

## Lafayette's 1824-25 Visit and His Connection with DACOR Bacon House History

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Tench Ringgold, owner and builder of 1801 F Street, was U.S. marshal of the District of Columbia during the visit of Marquis de Lafayette to the United States in 1824-25, now being remembered in a bicentennial year-long celebration. As marshal, Ringgold was responsible for the security of distinguished visitors to the capital city. Because of his old friendship with President James Monroe and his budding new friendship with John Quincy Adams, he interacted with the Marquis on numerous occasions and was made part of the entourage that visited Monroe in his retirement home at Oak Hill in August 1825. When Lafayette departed the country in September 1825, Ringgold once again figured in the official ceremonies. Thus, in the arrival and departure of the great Frenchman, Ringgold had roles to play. Moreover, Samuel Sprigg, the second owner of DACOR Bacon House and the father of Sally Sprigg Carroll, also played a role in Lafayette's tour, and even hosted him at his plantation in Prince George's County. The memory of Washington's virtual adopted son reverberates in our house.<sup>1</sup>



Engraving of Le General La Fayette in uniform done ca. 1820 based on portraits by Ary Scheffer. Courtesy Lafayette College print collection.

General Lafayette landed in New York on August 15, 1824, and then made a swing up to New England and upstate New York before proceeding city by city southward. At every stop he was enthusiastically received by throngs, parades, and dinners. He reached Baltimore on October 7, and on the 12<sup>th</sup> was escorted to Washington, D.C. by a special militia under Capt. Samuel Sprigg, former Maryland governor and future owner of DACOR Bacon House. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, he reached

Washington, and a fresh escort composed of District of Columbia militia and notables accompanied him from the Maryland line to the White House, where Tench Ringgold, as marshal, ushered in the distinguished guest and formally introduced him to President James Monroe.<sup>2</sup> The general was feted that day at the White House, but Lafayette opted to stay in Franklin House during the remainder of early visits in the city.<sup>3</sup>

Tench attended the state dinner at the White House given by President Monroe on October 14, along with many members of Congress, military and ministerial heads.<sup>4</sup>

During his time in the United States, Lafayette, who was designated “the Nation’s Guest,” became a much sought-after invitee in every state. During