larger Jacksonian removal narrative, while African Americans' place in the decade is entangled within the ever-increasing national tensions over slavery. In visiting the United States for the final time, Lafayette received a nationwide welcome from Americans, and helped President Monroe and the first post-Revolution generation celebrate the event's 50th anniversary. How Americans received and celebrated Lafayette tells us much about the 'Era of Good Feelings.'

We know from the existing historiography that white Americans hosted lavish dinners and balls, gave admirable toasts, and conducted city-wide parades for Lafayette's return. Even with the increased popularity of African American and Native American histories, however, little work has been done on how people of color received the Revolutionary hero. This project explores how African and Native Americans interacted with Lafayette as a representation of the American Revolution, emphasizes its contested legacy, and further demonstrates that the 'Era of Good Feelings' was ripe with national discourse over the past and future of the United States.

INTRODUCTION

This project aims to combine two themes important to fully understanding the early nineteenth century American nation: the Revolution's legacy at its 50th anniversary and how people of color received the Marquis de Lafayette as a representation of the Revolution. This combination tells us much about the nation's memory and how people acted upon it to advance their own agendas. Americans contested the Revolution's narrative and there was no unified memory of it in the 1820s, especially since this is when the first post-Revolution generation emerged. Elite, white men, social reformers, and people of color held different interpretations of the American Revolution and the legacy's role in contemporary society. Military service and witnessing the War for Independence firsthand united the Revolutionary generation. Their children and grandchildren, however, relied on memory and accounts of their nation's founding rather than experience. The United States was expanding, social issues divided groups, and the only history Americans shared was their founding. Yet even something as unifying as winning a major war and establishing a new country cracked within the new generation as they struggled to apply the Revolution to the present and future.

President James Monroe, often equated with the Era of Good Feelings, recognized that this generation was not as unified as his own and worried that they did not possess the Revolutionary values that founded the country. Monroe had maintained correspondence with the Marquis de Lafayette since the Revolution and therefore knew the Frenchman desired to return to the United States before he was too elderly to do so. The president hoped that Lafayette's presence, as the last surviving Revolutionary

general, would instill the founding values into the new American generation. Lafayette coincidentally lost his reelection bid to the French Chamber of Deputies in 1823. Perhaps by fate, Lafayette was available, and eager, to return to his adopted country.

Thus, we know that President Monroe considered the American Revolution an important component of the American nation and that he associated it with Lafayette. We also know that white Americans celebrated Lafayette and viewed him as a personification of the Revolution. We do not know, however, how people of color received the French hero's return and if their reception tells us anything about their version of the Revolution's legacy. This is not for lack of evidence or sources. Auguste Levasseur, Lafayette's personal secretary during the tour, recorded numerous interactions with African Americans or Native Americans.

This project broadly explores the Revolution's contested legacies in the Era of Good Feelings, and specifically how African and Native Americans interacted with Lafayette as a representation of the American Revolution. Through this research, it is evident that people of color celebrated Lafayette's return and the Revolution, just as white Americans did, but in different ways. Exploring the different interpretations of the Revolution's legacy that Americans held and including people of color in this narrative challenges our current understanding of Lafayette's visit and the Era of Good Feeling's 'national unity.'

...

Historians often refer to Lafayette as the "Nation's Guest" from 1824 to 1825, yet the 'nation' merely included white men. Americans of the first post-Revolutionary generation contested their national identity in the wake of the 50th anniversary of their

independence. In the mid-1820s the United States was democratizing and more Americans experienced the Revolution's republican values than ever before, but inclusion required further exclusion. Though many of them fought alongside white soldiers in the Revolution, African Americans remained enslaved or second-class citizens, while statesmen and frontiersmen increasingly turned their attention to displacing or assimilating Native Americans. White men quickly shaped the Revolution into an exclusionary narrative, while African and Native Americans, along with women, became the 'other' to the American national identity. Thus, it is only appropriate to acknowledge Lafayette as the "nation's guest" if we include marginalized groups.

Scholarship on Lafayette often includes the grand farewell tour not just as a significant biographical event, but also to demonstrate his continued popularity in the United States. For thirteen months, Americans seemed to forget their factional, sectional, and political divides. They organized expensive parades, lavish dinners, and created a variety of material goods that depicted Lafayette. Such events created the illusion that every American celebrated the Frenchman. His presence, as the last surviving Revolutionary general, unified the country amidst a contentious presidential election and instilled the nation's founding republican virtues in a new generation of Americans.¹ By the 1820s, the Revolutionary generation who had either fought for American independence or at least bore witness to it were aging and dying. This was almost a forced opportunity for a new generation of Americans to decide if they would continue the Revolutionary period's norms or redefine them, while Native and African Americans

¹ Stephanie Kermes, *Creating an American Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2008).

may have seen it as a chance to contribute to this conversation and appeal to the unfulfilled promises of the American Revolution.

Without the Revolution as a common event to unify them, this new generation struggled amongst itself over what it meant to be American and what their nation should be. Such a young nation, Americans believed their history was unique and distinct from European histories bound to certain expectations or legacies. 1820s Americans had no obligation to any history or memories apart from their Revolutionary ideals, which they sought to continue in their national development. As a living relic of the Revolution, the second generation of Americans desired Lafayette's approval for what the United States had become.² 1824 was also the beginning of the American Revolution's semicentennial and Lafayette, though a foreign figure, was a domestic idol who represented the Revolution to Americans displaced from its reality.

Lafayette's visit also exemplified the United States' increased democratization in the 1820s. While he met privately with influential American figures, he mostly interacted with ordinary people— veterans, women, children, African Americans, and Native Americans.³ He represented an American Revolution that belonged to the entire population, not just elite, white men. Lafayette enjoyed these celebrations because they reinvigorated the Revolution, but also because he realized that their publicity could be lent to causes important to him, like abolition. According to Lloyd Kramer, the dominant Lafayette scholar, Lafayette believed that symbolic gestures, like parades, influenced the public. He saw the celebrations as an opportunity to make important statements to the

² Fred Somkin, *Unquiet Eagle; Memory and Desire in the Idea of American Freedom, 1815-1860*. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1968).

³ Kermes, *Creating an American Identity*.

American people, specifically that black and Native peoples were integral to the American Revolution. Black and Native soldiers fought and died alongside white soldiers, and Lafayette hoped that white Americans would recognize their service and current racial inequality if he embraced the veterans of color.⁴

Alfred F. Young argues that by the early 19th century, when the Revolutionary generation was dying out, the new generation reshaped the Revolution's legacy as to dilute its radicalism and crowd actions. Rather than celebrate the radical group effort that was the Boston Tea Party (which was renamed so at this time to further disassociate it from radicalism and replace it with a positive connotation), people were encouraged to celebrate the Fourth of July. Similarly, George Washington was revered over common soldiers. Perhaps this merely simplified the Revolution in a way that more people could understand it, but it also encouraged Americans to remember the role of great men rather than Americans from diverse backgrounds. Focusing on a more positive and controlled event, such as signing the Declaration of Independence, and one great man overshadowed common people's roles.⁵ This further excluded African and Native Americans. If average white soldiers and white women's contributions were ignored for the pantheon of white, male Founders, then black and Native soldiers were even further displaced from the Revolution despite their crucial roles in it. Lafayette is not exempt from the great man celebrations, because by almost all accounts of his final tour, it is evident that Americans equated him with the Revolution. Yet Lafayette combatted the legacy of an American

⁴ Lloyd S Kramer, *Lafayette in Two Worlds: Public Cultures and Personal Identities in an Age of Revolutions* (Boulder, Colo.: NetLibrary, Inc., 1999).

⁵ Alfred F Young, *Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution*. (New York: Random House Publisher Services, 2001), <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=5337605>.

Revolution fought by, won by, and meant for white men. He frequently sought out veterans of color and other marginalized groups to emphasize the Revolution as a collaborative effort between diverse groups.

Historians of the early 19th century, democratization, and memory rarely neglect the prominence of Lafayette's final tour. Yet they overwhelmingly present how white Americans celebrated him or focus on the tour's material culture. For a decade widely known for its racial tensions and democratization, there is little done on people of color in Lafayette's farewell visit. This is surprising especially given that Lafayette often sought out African or Native Americans. Thus, it behooves us to include people of color in this narrative with the limited sources we possess. Though the American state did not consider African and Native Americans citizens, their perception of the American experiment and memories of the Revolution offer us new insights into this formative period of American history and the process of constructing a national identity. Lafayette's farewell tour offers a unique opportunity to observe this.

Historians have also neglected to consider Lafayette's final tour within the Era of Good Feelings. Covering 1815 to 1825, the Era of Good Feelings defines the United States between Jeffersonian and Jacksonian democracy. It is characterized by a surge in nationalism and Revolutionary celebrations that quelled political tensions between Republicans and Federalists. A Boston Federalist newspaper coined the term during Monroe's brief 'Goodwill' Tour, which resembles Lafayette's. Monroe briefly toured the United States in 1817 and 1819 and experienced banquets, parades, and receptions similar to those that Lafayette would encounter five years later. Its purpose was for Monroe to observe the country's military and naval institutions, but it quickly turned into

celebration of American national unity. Unlike Lafayette's undistinguished appearance, Monroe wore his Revolutionary War uniform and tied his long and powdered hair into a queue to resemble his 18th century persona. Evoking the Revolution was extremely successful in uniting a new generation of Americans, especially in Boston. It inspired Americans to renew their "explicit and solemn declarations...to get back into the great family of the union."⁶ The Panic of 1819, however, created a new conflict between economic nationalism and democratic nationalism, dividing the country once more.

Monroe's presidency is closely associated with the Era of Good Feelings because of his virtually ambiguous political affiliation and the 'amicable' political environment he fostered. Despite appearing non-partisan, Monroe felt he had successfully de-Federalized the United States and secured Republican dominance by 1820. Yet he remained insecure in political support for his domestic and foreign programs and grew increasingly worried about the upcoming presidential election. Americans would elect their first non-Founder president in 1824, which he feared would resurrect aggressive political parties and divisions. Rather than choose a candidate and jeopardize his non-partisan façade, he encouraged Congress to invite Lafayette back to the United States. He hoped the Frenchman's presence would solidify national unity amidst the Revolution's approaching semicentennial.

The Era's historiography, until recent years, has not even acknowledged Lafayette's final tour, when it is clearly important to the narrative.⁷ Monroe invited

⁶ Harry Ammon and American Political Biography (Firm), *James Monroe: The Quest for National Identity* (Newtown, Conn.: American Political Biography Press, 1971), 8.

⁷ Ammon, "James Monroe and the Era of Good Feelings," (1970) George Dangerfield's *The Era of Good Feelings* (1952) and *The Awakening of American Nationalism: 1815-1828* (1965), and Sean Wilentz's *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (2009) make no mention of Lafayette's farewell tour.

Lafayette because he could represent the Revolution and promote national unity, but also publicly support his administration's new South American foreign policies. George Dangerfield's work from the late 1950s defined the Era as the years between the Jeffersonian period and Jackson's rise to power, and argued that it was relatively void of social and political tension. Rather, Americans focused on westward expansion and foreign affairs.⁸ More recently, the Era is incorporated into scholarship on the Monroe and Quincy Adams administrations or as a precursor to Jacksonian democracy instead of being treated as a separate field. Similarly, Lafayette's visit tends to be a minor detail stretched into a paragraph. Daniel Walker Howe acknowledges that Monroe invited Lafayette back to the United States as a tool in domestic and foreign policy support.⁹ He also finds that the first six presidents, but especially Monroe, sought to minimize political parties and promote national unity. Yet, Howe and other historians neglect to fully incorporate Lafayette's visit into the Era of Good Feelings or Monroe's administration.

If we examine Lafayette's tour we find it exemplifies current scholarship's claims that the Era of Good Feelings is a misnomer, that Americans remained politically, racially, and Revolutionarily divided during 1815-1825. Monroe, and subsequently Lafayette, may have reinvigorated the Revolution's values, embodied its legacy, and politically unified Americans for a brief time. But, Americans remained racially divided and contested the Revolution's legacy. There was no single narrative of the American Revolution in the 1820s and if we are to fully understand the Era of Good Feelings,

⁸ George Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings* (New York: American Council of Learned Societies, 1959).

⁹ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Monroe's administration, and Lafayette's visit, we need to explore Americans' differing legacies. This paper will hopefully set the foundation for a larger project that considers contested legacies among white Americans during the Era.

Lafayette's tour is an understudied source for this historiographical gap, especially since its sources include African and Native American voices. Lafayette visited all 24 American states and interacted with white, black, and Native Americans. Lafayette himself was a Revolutionary legacy because Americans revered him as a domestic hero and a foreign advocate of their cause in Europe. He represented the Revolution to a new generation of Americans, but also shaped its legacy by engaging with marginalized peoples.

...

To fully understand Lafayette's historical importance to the United States, his life is integrated into this narrative. It is not intended to overshadow that of marginalized groups or construct a 'great man' history. Rather, it benefits the reader to understand just how prominent he was in the American mind and how the United States contributed to his political and social thought. Similarly, his thoughts on the United States throughout his visit are considered alongside African and Native Americans. He was present for the nation's founding and remained a beloved friend of many Founders, which put him in a unique position to judge the country's development. During his nearly 50-year absence, spent mostly in his native France, many Founders still included Lafayette in their conversations about the United States and its future. Thus, his time away from the country was a useful comparative tool. His return in 1824 should reveal how the American promise had lived up to its intended purpose as the founding generation began

to disappear and a new generation of Americans more removed from the Revolution assumed political and cultural power.

Lafayette's voice and opinions are evident in his secretary's journal. Auguste Levasseur served as Lafayette's personal secretary during the trip and he maintained a detailed journal of their travels. It includes accounts of celebrations, who Lafayette met with, their conversations, and Lafayette's own perceptions of the country he helped found. Though Levasseur did not have the same American experiences as Lafayette, the two Frenchman held similar views and beliefs. Thus, Levasseur's own voice is sometimes more evident in the journal than Lafayette's, but we can assume their opinions did not differ much. It will be useful to understand what Lafayette thought of the United States in order to better understand his interactions with the Americans that hosted him. Did these conversations differ from his private thoughts or conversations with those closest to him? Was his public opinion about the United States different than his personal opinion? If so, what were the differences and whom did he share his concerns or comments with? Did he suggest how to better represent the Revolution?

Additionally, I intend to treat Native tribes as culturally separate and distinct groups, not as a generalized population. While I expect them to have similar Revolutionary memories, I also expect individual tribes to have unique interactions with Lafayette and recollections distinct to their people. My sources are limited but I have managed to analyze several tribes as to ensure my thesis is widely applicable. The tribes are regionally diverse, expressed different attitudes and loyalties in the Revolution, and met with Lafayette in different ways in the 1820s.

Slaves, freedmen, and white reformers are considered when assessing African American interactions with Lafayette. Abolition was one of Lafayette's three self-proclaimed hobby-horses, he was an active member in American and French antislavery societies, and he followed its international discussions throughout his life. He also attempted his own gradual emancipation experiment on a plantation in the French Guyana. Thus, he was well known as an antislavery advocate, and both black and white Americans took advantage of this.

CHAPTER 1 – NATIVE AMERICANS

The Marquis de Lafayette arrived in the American colonies on June 13, 1777, received commission as a major general in the Continental Army on July 31, and had command of troops by November 24. He quickly became an integral asset of the rebelling Americans and a trusted confidant of General George Washington. At just 19 years old, Lafayette was prepared to take arms against the British, a European monarchy not unlike his own, who had killed his father in a Seven Years' War battle. Lafayette and several other foreign officers helped transform the Revolution into a transnational conflict even before France intervened on America's behalf. But before the French became integral players, the struggle included another transnational group— America's indigenous populations.

Amidst their political disagreements, the British and the Americans agreed that their conflict was between white people and that Native Americans had no place in it. In 1775 the Second Continental Congress created a committee to draft a statement to the Six Nations about the ensuing conflict:

Brothers and Friends!

This is a family quarrel between us and Old England. You Indians are not concerned in it. We don't wish you to take up the hatchet against the king's troops. We desire you to remain at home, and not join on either side, but keep the hatchet buried deep. In the name and in behalf of all our people, we ask and desire you to love peace and maintain it, and to love and sympathise with us in our troubles; that the path may be kept open with all our peoples and yours, to pass and repass, without molestation.¹⁰

¹⁰ "Journals of the Continental Congress - Speech to the Six Nations; July 13, 1775." The Avalon Project - Laws of War: Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague IV); October 18, 1907. Accessed November/December 2018. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/contcong_07-13-75.asp.

The council asked the Indians to respect the war as one between a parent, Great Britain, and their child, the American colonies. The Congress did not ask for their assistance or to take arms against the British, but encouraged caution should the British ask for their allegiance. The Americans and the British were of the same blood, so if the British brutalized and seized American property, the Indians should consider how the British would treat them. The message was addressed specifically to the Six Nations, which included the Mohawks, Oneidas, Tuscaroras, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senekas (sic). The Congress planned that “a similar talk be prepared for other Indian nations, preserving the tenor of the above.”¹¹ The British Superintendent of Indian Affairs, John Stuart, similarly addressed the Creek and Cherokee tribes: “Nothing is meant by it against you or any other nation of Red People but to decide a Dispute amongst the white People themselves.”¹²

The Americans and the British had clearly considered Native Americans and already decided what their role in the Revolution would be— to remain neutral and peaceful. These messages did not prevent Indian involvement, however. By 1777 many tribes were involved in the conflict. Though allies of either the Patriots or Redcoats, they did not fight on behalf of either, but for their own sovereign interests. The Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes paroled the Mississippi River to prevent Spaniards in New Orleans from supplying Americans. The Seneca tried to remain neutral but ultimately found it unachievable and pledged loyalty to the British. Five Nations of the Iroquois tribe worked

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Ethan A. Schmidt, *Native Americans in the American Revolution: How the War Divided, Devastated, and Transformed the Early American Indian World* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2014), accessed November/December 2018, 88.

with the British because they recognized that American independence would mean westward expansion onto tribal lands, while the British promised to protect their claims.¹³

As Indian involvement increased, the Patriots continued neutrality or peace efforts with the tribes. Lafayette, new to the continent and war, nevertheless proved to be an effective mediator between the Americans and the Six Nations. He personified France and many natives fondly remembered the French from their alliance in the French and Indian War. Along with securing the Franco-American alliance, the young Frenchman was also instrumental in the new nation's Indian affairs.

...

In 1778, Lafayette recruited nearly fifty Oneida warriors for the Continental Army. On May 15 the Oneida men marched into the Continental Army's camp at Valley Forge, a welcomed sight to General George Washington.¹⁴ Throughout the American Revolution over 300 Oneidas served in the Continental Army, and were instrumental allies to the Patriots. Washington assigned the warriors to Lafayette's regiment; whose purpose was to track the British soldiers' location compared to the American camp. To embarrass the Americans and the French, the British intended to capture Lafayette and possibly use his captivity as leverage in the war. They nearly succeeded one night at Lafayette's Barren Hill encampment. Stopping for the night, he was unaware of nearby British soldiers who learned of the Frenchman's location and surrounded the regiment. However, Oneida war-cries, hidden in the nearby forest, startled the Redcoats and they

¹³ Joseph Brant, Cpt., "Speech By Joseph Brant Concerning Indian Lands at Grand River," Papers of the War Department, accessed November/December 2018, <http://wardepartmentpapers.org/docimage.php?id=19236&docColID=20931>.

¹⁴ Unger, *Lafayette*, 74.

retreated.¹⁵ Had it not been for the Oneida, the British likely would successfully captured Lafayette. Native Americans prevented the Frenchman's capture and American embarrassment, a debt Lafayette would not soon forget.

In 1784, the Continental Congress appointed General Philip Schuyler to negotiate peace with the Six Nations' tribes in upper New York. The tribes anticipated American westward expansion, through tribal lands, with their new independence. The British shared these frustrations, which appealed to many of the tribes. Among the Senecas, Cayuugas, Oneidas, Onondagas, Mohawks, and Tuscaroras four of the tribes proposed war as a preventative solution, while two favored trade. Five eventually became British allies. Thus, the American congress desired a treaty with the Six Nations as to avoid conflict so soon after the Revolution. Hoping that Lafayette's French presence would benefit the Patriot cause, Schuyler asked Lafayette to attend the negotiations.

Another Frenchman, Francois Barbé-Marbois, also journeyed to Johnson's Town, New York, with the American delegation. He observed that though they had not been allies for nearly twenty years, many tribal leaders still regarded the French highly. Contrary to the British and Americans who liberally offered liquor to Indians, the French had refused their native allies this vice and the chiefs retrospectively appreciated that. For this reason, they considered the French their 'true fathers.'¹⁶ Schuyler hoped that Lafayette's presence would persuade tribes to sympathize with the Americans and remain neutral. Upon the delegation's arrival to the Mohawk River, the Six Nations welcomed them as visitors rather than enemies. Lafayette's presence excited the tribes.

¹⁵ Unger, *Lafayette*, 74-76.

¹⁶ Harlow G Unger, *Lafayette* (New York; Chichester: Wiley, 2003), 196-98.

Five-hundred men, women, and children danced alongside an abundance of milk, butter, fruit, honey, and fresh salmon. The Oneida Castle flew a white flag.¹⁷ The Indian rituals and dress somewhat startled Barbé-Marbois, who seemed uneasy in native presence. On the contrary, Lafayette was excited to be among the tribes and he gave them small gifts of French gold coins, rum, or trinkets between conversation. Aside from their physical appearances, Lafayette observed that the native men “intelligently” discussed politics and their sober intentions included “a balance of power.”¹⁸ Barbé-Marbois noted in his diary that Lafayette “has their confidence and their devotion to an extraordinary degree... They have communicated their enthusiasms to their friends, and they seem proud to wear around their necks some trinket that he...gave them.”¹⁹ Whereas his American counterparts believed Native Americans to be racially and culturally inferior, Lafayette perceived Native Americans through the ‘noble savage’ lens of Rousseau: America’s indigenous people were inherently good-natured because of white civilization’s absence. The ‘noble savage’ perception is further evident during Lafayette’s final tour when white civilization’s vices and impact on native peoples disgruntles both he and his secretary. Furthermore, it explains Lafayette’s lifelong paternal attitude towards Native Americans.

In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, James Madison explained that the tribes “retain a strong predilection for the French and...an enthusiastic idea of the marquis.”²⁰ The Iroquois held Lafayette fondly because of “his being a Frenchman, the figure he has

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Unger, *Lafayette*, 197–98.

²⁰ James Madison, "Founders Online: To Thomas Jefferson from James Madison, 17 October 1784," National Archives and Records Administration, accessed November/December 2018, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-07-02-0345>.

made during the war and the arrival of several important events which he foretold to them soon after he came to this country.”²¹ He further emphasized Lafayette’s instrumental role in the conference’s purpose—the Treaty of Fort Stanwix—because of “the attachment of the Indians to his person, which seemed indeed to be verified by their caresses and the artifices employed by the British partizans to frustrate the objects of the treaty.”²²

When Oliver Wolcott, a commissioner from Connecticut, introduced Lafayette at the powwow, it was as ‘Kayewla.’²³ The Six Nations gave the Frenchman a tribal name, that of a great warrior, during his first visit with them in 1777. Lafayette thanked “the great spirit” for bringing him back to his Native children who gathered around a “fire to smoke the pipe of peace and friendship together.” He scolded the tribes that had been British allies but also assured the Six Nations that the American cause was a just one and trade would only benefit them. Oscksicanechiou, a Mohawk chief, responded:

My father, we have heard your words and rejoice that you have visited your children to give them your wise advice... You have done us much good... we sense that your words are those of truth... they will strengthen the chain of friendship that we hope will live forever.

The Six Nations likely accepted their situation: the Americans won independence and the British would no longer protect tribal interests. Perhaps, like the Americans, the Natives decided to avoid further conflict with the recent victor in favor of peace. Negotiating, rather than war, would preserve their sovereignty and lands longer than if they potentially lost battles to the Americans.²⁴

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Unger, *Lafayette*, 68.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Oksicanechiou also had a peace necklace, which a French general had given him in the French and Indian War as a sign of the alliance. He placed it around Lafayette's neck as to reinvigorate that friendship. Lafayette wore the necklace for the other chiefs to see, but then placed it back on the Mohawk chief. James Madison recorded that this interaction awed all in attendance, that Lafayette was "the only conspicuous figure there."

Lafayette's prominent presence among the American commissioners and the Six Nations proved Schuyler right and the tribes signed a peace treaty with the Americans. The Treaty of Fort Stanwix (1784) recognized the Six Nations' sovereignty in western New York with a few exceptions and granted American sovereignty over Native territory between Lake Erie and the Ohio River. Aside from the treaty, Lafayette offered to take two French-Oneida boys back to France with him. He promised to educate the Otisquette brothers, as to prepare them to lead the tribe and effectively negotiate with white people. Otisquette's family accepted Lafayette's offer but one of the brothers ran to the forest and threw rocks at those who pursued him. Peter, the other brother, had met Lafayette when he first arrived in America in 1777 and the two were friends. His family accepted Lafayette's offer though the Otisquette's wished to postpone Peter's journey to France for a year. An Onondaga family instead sent their twelve-year-old son, Kayenlaha, with Lafayette.²⁵

During the monthlong ship voyage, he taught Kayenlaha and a white orphan he also brought, the French language and history, as well as Latin. The two boys were his wards, but were immediately accepted into the Lafayette family. Adrienne, Lafayette's wife, was apparently unaware of the children her husband was bringing back but

²⁵ *Ibid.*

nonetheless welcomed them into their home as one of their own. Lafayette and Adrienne were unorthodox aristocratic parents. They openly embraced their children (both biological and ward) and spent much time with them. The children often entertained American and French guests at the family home while their parents proudly watched. Georges and Virginie, their biological children, sang songs in English, while Kayenlaha demonstrated traditional Indian dances. Peter Otisquette did eventually join the Lafayettes in their French residence, as an honored guest, alongside Kayenlaha.

After the British conceded in the American Revolution, they also conceded many promises to their Native allies. Many tribes were convinced that the British would protect and respect their land rights, contrary to the Americans who were eager to remove Natives and occupy their land. Yet Britain defaulted on its promises and the United States expanded into the relinquished territory, neglecting or negotiating Indian claims. It was evident that the newly independent nation desired Indian land and would manipulate tribes into unfair treaties. The British and many Native tribes continued fighting American expansion after the Revolution, which, among other reasons, led to the War of 1812. Tribes that resented the American Revolution's outcome believed the war was an opportunity to compete with the United States for their land.

Northern tribes gathered to discuss the emerging conflict and what their role in it should be. The Wyandott representatives remained wary of intervention, but neutrality was not an option for the Shawnee. Tecumseh, a Shawnee chieftain, explained to those present that this war was a chance for the Indians of North America to fight for their land

and encouraged them to join together and ally with the British against the Americans.²⁶ In this example Native Americans harbored uncertain or negative memories of the American Revolution. For the Wyandott and other tribes, forming another alliance in a white war seemed risky. For the Shawnee, American independence had disrupted native autonomy and they believed British victory in the current war would reinstate tribal land. Ultimately the War of 1812 had no clear victor but Native Americans inarguably lost. The War of 1812 was a transformative moment for Indians in American memory and the nation. No longer an international threat to the United States nor American citizens, many European Americans neglected their presence and role in the nation's history. Additionally, Britain stopped fighting American expansion, and abandoned its native allies. In calling themselves 'Americans,' the United States' white inhabitants further alienated indigenous populations from their historical relevance. Prior to the War of 1812, 'Americans' referred to the continent's native peoples. Not only were native peoples no longer a legitimate enemy to the American state, but white people now considered themselves Americans—the land's natural inhabitants.

...

When President Monroe invited the Marquis de Lafayette to return to the United States, nearly 50 years had passed since the Revolution. During his 1824-1825 visit the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creeks, Iroquois, Oneida, and Seneca peoples welcomed Lafayette's presence as "one who, in his affection for the inhabitants of America, had never made a distinction of blood or colour; that he was the honoured father of all the

²⁶ Peter Dooyentate Clarke, *Origin and Traditional History of the Wyandotts: And Sketches of Other Indian Tribes of North America* (Breinigsville, Pa.?: Nabu, 2011), , accessed November/December 2018, <https://books.google.com/books?id=CGd1AAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>, 96.

racess of men dwelling on the continent.”²⁷ In contrast to the white Americans that threatened native sovereignty and traditional lifestyles, they may have considered Lafayette a mediator between their people and the United States government. In celebrating the Revolution, Lafayette sought out native veterans as he maintained fond memories of their military service and individual interactions. Visiting all 24 states in the Union, he publicly met with many people but often sought out former native allies and gave native peoples a private audience. Just as white Americans did, Indians celebrated Lafayette but they also discussed their tribes’ circumstances with him.

In the following pages, we will meet Native groups and individuals who interacted with Lafayette and his party during his final visit. These people belonged to tribes who, during the American Revolution, were loyal to the colonists, sided with the British, or sought to remain neutral in the conflict. As Lafayette traveled to all 24 states in the Union, the tribes were regionally diverse and some traveled to meet him while others received him. Most interactions took place between Lafayette and native men but there are instances of native women speaking with him. Regionally, politically, and circumstantially diverse native tribes met with Lafayette and discussed their memories and contemporary circumstances. Their voices are necessary to fully understanding the Revolution’s legacy and American society in the 1820s.

The French guests encountered Native Americans for the first time in New Hampshire in September 1824. A group of Indians had traveled to New Hampshire from

²⁷ Auguste Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825: Or, Journal of Travels in the United States* (New York: White, Gallaher & White, 1829), 75.

Canada to trade fur pelts for “toys and liquor.”²⁸ Members of the New Hampshire delegation, who escorted the French party from a banquet to their lodging, noticed that Levasseur was extremely curious about the Indians, so they invited some of them inside. Like Lafayette, Levasseur likely thought of natives through the ‘noble savage’ lens and expected them to be happy, simple people. He was surprised to discover a discontent people who looked much different than he expected.

“I found nothing in them which corresponded with my ideas of these children of nature. Their dresses had no other character than that of misery; crosses and chaplets had taken place of their beautiful head-dresses of plumes, their furs and their arms; their drunken visages had nothing of that noble expression which is said so particularly to distinguish the savage man; at first their manners appeared affectionate, but it was soon evident that they were only servile of interests. They talked of beads and confession, as their fathers, no doubt, did of sorcerers and manitoes.”²⁹

The Frenchmen found that, strikingly accurate to the ‘noble savage’ lens, white civilization had not benefited the Indians. Instead, it had replaced their unique cultural superstitions with that of white religion and introduced detrimental vices.

Near the Alabama-Georgia border, Lafayette’s party visited an American trader. When they arrived at the trader’s well-furnished home two Indians sat outside but arose and saluted Lafayette. The younger Indian’s English impressed the party and they learned that he had attended an American college but he preferred his native life to that of white civilization. Lafayette and the young man then discussed the current state of the Indian nations. Levasseur documented that as they discussed the most recent treaty between the

²⁸ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 74.

²⁹ Marian Klamkin, *The Return of Lafayette, 1824-1825*. (New York: Scribner, 1975), 41, <http://books.google.com/books?id=BneyAAAAIAAJ>.

United States and the Creek people, the man “became somber...stamped on the ground, and, placing his hand upon his knife, he murmured the name of McIntosh in such a manner, as to many us tremble for the safety of that chief.”³⁰ The young Creek explained that McIntosh had “sold the land of his fathers, and sacrificed us all to his avarice.”³¹ He was referring to the Treaty of Indian Springs (1825) in which William McIntosh, a Creek chief, manipulated other Creek leaders into signing Creek land over to the Americans. This upset the tribe because just a year prior, McIntosh and many of the same chiefs present for the treaty met in the Creek National Council and passed legislation to prevent the sale of communal lands. The young Creek embodied the tribe’s betrayal and their anger with McIntosh rather than towards white Americans.

After this interaction Levasseur noted interesting remarks about the white-native dynamic. He believed that white Americans prejudice against natives served as justification to remove or conquer them: natives were ‘barbaric’ and ‘primitive’ while the Americans were “noble and legitimate.”³² Yet Levasseur also commends the Americans for using “gentle violence” against Native Americans.³³ He appreciates that Americans used treaties, rather than war, to impose civilization upon natives rather than the “crimes to be compared with those of Great Britain in India.”³⁴ Despite a ‘fairer’ treatment, the Frenchmen “at the same time, cannot help feeling a strong interest in the fate of the unhappy Indians.”³⁵ Lafayette and the Creek were aware that the tribe would soon be removed from their ancestral lands and white settlers would replace them. The Creek

³⁰ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 73.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 74.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 75.

recognized that they had little power, weak allies, and few options in resisting American expansion. The party continued to travel through Creek land and the natives' inevitable fate saddened the Frenchmen.

In traveling from Georgia to Alabama, the Frenchman had to continue through Creek territory, where they experienced their first formal Indian welcome on the Chattahoochee's banks. Chief Chilly McIntosh, a large group of natives, and the Alabama Committee on Arrangements awaited the nation's guest. This welcome was simple compared to most white welcome celebrations for Lafayette, which were grand events with crowded streets, parades, and cannons.³⁶ It was indicative of an interesting middle ground. Rather than the Georgia escort relinquish Lafayette directly to the Alabama Committee, "the General was turned over by the Georgians to the Indians."³⁷ For Lafayette to cross from one American state into another via native territory, it seems that the state delegations had to relinquish their escort to that of the tribe. The Creek resembled a middleman between the states, yet there was no conflict between Georgia and Alabama to require a third-party escort. Rather the Americans were respecting the distinction between their land and that of natives— even as great of an event as Lafayette's triumphal tour of the United States did not justify Americans violating borders or inspire Native Americans to open their territory to white Americans without conspicuous tribal presence. The Creek also did not act favorably toward one state escort over the other. The Georgians sent Lafayette on a ferryboat across the Chattahoochee River, where the Creek received him "some eight yards where the Alabama delegation

³⁶ Klamkin, *The Return of Lafayette, 1824-1825.*, 139–40.

³⁷ "21 Jan 1900, Page 24 - The Courier-Journal at Newspapers.com," Newspapers.com, accessed April 09, 2019, [https://newspapers.com/image/32691488/?terms=marquis de lafayette indians](https://newspapers.com/image/32691488/?terms=marquis%20de%20lafayette%20indians).

stood.”³⁸ The Creek and Alabama Committee ultimately co-escort Lafayette, but at least during Lafayette’s transition, the Indians remained “at a proper distance from the Alabama delegation” as they received the boat and Lafayette prepared to come ashore.³⁹ Compared to most other welcomes, “the Indians were particularly conspicuous and formed quite a feature of the entertainment, as they seemed to take as much interest in the matter as the whites.”⁴⁰

Creek Women and children joyfully cried when they saw Lafayette approaching the shore, and warriors hastened to the shore to receive the party. Lafayette’s son, Georges, was the first off the ferry and native men, women, and children “danced and leaped around him, touched his hands and clothes with an air of surprise and astonishment.”⁴¹ The Creek warriors then arranged themselves in front of the Frenchmen and mirrored their chief’s salute. The crowd fell silent as Lafayette prepared to come on shore. Warriors took his small carriage and insisted that he sit in it— “not willing...that their father should step on the wet ground.”⁴² The warriors carried Lafayette away from the shore and their chief approached him. In English he exclaimed “that all his brothers were happy in being visited by one who, in his affection for the inhabitants of America, had never made a distinction of blood or colour... the honoured father of all the races of men dwelling on that continent.”⁴³ Individual Indians then approached Lafayette and, as a sign of friendship, placed their right arm on his. They then carried him to their largest village.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 75.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Once in the village Levasseur approached the chief. He learned that the Creek chief was educated in the United States, nearly 28 years old, and that he was McIntosh's eldest son. Levasseur recalled the previous evening's discussion of McIntosh and assumed that young McIntosh's mournful expressions and "air of depression and thoughtfulness"⁴⁴ stemmed from the tribe's disdain for his father. Young McIntosh confided in Levasseur that he understood "the real situation of his nation...he saw it gradually becoming weaker, and foresaw its speedy destruction."⁴⁵ Young McIntosh



Figure 1 Charles Bird King, *McINTOSH: CREEK CHIEF* (1838), from *History of the Indian Tribes of North America* (1872), hand-colored lithograph on paper.

recognized the impact white civilization had upon native peoples but unlike the Creek man the Frenchmen encountered the previous night, he did not blame his father for selling Creek lands to the Americans. Rather he faulted his people for falling into white vices and trying to appease white civilizations. The Treaty of Indian Springs ultimately evicted this Creek tribe from its cultural land but young McIntosh believed that removal, situating them further from white civilization, would allow the Creek to "re-establish the ancient organization of the tribes, or at least preserve them

in the state in which they now were."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 76.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

In the village, many Natives delivered short speeches to Lafayette, including one from ‘the Little Prince.’ The Little Prince acknowledged that his people fought for the British, while Lafayette fought for the Americans. They men had once been enemies, but now the Little Prince believed they were friends and hoped the Americans and his tribe would remain on good terms. He told Lafayette of his tribe’s young warriors, whom he had trained, and that they would be ready to serve the Americans should an occasion arise. It is likely the warriors who had received Lafayette across the river were the men the Little Prince spoke of. His speech concluded with a declaration that the young Native men would ‘ball play,’ which was the most masculine activity they could engage in apart from war. Together, Lafayette and the Alabama delegation watched this Native sport.⁴⁷

Lafayette’s group encountered more Indians throughout the Creek forests. One of these groups used their bodies to build a bridge across a flooded creek for Lafayette to cross. The Indians “holding each other by the hand, and breast deep in the water, marked the situation of the bridge by a double line.”⁴⁸ The party appreciated the assistance and was surprised to learn that in return, the Creek wanted only to shake Lafayette’s hand—“whom they called their white father, the envoy of the Great Spirit, the great warrior from France, who came in former days to free them from the tyranny of the English.”⁴⁹ While embracing him, they recalled Lafayette’s service in the American Revolution, specifically his role in securing their freedom from the English.

Creek warriors escorted Lafayette and the Alabama delegation towards the Frenchman’s next destination. Together they approached a hill lined with American

⁴⁷ "21 Jan 1900, Page 24 - The Courier-Journal at Newspapers.com," Newspapers.com, , accessed April 09, 2019, [https://newspapers.com/image/32691488/?terms=marquis de lafayette indians](https://newspapers.com/image/32691488/?terms=marquis+de+lafayette+indians).

⁴⁸ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 79.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

troops. Levasseur noted that “the Indians saw with some jealousy” that the American soldiers assumed protection of Lafayette.⁵⁰ That the Creek were jealous reinforces that they understood their status in the United States as separate and distinct from white people. The tribe clearly did not view the exchange as an interaction between one people or even friendly nations; they still viewed themselves as a separate nation from the Americans, that they were not unified under the American Revolution’s values and promises.

Arriving at Line Creek, “the frontier of Indian country,”⁵¹ the party met with an American who married a Creek chief’s daughter and assimilated into their culture. A neighboring chief approached Lafayette and “he commenced by high eulogiums on the skills and courage the general had formerly displayed against the English.” He recalled the American Revolution’s events “in a poetical and somewhat pompous strain.”

Father, we had long since heard that you had returned to visit our forests and our cabins; you, whom the Great Spirit formerly sent over the great lake to destroy those enemies of man, the English, clothed in bloody raiment. Even the youngest amongst us will say to their descendants, that they have touched your hand and seen your figure, they will also behold of you, for you are protected by the Great Spirit from the ravages of age—you may again defend us if we are attacked.⁵²

Lafayette responded to the chief through an interpreter. He told him to be temperate, to live in harmony with the Americans, and always consider them friends and brothers.

The party stayed overnight in Line Creek. Levasseur notes that most of the town’s population were white people after individual wealth. They moved onto Creek land in search of profit and neglected native autonomy and culture. The Frenchman found evidence that white people were “the most cruel and dangerous enemies of the Indian

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 80.

⁵² *Ibid.*

nations”⁵³ and finds it ironic that they deemed natives the savages. The white settlers used liquors to corrupt the tribes “without scruple” and then “ruin them by duplicity and overreaching.”⁵⁴ Lafayette and Levasseur concluded that the downfalls of Native society came from white civilization and that white people were often far crueler and savage than they claimed natives to be. Lafayette recalled that George Washington had once said “whenever I have been called upon to decide between an Indian and a white man, I have always found that they white had been the aggressor.”⁵⁵ He agreed. However, Levasseur viewed the American government differently than white settlers. Contrary to white individuals, he commended the American government for their paternal protection against neighboring states and providing money and supplies to tribe during poor harvests or other unpredicted crises.⁵⁶ The Frenchmen eventually parted ways, reluctantly, with Chilly McIntosh, who Georges and Levasseur had come to admire.⁵⁷

While In New York, Lafayette’s party met with chiefs of the Oneida tribe who had come “from several miles around to pay their respects to him.”⁵⁸ Taniatakaya, Sangouxyonta, and Doxtator had a private audience with Lafayette where they recalled their military service under him during the Revolution. Though they had aged, Lafayette recognized them and was surprised to see them still alive. They told the general of their tribe’s situation: “The case is no longer productive...it does not supply our wants, and we are obliged to provide for our subsistence by agriculture, which renders us very

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 81.

⁵⁵ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 83.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Klamkin, *The Return of Lafayette, 1824-1825.*, 142.

⁵⁸ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 195.

unhappy.”⁵⁹ Like many of the Creek, however, the Oneida chiefs did not blame white civilization:

But it is not owing to our white brothers of the state of New York; they act generously towards us; they permit us to live in peace near the bones of our fathers, which they have not obliged us to transport to a strange land; and the government often succours us when our harvests fail; hence we sincerely love our white brothers, the Americans. We formerly fought for them against the English, and we are still ready to raise the Tomahawk in their favour, whenever occasion requires it.⁶⁰

Lafayette assured the chiefs he had not forgotten their valuable contributions to the Revolution and encouraged them to always consider the Americans as “good brothers.”⁶¹ Lafayette understood the many paradoxes American democracy faced, one of them its unequal treatment of native peoples, but he was nevertheless optimistic about the country’s intentions. He simultaneously recognized the Oneida’s hardships while promoting a positive Revolutionary legacy.

Oneida Indians received a private audience with Lafayette again, a privilege no other group he met with on that day received. He recognized two of the Natives, who had traveled from the countryside, as Blatcop Tonyentagoyon and Henry Cornelius. They recognized him as ‘Kayewla,’ or ‘Great Warrior.’ In the Revolution they had served under Lafayette’s command at Barren Hill, but also served at Valley Forge and the Battle of Oriskany. Lafayette, Blatcop, and Henry recalled the Revolutionary days fondly. Blatcop and Henry were also nostalgic for the plentiful times of the Revolution. They told Lafayette how much of their territory they had lost since its conclusion, that many Oneidas were moving to the Wisconsin territory because they could not sufficiently hunt

⁵⁹ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 188.

⁶⁰ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 196.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

on their remaining land. Lafayette detected a sadness in the Oneida men before him, that they longed “for the old days before their world had begun to disintegrate in the midst of the American Revolution.”⁶² Lafayette eventually departed for the next stop of his tour but the Oneidas “took consolation that Kayewla had remembered their wartime services and met with them, even if their European American neighbors had no memory of their many contributions to the Revolution and cause of liberty.”⁶³

In this interaction, the Oneida were nostalgic for the American Revolution. Their memory of the Revolution included their service to the Americans and Lafayette, but also that they were undisturbed and uncorrupted. The Oneida demonstrated unwavering loyalty to the Americans during the Revolutionary War, and continued to do so during Lafayette’s visit but they recognized the effects American independence had on their tribe. Though they served alongside Americans, their “European American neighbors” neglected this memory, corrupted their culture, and removed them from their territory. The Revolution’s dominant narrative, focused on white contributions and successes, neglected the Oneida’s role and therefore excluded them from its promises.

Lafayette also met Seneca chief Red Jacket while in New York. Men and women of Buffalo celebrated the General and had the honor of shaking his hand, but “this ceremony was diversified by an entertaining introduction of the noted Seneca Chief Red

⁶² Joseph T. Glatthaar and James Kirby Martin, *Forgotten Allies the Oneida Indians and the American Revolution* (New York (N.Y.): Hill & Wang, 2007), accessed November/December 2018, 315, <https://books.google.com/books?id=8XfCLqyuRlC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

⁶³ *Ibid.*



Figure 2 Charles Bird King, *RED JACKET: A SENECA WAR CHIEF* (1835), from *History of the Indian Tribes of North America* (1872), hand-colored lithograph on paper.

Jacket.” A contemporary newspaper identified the native presence at the celebration for Lafayette as “an interesting incident.” A Missouri Intelligencer article, published shortly after, described how both men recognized each other despite their aging and time apart. Lafayette and Red Jacket had been present at the 1784 Indian Treaty at Fort Schuyler, which was now the city of Rome in Oneida county. Lafayette asked Red Jacket “what had become of the young Seneca, who on that occasion so eloquently opposed to burial of the tomahawk.” In his native tongue, Red Jacket exclaimed to the Frenchman that “he has the honor to stand before you!”⁶⁴

Also, in New York, Dr. Job Smith, a Seneca chief, physician, and Revolutionary veteran presented Lafayette with a copy of a constitution he intended to propose for his tribe. It is not clear what became of this interaction or if Lafayette read the constitution, but we do know that Dr. Smith wanted Lafayette’s approval of the constitution before he presented it to the Seneca people. This is indicative of the Seneca nation’s desire to remain independent from the United States, despite their Revolutionary involvement.⁶⁵

While visiting Revolutionary veterans and Indian villages in Kaskaskia, Illinois, a young native woman, Mary, asked to meet with Lafayette. Another visiting Frenchman,

⁶⁴ “5 Aug 1825, 1 - Missouri Intelligencer at Newspapers.com,” Newspapers.com, accessed April 09, 2019, [https://newspapers.com/image/249523521/?terms=Marquis de Lafayette indians.](https://newspapers.com/image/249523521/?terms=Marquis%20de%20Lafayette%20indians.;); “29 Jun 1825, Page 4 - Gettysburg Compiler at Newspapers.com,” Newspapers.com, , accessed April 09, 2019, [https://newspapers.com/image/73842206/?terms=Marquis de Lafayette indians.](https://newspapers.com/image/73842206/?terms=Marquis%20de%20Lafayette%20indians.)

⁶⁵ “Digital Facsimiles,” The Arthur H. and Mary Marden Dean Lafayette Collection, , accessed April 09, 2019, http://rnc.library.cornell.edu/lafayette/collection/exhibit/iampol_jobsmith1.htm.

Mr. de Syon, met her and a group of Indians while exploring the nearby forest. De Syon explained to Levasseur that Mary was eager to speak with Lafayette if he was actually at Kaskaskia. Mary claimed that she always carried a very dear relique (sic) and wanted to show it Lafayette because “it will prove to him that his name is not less venerated in the midst of our tribes, than among the white Americans, for whom he fought.”⁶⁶ Mary also showed de Syon a letter from Lafayette to her father, which he considered “the most precious thing he possessed” upon his death.⁶⁷ Her father was Panisciowa, a chief of one of the Six Nations. Lafayette thanked him for his Revolutionary service in the letter. De Syon assured Mary that Lafayette “would be very much pleased to see her.”⁶⁸ Levasseur and de Syon joined Lafayette for dinner shortly after this interaction and were excited to tell the general of Mary, who revered him as “the courageous warrior and the friend of our nations.”⁶⁹ After dinner, Lafayette hastened to the local home where Mary awaited him.

He saw and heard Mary with pleasure, and could not conceal his emotion on recognizing his letter, and observing with what holy veneration it had been preserved during nearly half a century in a savage nation, among whom he had not even supposed his name had ever penetrated.⁷⁰

Lafayette was excited that his memory remained prominent among Mary’s people and took their discussion as “evidences of the fidelity and courageous conduct of some Indian nations towards the Americans, during the revolutionary war.”⁷¹

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⁶⁶ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 136.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 137.

⁶⁹ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 141.

⁷⁰ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 147.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

The Creek, Seneca, Oneida, and Six Nations, among other tribes, welcomed Lafayette back to America in the 1820s. White Americans celebrated Lafayette as emblematic of their Revolution's success and were eager to impress him. Native Americans, however, included grievances in their celebration or sought his approval for their sovereignty. The American Revolution did not result in equality, liberty, or even citizenship for native peoples. Corrupt treaties and manipulated deals saddened tribes and turned them against their own leaders—the Creek even executed the elder McIntosh and his accomplices.

When they spoke of their circumstances to Lafayette and his party, they did not blame white Americans. Rather they faulted tribal leaders and their society for falling victim to white vices that Americans introduced as they expanded westward after the Revolution. While they overwhelmingly recalled the Revolution as a positive event, Indians also associated it with a transformation in their culture and sovereignty. They recognized that the American state provided some financial assistance and protection, but also that the American Revolution resulted in westward expansion that claimed their land and introduced white vices, like greed and alcohol. Lafayette and his accompanying party observed the natives' sadness and discontent with their circumstances. That natives and Lafayette's group demonized white settlers, but not the American government, is interesting and deserves further attention.

Native Americans clearly interpreted the American Revolution's legacy differently, even amongst themselves, and used Lafayette's presence to continue fighting for a place in the country's past and future.

CHAPTER 2 – AFRICAN AMERICANS

The first people the Marquis de Lafayette encountered when he arrived in the rebelling American colonies were enslaved African Americans.⁷² The slaves were fishing in small boats and helped bring Lafayette and other French officers to South Carolina's coast. Lafayette was aware of American slavery before he even stepped foot on American soil. His time in the United States even began as a slaveowner. Someone of his status, a major general in the Continental Army and a French aristocrat, required a slave. The Continental Congress/Army adhered to this norm and bought him an enslaved man.⁷³ Slavery did not shock Lafayette, nor did that landowners often owned many slaves. He even proposed that any slaves captured from the British be sold to American planters as a means to obtain more funding for the war, and that the Continental Army should kidnap British slaves and sell them in the French Antilles.⁷⁴ To the young general, slaves were initially just leverage against the British and additional funding for the American war effort.

The Patriots and British initially held similar attitudes about black involvement in the Revolutionary War. Of America's 2.5 million population at the time, nearly half a million were black and enslaved. Enslaved and free black Americans were involved with the Revolution from its beginning. It presented an opportunity for them to resist enslavement and pursue equality in "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." They

⁷² Lilliane Willens, "Lafayette's Emancipation Experiment in French Guiana, 1786-1792," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 242 (1986), 345.

⁷³ Stanley J Idzerda et al., *Lafayette, Hero of Two Worlds: The Art and Pageantry of His Farewell Tour of America, 1824-1825: Essays* (Flushing, N.Y.; Hanover, N.H.: Queens Museum; Distributed by University Press of New England, 1989), 128.

⁷⁴ Louis Reichenthal Gottschalk, *Lafayette Joins the American Army* (Chicago: Univ. Pr., 1974), 69.

signed and sent several petitions to state legislatures asking to receive the Declaration of Independence's promises because they were no different than the white men who already did. All of the petitions were rejected, but enslaved and freemen continued to use the Revolution as a tool for their own American freedom. Aside from legal avenues, military service provided another avenue to achieve freedom. African Americans sought to join the Continental Army's ranks, not on behalf of the patriot cause, but for their own interests. Northerners and Southerners both worried that arming slaves in rebellion against Britain would inspire rebellion against their masters and the institution. Their anxiety manifested into a military and congressional rejection of black soldiers and "negroes altogether." In 1775, General Washington and the war council decided to reject enslaved and freedmen as soldiers, which influenced the Continental Congress to do the same.⁷⁵

Revolutionary efforts soon demanded black troops and efforts, however. Both the Americans and the British faced diminishing troops, and recognized the importance of black support. Within months of each other, the opposing sides identified that those who won black support would win the war itself. In June 1775, General Thomas Gage of the Continental Army proposed creating a regiment of freed slaves as the patriots needed "every resource, even to raise the Negroes, in our cause."⁷⁶ Lord Dunmore issued his infamous proclamation, which promised freedom to slaves who joined the Redcoats, five months later. African American interest in the Revolutionary cause remained independent from that of white patriots, and is best understood as loyalty to the principle of freedom

⁷⁵ "Founders Online: Council of War, 8 October 1775," National Archives and Records Administration, , accessed April 09, 2019, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-02-02-0115>.

⁷⁶ Sidney Kaplan, *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution, 1770-1800*. (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1973), 16–17.

rather than the Patriots or Redcoats: the black man would join the side that offered him the quickest and best route to Jefferson's 'unalienable rights.'⁷⁷ Both sides eventually welcomed black troops, but also black guides, scouts, spies, guards, couriers, and cooks.⁷⁸ An estimated 5,000 African Americans served in the American Revolution, but their contributions are mostly lost to white historical records. Some individual men resonated in history because of their association with famous generals. Such is the case of James Armistead and Lafayette.⁷⁹

During Lafayette's second leg of Revolutionary service, an enslaved man from



Figure 3 Noël Le Mire and Jean-Baptiste Le Paon, *CONCLUSION DE LA CAMPAGNE DE 1781 EN VIRGINIE* (1780).
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2004666565/>

Virginia volunteered to serve under the Frenchman. James Armistead belonged to William Armistead, who granted him permission to join the Revolutionary cause under Lafayette. Lafayette paid Armistead, who became a spy disguised as a runaway slave, to infiltrate British camps. He was extremely successful and gained Benedict Arnold's confidence. In 1781 he joined General Cornwallis' camp where the British officers discussed their strategies and plans in front of him. Armistead sent written reports of the information he overheard to other American spies that eventually

reached Lafayette and Washington. The intelligence the Continental Army gained from Armistead's espionage proved crucial in defeating the British at Yorktown. From August

⁷⁷ Kaplan, 3–4.

⁷⁸ Kaplan, 44.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

to September 1781, under orders from Washington, Lafayette kept the British cornered at Yorktown until French support arrived. On September 17, Washington gave Lafayette full command of the American forces and two days later, Cornwallis surrendered.

Following the military conclusion of the American Revolution, Lafayette once again obtained Congressional permission to return to France in December 1781. While in his native country, he frequently wrote to Washington. The Revolution was over and the United States had successfully gained its independence, and Lafayette seized this calm opportunity to discuss slavery with Washington. He proposed that, together, they buy a plantation with the intent of freeing its slaves, who would become tenants of the land. He asserted that Washington's example in emancipation would influence other Americans and popularize antislavery. "If it be a wild scheme," he wrote, "I had rather be mad that way, than to be thought wise on the other track."⁸⁰ Washington complimented the Frenchman: "The scheme, my dear Marquis, which you propose as a precedent, to encourage the emancipation of the black people of the Country from that state of Bondage in which, they are held, is a striking evidence of the benevolence of your Heart."⁸¹ He was happy to join Lafayette in such a venture, but wished to discuss it in person. This did not hinder Lafayette from attempting the idea on his own. Still determined to experiment with emancipation on a plantation, Lafayette wrote to Henry Knox on June 12, 1785 to tell him "I am about purchasing a fine plantation in a French

⁸⁰ "To George Washington from Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, 5 February 1783," *Founders Online*, National Archives, version of January 18, 2019, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-10575>.

⁸¹ "George Washington to the Marquis de Lafayette, 5 April 1783," *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. 26, 300.

colony, to make the experiment for Enfranchising Our Negro Brethren, god grant it may be propagated!”⁸² Similarly on July 14, 1785, he wrote to John Jay of the experiment.

In 1786, Lafayette bought a plantation in French Guyana for twenty-five thousand French livres. He employed slaves on a wage, imposed the same laws that white people adhered to, and intended to not only prove the capabilities of the black race, but also to free them.⁸³ Though Washington did not partake in the experiment, he continued to laud his friend, complimenting the benevolence of his heart and deeming the Cayenne

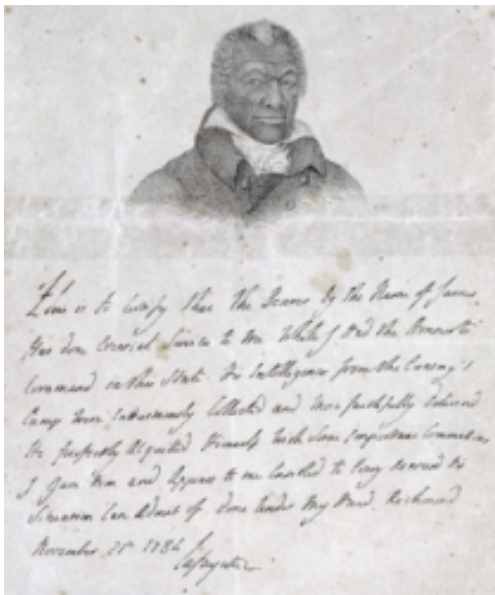


Figure 4 "Engraved portrait of James Armistead Lafayette (c. 1759-1830)". After the painting by John B. Martin, ca. 1824.

experiment “generous and noble proof of your humanity.”⁸⁴ The United States would benefit from more minds like Lafayette, explained Washington in the same letter, but the country was not ready for abolition despite some petitions in Congress.⁸⁵

Lafayette remained in France with his wife and children until June of 1784 when Washington invited him back to the United States, to Mount Vernon, as an honored guest.

The city of Richmond celebrated the men’s reunification with three days of feasting,

⁸² Lafayette to Knox, June 12, 1795.

⁸³ “To George Washington from Lafayette, 6 February 1786,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, version of January 18, 2019, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/04-03-02-0461>. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Confederation Series, vol. 3, 19 May 1785–31 March 1786, ed. W. W. Abbot. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994, pp. 538–547.]

⁸⁴ “From George Washington to Lafayette, 10 May 1786,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, version of January 18, 2019, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/04-04-02-0051>. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Confederation Series, vol. 4, 2 April 1786–31 January 1787, ed. W. W. Abbot. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995, pp. 41–45.]

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

balls, and fireworks. Amidst the celebrations, Lafayette recognized an enslaved man from the Revolution. Upon recognition, the two embraced. Lafayette publicly hugged his former spy, a slave—James Armistead. Soon after, Lafayette presented Armistead with a letter that validated his “essential service” and deemed the information he obtained “...from the enemy’s [sic] camp were industriously collected and most faithfully delivered.”⁸⁶ Lafayette saw Armistead perfectly fit and deserving of freedom. The letter won Armistead his freedom in 1787— and an annual \$40 pension. The newly freed man adopted the last name ‘Lafayette’ in honor of his beloved friend.

Returning to France in 1785, Lafayette was elected as a representative of the nobility to the Estates General where he advocated abolishing the French slave trade. He wrote Alexander Hamilton, another dear friend, about this subject in the United States. While reading a New York Gazette, Lafayette found a section about an American antislavery association. Lafayette asked Hamilton, as a member of it, to nominate him for membership because he had “been partial to my Brethren of that Colour.”⁸⁷ The New York Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves and Protecting Such of Them as Have Been or May Be Liberated was the society Lafayette spoke of and it was founded in the same year as the letter he sent to Hamilton. John Jay was the organization’s first president, and Lafayette expressed his happiness in hearing of Jay’s advocacy for African Americans, promising to write him more about the subject. He reminded Jay that “...their

⁸⁶ "Lafayette's Testimonial to James Armistead Lafayette," George Washington's Mount Vernon, , accessed April 09, 2019, <https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/the-revolutionary-war/spying-and-espionage/american-spies-of-the-revolution/lafayettes-testimonial-to-james-armistead-lafayette/>.

⁸⁷ "To Alexander Hamilton from Marquis de Lafayette, 13 April 1785," *Founders Online*, National Archives, version of January 18, 2019, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-03-02-0424>. [Original source: *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 3, 1782–1786, ed. Harold C. Syrett. New York: Columbia University Press, 1962, pp. 603–604.]

(negroes) cause, is mine.”⁸⁸ John Adams put Lafayette in contact with reputable abolitionist Granville Sharp when the Frenchman asked for antislavery works from America and England. Sharp, via Adams, was interested in Lafayette’s opinion on his antislavery literature and wanted his approval. In addition, Adams sent Lafayette “all the writings which have fallen in my way, against the slave trade.”⁸⁹ In 1788, the French Society of the Friends of Blacks was formed and Lafayette assumed an active role in it.

Adrienne, the Marquise de Lafayette, assumed control of the Cayenne property and during the French Revolution. Because she shared antislavery views similar to Lafayette’s, she cherished the role and continued his correspondence with the estate managers. Upon Lafayette’s imprisonment, however, the government seized the family’s properties and re-enslaved Cayenne’s black tenants. Even then, Lafayette inquired about the slaves he had employed, as he was concerned for their welfare.⁹⁰ The French National Convention emancipated slaves two years later in 1794, which somewhat comforted him.⁹¹

Lafayette shied away from public life when he finally returned to France in 1799. Napoleon, who had assumed power just a year prior, refused to admit him back into France because of his ‘radical’ politics. Likely homesick after years of imprisonment in Austria and intolerant of any further intimidation, Lafayette ignored Napoleon’s decision

⁸⁸ Lafayette to Jay, July 14, 1785.

⁸⁹ "The Marquis De Lafayette to John Adams," The Marquis De Lafayette to John Adams, 9 Jan. 1786, , accessed April 09, 2019, <https://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/FOEA-03-01-02-0458>. ; "John Adams to the Marquis de Lafayette, 31 Jan. 1786," *Founders Online*, National Archives, version of January 18, 2019, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-01-02-0486>.

⁹⁰ Liliane Willens, “Lafayette’s emancipation experiment in French Guiana – 1786-1792,” in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 242 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1986).

⁹¹ "The Cayenne Experiments," The Cayenne Experiments – Lafayette and Slavery, accessed April 09, 2019, <https://sites.lafayette.edu/slavery/the-cayenne-experiments/>.

and returned to France as a gentleman farmer. Though he refrained from politics, he remained invested in the antislavery cause. He resumed correspondence with Americans and British abolitionist and statesmen, and caught up the movement's developments in his native France, adopted America, and England. Yet he could not evade politics for long. By 1814 Lafayette was elected back into the Chamber of Deputies, where he advocated liberal policies for the common people.

The Missouri Crisis of 1819 and 1820 further worried Lafayette about American slavery. His old friend, Thomas Jefferson was already retired from public life in 1820 but also remained invested over slavery's future. Jefferson did not seem worried about the Missouri Crisis, as wrote to Lafayette that "we shall ride over it as we have over all others."⁹² Lafayette held a different opinion. Where the American saw slavery's westward expansion as a question of power, rather than morality, the Frenchman believed it a further hinderance to total abolition. Spreading slavery into new American territories would "increase the happiness of those existing... (and) dilute the evil everywhere, and facilitate the means of getting finally rid of it," per Jefferson, but to Lafayette it was "spreading the prejudices, habits, and calculations of planters over a larger surface" which increased "the difficulties of final liberation."⁹³ Lafayette even claimed that Europeans would respect the United States more without its peculiar institution, that it would be a better example to the world if it eradicated slavery.

⁹² "From Thomas Jefferson to Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, 26 December 1820," *Founders Online*, National Archives, version of January 18, 2019, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-1708>.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, "Jefferson Letters," Jefferson Letters – Lafayette and Slavery, accessed April 09, 2019, <https://sites.lafayette.edu/slavery/a-lifetime-passion/jefferson-letters/>.

Lafayette remained unconvinced of Jefferson's expansion justification in 1822. While the United States' mere existence and continuous progress delighted Lafayette, slavery created "a great drawback" for him.⁹⁴ As one of his three hobby horses, Lafayette desired slavery's complete eradication. He recognized the near impossibility of his cause, however, so "progressive and earnest measures...to attain...so necessary an object" in his lifetime would satisfy him.⁹⁵

Thus, the Revolution impacted Lafayette as much as he impacted it. Initially indifferent to slavery, he quickly became a fierce, lifelong antislavery advocate. As a major general in the Continental Army, Lafayette worked alongside an undercover slave and African American soldiers. Yet, his service in the American Revolution did not solely inspire his antislavery views.⁹⁶ It was also his return to France in the late 1780s where French radicals discussed gradually ending slavery that inspired him to reconsider the cause of America. When he incorporated the institution of slavery with the ideals which the United States had fought for and been founded on, Lafayette determined that the two were incompatible. French anti-slavery writings motivated and inspired Lafayette to oppose slavery, and he saw an opportunity in the new United States to end the institution.⁹⁷ While most 18th century anti-slavery advocates opposed slavery on an economic basis, because it was inferior to wage labor, Lafayette immediately opposed slavery on moral grounds. As a friend of the Founders, he frequently discussed the issue

⁹⁴ "Jefferson Letters," Jefferson Letters – Lafayette and Slavery, accessed April 09, 2019, <https://sites.lafayette.edu/slavery/a-lifetime-passion/jefferson-letters/>.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Willens argues that some of Lafayette's antislavery views developed because of his work with black soldiers in the American Revolution.

⁹⁷ "Lafayette and the Guyana Experiment in French Guiana, 1786-1792"

of slavery and its place in the United States' future. As an influential figure he dedicated himself to abolitionist causes/societies on both sides of the Atlantic.

When he returned to the United States for the final time in 1824-1825, slavery remained a pressing issue for Lafayette. African Americans were not permitted to attend many of the public celebrations, but this did not prevent their interactions. Several African Americans found an audience with the Frenchman, while he also sought them out. Similar to white Americans welcoming him back, African Americans celebrated Lafayette's return and projected the promise of liberty onto his celebrity.

...

It was evident during the 1824-1825 visit that Americans revered Lafayette as a Founder concerned with reform issues in the new nation. Whereas they celebrated Washington and Jefferson primarily for founding the nation, Lafayette gained notoriety for his views on social issues, like slavery. Many of the Founders were slaveowners and made few strides in ending the institution despite some personal disdain for it. Lafayette, on the contrary, was well-known as an antislavery advocate, a "friend of the negroes." Biographies published before his tour described him as a gradual emancipationist during the French Revolution.⁹⁸ Despite his well-known views, if Lafayette made any public support of emancipation during the tour, it was indirect and discreet.⁹⁹ Though he did not advertise his dedication to the antislavery cause, Americans, both white and black, were well aware of Lafayette's views. White antislavery reformers, especially, took interest in his influence.

⁹⁸ Anne C Loveland, *Emblem of Liberty the Image of Lafayette in the American Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 66, <http://books.google.com/books?id=jZ92AAAAMAAJ>.

⁹⁹ Loveland, 72.

John Paxton, a white abolitionist, documented that Lafayette's visit was directly important to the emancipation cause. He observed that slaves understood their bondage contradicted the nation's values, that "the general facts of the American revolution are known to the coloured population."¹⁰⁰ Lafayette was inherently "connected with freedom and equality" and his presence revived the revolutionary values during the 1820s.¹⁰¹ As an embodiment of the country's dedication to these values, Paxton believed slaves would inevitably notice their lived contradiction. If Lafayette's presence caused white Americans to recall their struggle for freedom and celebrate its benefits, enslaved Americans, too, were bound to desire the same outcome with Lafayette's assistance.¹⁰²

For enslaved Americans and white abolitionists, Lafayette's final tour of the United States further clarified the country's hypocrisy. Lafayette was from the generation of Americans that achieved freedom and independence, which the new generation celebrated while still maintaining slavery. Black Americans noticed this paradox. In a poem published in Boston's Federalist newspaper, *Columbian Centinel* in October 1824, an anonymous enslaved author probed Lafayette's role in the country.

As the Whites gained the Freedom for which they contended,
Could you have suppos'd, when the war had thus ended,
That they would bind over the African race,
To thralldom unceasing, and endless disgrace,
-- Inflicting more evils, as thousands to one,
Than the Rulers of Britain on them had e'er done,
-- Ah, hold us a cattle for barter and sale,
And leave us as hopeless our state to bewail?
Did you, Sir, imagine such Pleasers for right,
Would quickly prove Tyrants and substitute might,
-- And kill the poor Negroes who see, tho' in vain,
To shake off their fetters, their Freedom to gain?"
While they report that 'ten millions' of men,

¹⁰⁰ Loveland, 68.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Unite in proclaiming your praises again,
 One million and a half of this very number,
 Are treated as Slaves.
 What, Sir, can you fancy our feelings to be,
 When White men proclaim— ‘It is good to be free,
 -- that violence and slaughter in Liberty’s cause,
 Are sanctioned by Heaven with loudest applause,
 -- That men who thus hazard their lives and their name,
 Shall shine as Immortals in Temples of fame?’
 How plainly they tell us the course to pursue,
 In all the applauses they lavish on you!
 The plaudits and speeches pronounced by their breath,
 Inculcate the doctrine of ‘Freedom or Death.’
 We have their example in word and in deed,
 To rouse us to action tho’ thousands may bleed—
 Tho’ innocent victims by myriads may fall,
 To settle the question by powder and ball!
 Approving in age what you did in your youth,
 In fighting for Freedom, for Glory, and Truth,
 You can’t be contented to see us enslav’d,
 By freemen who laud you for valor that saved?
 We therefore solicit assistance from you,
 As one to whom deference is own’d to be due;
 If millions to you have surrendered the heart,
 Direct them, O’General; to act the good part,
 To take off our fetters with wisdom and grace,
 To treat us as brothers—tho’ sable our race.¹⁰³

The author(s) called upon Lafayette to fight for their freedom as he had done for white people in the Revolution; to use his influence and celebrity to sway white Americans in favor of emancipation.

While in New York, Lafayette and his accompanying party visited the Abolition Society’s Free School for Young Africans. The group visited many public schools throughout their time in the United States but Levasseur documented that this visit “inspired the most lively interest.”¹⁰⁴ Once inside the school, Lafayette learned that the

¹⁰³ Loveland, 69-70.

¹⁰⁴ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 91.

Abolition Society unanimously admitted him as a member. The announcement moved Lafayette and excited him with “considerable feeling.”¹⁰⁵ A young, African American student then approached the Frenchmen and presented a speech he prepared for the visit.

Here, Sir, you behold hundreds of the poor children of Africa sharing those of a lighter hue, in the blessings of education, and while, it will be our pleasure to remember the great deeds you have done for America, it will be our delight also to cherish the memory of General La Fayette as a friend to African emancipation, and as a member of this institution.

The speech indicates that the black students were aware of their racial inferiority, yet they were simultaneously eager to prove that they equally remembered Lafayette’s services to the United States. Just as white children learned of Lafayette in the American Revolution, so too did the children at the Free School. They clearly understood that their race remained in bondage and under oppression in the United States, that their equality—like that of the white children—was not earned in the Revolution. The boy speaking was 11-year old James McCune Smith, who eventually became a famous abolitionist and the first African American to earn a medical degree. McCune Smith specifically acknowledged Lafayette’s opposition to slavery and perhaps this is why his memory was so strong with the black children. Here was the American Revolution embodied, standing amongst a school of black children. Lafayette no longer represented just an American Revolution against the British, but now also one of abolition and racial progress. The black students did not separate Lafayette’s service in the Revolution from his antislavery views, rather this new generation of black Americans combined them into one memory, thus molding the Revolution into a tool of equality.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Levasseur noted New York's black population, though "not very numerous," expressed their excitement and celebrated Lafayette alongside the white people. According to the French account there were less than 30 slaves left in the state, which inspired the Frenchman that by "1827 liberty will no longer have to blush in the presence of coloured men!"¹⁰⁶

In May 1825 while traveling through Lexington, Kentucky Lafayette noticed a young, enslaved boy among the parade route's spectators and bowed to him. The boy, Lewis Hayden, recalled later in his life that Lafayette's gesture inspired his life work.

You can imagine how I felt, a slave boy to be favored with his recognition...I date my hatred of slavery from that day, and I tell you that after I allowed no moving thing on the face of the earth to stand between me and my freedom.¹⁰⁷

Hayden likely knew of Lafayette's Revolutionary importance because he attended the parade where people and material items distinctly identified so. Yet it is unclear if he also knew of the Frenchman's antislavery views and if that is why Lafayette's bow was so significant. Hayden either understood Lafayette as merely representative of the nation's Revolutionary values, which he desired to include his race, or he understood Lafayette as an antislavery founding figure. Either way, Hayden conflated the Revolution with antislavery in Lafayette.

Lafayette's presence reminded the young slave of the nation's independence and declaration that "all men are created equal." He was, perhaps unknowingly, instilling Revolutionary values in the new generation of Americans as President Monroe hoped.

¹⁰⁶ Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, 121.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis Hayden and the Underground Railroad, accessed April 9, 2019, <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/mus/pdfs/Lewis-Hayden.pdf>.

Lafayette did not inspire Hayden to seek only his freedom, but also emancipation for all enslaved Americans. Hayden became a fierce abolitionist and dedicated his entire life to leading slaves through the Underground Railroad to freedom.

“Capac,” an author’s pseudonym, wrote to Lafayette in 1826 and asked that he fulfill the Revolution. Lafayette helped achieve freedom for white Americans in the Revolutionary War, and was now responsible for extending it to African Americans. Similar to how Lafayette proposed that Washington’s support of a gradual emancipation project would make the idea popular with Americans, “Capac” believed that people would follow Lafayette’s example if he publicly partook in an abolition project. Lafayette’s fond place in American history was such that the government and people could not resist joining his efforts. He achieved much as a young general for the Americans, and in his old age had even greater power to persuade the country.¹⁰⁸ Martha Miller expressed a similar understanding of Lafayette in a letter to her cousin. The United States expressed such gratitude to Lafayette for his role in the Revolution that the nation would be ashamed to deny any of his wishes, even abolition.¹⁰⁹

The American paradox was obvious to many people, from reformers to Founders. That Americans celebrated Lafayette as the embodiment of equality and liberty while they owned slaves particularly bothered Frances “Fanny” Wright. Wright accompanied Lafayette on his final American tour and observed the irony firsthand. A British radical, Wright befriended Lafayette because of his liberal views and soon became like a daughter to him. She, like Lafayette, admired the United States and was eager to visit such a liberal utopia compared to her native Britain. While touring the Southern states,

¹⁰⁸ Loveland, *Emblem of Liberty the Image of Lafayette in the American Mind*, 71.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

Wright grew increasingly discontent from observing white Americans revere her friend for values they refused to extend to black Americans. She was determined to understand slavery as an institution and find a solution to it. Thus, she left Lafayette's tour and dedicated her time in the United States to studying its peculiar institution. She developed a plan for gradual emancipation and sought Lafayette's approval. He used his friendships with prominent Americans in attempt to garner public and financial support for the project. Ultimately, Wright spent much of her money on the project and received little financial support from Americans. Though Lafayette's influence among prominent Americans did not manifest into actual support, it is still significant that he still maintained a social circle in the United States to promote the idea in. In 1825, Wright and her sister executed the antislavery effort in Nashoba, Tennessee but it failed just three years later.¹¹⁰

In the middle of the farewell tour, Lafayette dedicated over a month of his time to his Virginian friends, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. During his six-week stay at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, the two men frequently strolled the plantation's grounds. Israel Jefferson, a slave and Jefferson's son with an enslaved woman, Sally Hemings, often accompanied Lafayette and Jefferson and recalled one of their conversations later in his life. Israel identified that Lafayette's 1824-1825 visit was "of personal interest" to he and other slaves.¹¹¹ Jefferson, Lafayette, and Lafayette's son, Georges, discussed "the condition of the colored people—the slaves." While Lafayette's broken English often made it hard to understand him, Israel paid close attention to this specific conversation.

¹¹⁰ Gail Bederman, "Revisiting Nashoba: Slavery, Utopia, and Frances Wright in America, 1818-1826," *American Literary History*, July 29, 2005, accessed April 09, 2019, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/185372>.

¹¹¹ Israel Jefferson, *Pike County Republican*, 25 Dec. 1873.

He heard the Frenchman explain to Jefferson “that he thought that the slaves out (sic) to be free; that no man could rightfully hold ownership in his brother man,” and that slaves should be educated. Lafayette further explained that “gave his best services to and spent his money behalf of the Americans freely because he felt they were fighting for a noble principle—the freedom of mankind.” Yet that “instead of all being free a portion were held in bondage” saddened the veteran. Jefferson agreed that slaves should be freed, but “seemed to think that the time had not then arrived.” He was in favor of teaching slaves to read, but if they could write then they could forge papers and undermine slavery. This conversation pleased Israel.

While a guest of Monticello and Madison’s Montpelier, neighbors and distinguished guests often joined the friends for dinner. They often discussed slavery in detail— Jefferson, Madison, and neighboring planters assuming the opposite attitudes of the Frenchmen.¹¹² Throughout his time in the American south, Lafayette was very aware of the institution’s contentions. He understood “the disagreeable situation of American slaveholders” and the reasons that prevented them from immediately emancipating their slaves. Yet, he “never missed an opportunity to defend the right *which all men without exception* have to liberty” while with Madison, Jefferson, and their guests. Levasseur, who was as antislavery as his employer, admitted that though Jefferson treated his slaves well, he disapproved of the institution in American democracy and believed that Monticello would achieve more profit if Jefferson used paid labor instead.¹¹³

After touring the University of Virginia with Jefferson and Madison, Virginia’s Committee of Arrangements met Lafayette’s group at the Wilderness Town outside of

¹¹² Klamkin, *The Return of Lafayette, 1824-1825.*, 102.

¹¹³ Klamkin, *The Return of Lafayette, 1824-1825.*, 101.

Fredericksburg, where they were to lead a parade into the town. We do not know if Lafayette was aware of the town's regulations for the public celebration, but the *Virginia Herald* published a notice that read:

“Owners of slaves are respectfully solicited to keep their slaves within their lots. All colored people are warned that they are not to appear on any of the streets through which the procession will pass.”¹¹⁴

Fredericksburg slaveowners likely worried slaves would revolt if they witnessed a public celebration for an abolitionist. Or, that Lafayette's Revolutionary person and emphasis on freedom would inspire slaves to pursue emancipation as part of their due Revolutionary legacy.

Upon returning to Richmond, where he and Washington had last met, Lafayette again found James Armistead in 1824. Despite nearly 40 years apart, Lafayette recognized Armistead along the crowded parade route. He stopped the procession, dismounted from his horse, and again, publicly embraced Armistead.

In New Orleans, Lafayette explicitly connected the African American role in the Revolution's legacy when he met a group of African American men, many who were veterans from the War of 1812. The men expressed their gratitude for Lafayette's service and promised they were prepared to fight again if he called them. Lafayette's response mirrored that which white Americans used to praise him. He recalled that he witnessed “African blood shed with honor in our ranks for the cause of the United States” during the Revolution and thanked them for their valor. Lafayette, an immensely public figure,

¹¹⁴ Klamkin, *The Return of Lafayette, 1824-1825.*, 102.

used this specific celebration and interaction to include African Americans in the Revolution's legacy.¹¹⁵

During March 1825, the Frenchmen visited Savannah, Georgia. Lafayette experienced a grand welcome and several toasts from the Mayor and common men. He also happened upon his enslaved servant from the Revolution. The man, now completely blind, belonged to a Mr. McQueen, who lived near Savannah. He was overjoyed that Lafayette had returned to American shores. Lafayette approached him and the two men and recalled their time together in the Revolution. Lafayette warmly listened to the man's memories and contributed his own recollections to fill gaps which the enslaved man had forgotten in his old age.¹¹⁶

...

Unlike Native Americans, who often met Lafayette on their own territory, cities and white Americans often prevented any interaction between African Americans and Lafayette. Slaves and freedmen, though, facilitated their own interactions with the Frenchman. Lafayette also sought out veterans of color because they comprised a part of his Revolutionary memory. By publicly embracing African Americans or acknowledging their importance to the nation's founding, Lafayette contributed to the Revolution's contested legacy in 1820s America. More importantly, African Americans forced themselves into the nation by finding an audience with Lafayette despite white barriers.

¹¹⁵ Kramer, *Lafayette in Two Worlds*.

¹¹⁶ March 21, 1825 Savannah Georgian.

CONCLUSION

Lafayette's appearance was quite different from his Revolutionary era persona when he returned to the United States in 1824. Those who had last seen him during the Revolution would recall the uniform of an American major general, a sword, and a powdered wig. During his final visit, he wore plain, dark clothes and no wig—nothing to distinguish him as a foreign aristocrat. But, the United States had also changed and aged since Lafayette had last visited in 1784. Many of the men he fought alongside or kept correspondence with had died. Slavery's contested future was increasingly pitting Americans against one another. Americans had gone to war with Britain for a second time in 1812. After controversial involvement in the French Revolution, subsequent Austrian imprisonment, and a revitalized political career under King Louis XVIII, Lafayette was eager to experience what had become of the young nation he helped found. The thirteen colonies he risked his family's reputation and wealth for in 1777 was now twenty-four states that were home to a new generation of Americans tasked with continuing the Revolution's legacy.

As the last surviving general of the Revolutionary War, Lafayette's presence quelled political and sectional tensions for nearly thirteen months. He was a living relic of the Revolution and represented the distant event to Americans in 1824-1825. As part of the Revolution's semicentennial, Americans celebrated the aged general and sought his approval for their progress in the American cause. Yet, there was not one memory of the Revolution and Americans interpreted its legacy differently. Lafayette, then, did not represent one Revolution—he represented many versions of it to many different people. We know that white Americans celebrated and how they did so, but until now history has

neglected the voices of Americans of color during the national celebration. This research has proved that not only did white, black, and Native Americans see Lafayette as a reminder of the country's founding, but they also projected their own hopes for its future onto him.

Lafayette's military contributions and instrumental role in securing the Franco-American alliance dominate his importance in American history. His final visit to the United States is increasingly considered for its material culture, but we should consider his final visit just as important as his Revolutionary presence and in terms of what it can tell us about the first post-Revolution generation of Americans, especially people of color, and the Era of Good Feelings. Lafayette occupies a unique position in which to observe how the American Revolution had played out by the 1820s and how Americans had shaped its memory. He adored the nation he helped found and believed its success was integral to liberty and republicanism's success around the world. Lafayette not only witnessed the Revolution, but he also carried its values back to Europe and became a beacon of the American experiment abroad. Perhaps, more than anyone, he could best judge the United States' progress because of both his involvement and years away from it. Many people, including himself, may have considered Lafayette an American but he was first and foremost a Frenchman. His primary citizenship qualified him as a transnational agent and observer of the American cause. Similarly, in interacting with Native Americans, still considered separate nations in the 1820s, his identity as both a Frenchman and American provides a unique transnational lens. Lafayette's dual identity as representative of the American Revolution and a Frenchman may have also encouraged people of color to engage differently with him than they would white

Americans. An influential foreigner, who was also a fierce advocate of the Revolution's values and promises, provided African and Native Americans a unique opportunity to advance their own agendas in pursuing equality and liberty.

Neglecting to incorporate these marginalized voices into the narrative of Lafayette's final visit does a disservice to those people's roles in the 1820s, a fuller understanding of the Era of Good Feelings, and how they understood the Revolution's legacy. A lack of marginalized voices also does a disservice to fully understanding Lafayette. Lafayette's own understanding of the American Revolution was that, while it was successful, it did not extend to all of the country's inhabitants. He recognized American democracy's paradox in promoting freedom and liberty while maintaining slavery and continuously excluding Native peoples. After the Revolution Lafayette became known for his dedication to liberal reforms and causes, especially slavery. Africans and Native Americans remembered Lafayette as a friend to all races and understood that his Revolutionary memory was similar to their own. They, too, sought the Frenchman's attention in the 1820s.

Though Americans temporarily dismissed their political differences to unite over Lafayette's return, racial tensions remained prominent during the tour. White and black Americans did not unite during Lafayette's visit to promote the success of the young Republic and celebrate its founding. Rather, white Americans made public spaces, dedicated to celebrating the country's founding and a national celebrity, white spaces which further enhanced racial segregation. Black people were often not even allowed to attend as Lafayette's parade traveled through their city. Similarly, Lafayette mostly met with Native Americans on their tribal territory, rather than at white celebrations. Neither

African or Native Americans truly participated in the democratized celebrations that white Americans hosted for Lafayette. White Americans and local authorities did not necessarily offer people of color a space to celebrate Lafayette, in fact, they overwhelmingly excluded them. In including Lafayette's interactions with people of color during the tour, we find an interesting middle ground in which marginalized groups experienced Lafayette.

Monroe ensured that Lafayette would be in Washington, D.C. during the contested presidential election as to quell tensions. There is little evidence of further federal involvement throughout the rest of the tour, however. We can assume, however, that if white Americans and the American state orchestrated Lafayette's entire tour, he would not have met any people of color. But because he maintained a different, more inclusive memory of the Revolution, Lafayette defined his tour as a tool for inserting Americans of color back into the historical narrative. More importantly, African and Native Americans used his presence to insert themselves into the Revolution's legacy. For people of color, the Revolution's legacy was an odd middle ground in which white Americans subjugated them but did not consider them citizens. Post-Revolution Americans were tasked with continuing its promises, but in order to do so they had to agree on what its legacy was. Elite, white men dominated politics and cultural spaces which means they decided how the Revolution would be remembered and executed. This included reshaping its legacy exclude people of color. This is indicative of a new generation's memory— their Revolution was white, had been fought for white people, and its impact and promises extended only to white people. People of color had to improvise their own methods of contact with Lafayette since the state clearly would not

facilitate their interaction. We can only consider Lafayette as the ‘nation’s guest’ if we include people of color. Otherwise, he was merely the guest of white elites.

It is also worth further exploring the dynamic between the federal and local authorities during Lafayette’s tour. Cities individually planned and executed their own celebrations for the Frenchman, though they often resembled one another. For example, many built and featured triumphal arches just for Lafayette’s short trip through the city. The research in this paper leads me to believe that the federal government did not control how local populations celebrated Lafayette, thus there was no set standard of patriotism. Yet, elite, white men and women were still responsible for the celebrations and dictated who attended public events. Some cities, especially in the South, specifically demanded that African Americans not attend Lafayette’s celebrations, which created and enforced a specific Americanness on people. This is indicative of how national memory, composed of collective and individual memories, is inherently political and very intentional.¹¹⁷ The group in power, in this case 19th century elite, white men, influenced how the rest of the country remembered the American Revolution and understood its contemporary legacy. Is this evident through federal and local roles? I am interested in exploring more sources to determine the role federal and local authorities played in Lafayette’s visit and what this tells us about American patriotism at the time. Lafayette’s transfer from the Georgia delegation to the Creek Indians to the Alabama Committee is particularly interesting.

We know from newspapers and other first-hand accounts that white Americans celebrated Lafayette’s return and the Revolution, and how they did so. Dinners, toasts,

¹¹⁷ Michael A McDonnell et al., *Remembering the Revolution Memory, History, and Nation Making from Independence to the Civil War*, 2014. explains that those who lived through the Revolution determined what would be remembered and how those memories evolved to the Civil War. That Americans decided what would be remembered reflects what they believed to be important or useful.

parades, and monument dedications were common in all 24 states of the Union. Cities shut down during his visit, went bankrupt, and dedicated resources to his short time there. Lafayette made time to interact with those who came to see him, if only for a brief handshake or exchange of celebration. To white Americans, their beloved French general had returned to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Revolution which he played so integral a part in. They were eager to celebrate him, as representative of the Revolution, and also demonstrate the Revolution's success and their continued commitment to its values. Lafayette's purpose in this instance, was as an American general in the Continental Army— someone who had witnessed the Revolution itself. Overwhelmingly, white Americans who talked with Lafayette or dedicated toasts to his visit emphasized his role in the Revolution and how thankful they were that he helped secure their liberty and freedom.

White Americans' celebratory remarks and Revolutionary memories are also important to understanding the Era of Good Feelings nationalism. These histories and views dominated the country and are therefore more evident than those of African and Native Americans, but further understanding the different interpretations amongst white people remains important to the narrative. For example, Utica, New York residents wrote a congratulatory letter to Lafayette during his time there in 1824.

We reside on a spot which, built a little more than forty years ago, you visited in its wilderness state, covered with the Savages of the forest. These have but recently given way to the enterprise and industry of freemen, in whose train have followed all the blessings of agriculture, commerce and the arts... Such improvements can flow only from the energies of enlightened men...¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ "Lafayette's Triumphant Tour: America, 1824-1825," Lafayette: Citizen of Two Worlds, accessed April 09, 2019, <http://rnc.library.cornell.edu/lafayette/exhibition/english/tour/>.

To these white Americans of Utica, Lafayette represented a Revolution that created civilization and profit. They credited the Revolution, and Lafayette's role within it, with allowing white people to settle 'savage' lands for industry and 'freemen.' As an embodiment of the Revolution, he justified their displacement of Native Americans and reinforced what white Americans considered to be civilization.¹¹⁹ In addition to further exploring people of color during the visit, and Lafayette's/the tour's place in the Era of Good Feelings, I would like to also research the different legacies among white people and how this contributed to the overarching narrative.

...

What are we to make of the continued disagreement over the American Revolution's outcomes and legacies? Perhaps that they are disputed reflects their Americanness: groups of people and individuals in the United States remember the Revolution in different ways to justify and understand certain ends. Americans remembered their Revolution to understand their present, justify their future, and remain secure in their national identity. It also reflects the Era of Good Feelings' complexity, which remains understudied. Broadly, Monroe's presidency did achieve a rather stable political atmosphere—at least among white people. Nationalism did flourish during the early 1820s, but it was not a unified concept. In order to fully understand the Era of Good Feelings' national unity, we need to include that Monroe intentionally invited Lafayette to return as an administrative tool for domestic and foreign policy support.

Similarly, Lafayette's final visit is inherently transnational because he was French. But this aspect of the tour requires further work. Evidence suggests that Monroe

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

invited Lafayette to the United States not only for domestic celebration and unity, but also to demonstrate public support for his administration's new foreign policy objectives. In correspondence, Lafayette commends Monroe for what would become known as the Monroe Doctrine and Monroe hopes that Lafayette's influence as a foreign figure will bring his policies popularity. Monroe hoped Lafayette's presence and his personal support would result in public support in the United States and abroad. Thus, I am interested in further exploring Lafayette's tour in the Era of Good Feelings specifically as a tool of Monroe's foreign policy. Particularly since the Era's scholarship argues that a defining feature of these years was American foreign policy.

Lafayette's public memory as a symbol of unity, American independence, and freedom from oppression must have resonated with Americans during his final tour, which fell near the celebration of the Revolution's semicentennial. In fact, we know it did because of the many lavish and extensive celebrations dedicated to his return across the 24 states in existence. Many primary sources, such as toasts, city records, posters, pamphlets, merchandise, and Lafayette's personal assistant's account of the trip exist to prove that white Americans, especially white American men, received Lafayette with great joy and celebration because of his Revolutionary symbolism. Prominent white women also frequently engaged in the private celebrations of Lafayette in homes or receptions.

During such an interesting and formative time, how did African and Native Americans receive Lafayette? To fully understand Lafayette's final tour and better reconstruct the United States at this time, we must understand the role of marginalized groups and include their voices. In these memories forgetting is just as important as

remembering. What white Americans remembered of the Revolution tells us much about people of color in society. It also intentionally portrayed the Revolution as a product and benefactor of white, elite men. Many African Americans and Native peoples served in the Continental Army, but by the 1820s most white Americans neglected to incorporate their contributions into the dominant narrative. Ignoring marginalized roles in the Revolution may have contributed to the racialization of American national identity and citizenship. Similarly, what African and Native Americans recalled of the event informs us of how they perceived themselves in society and what they expected of the United States and its Revolutionary promises.

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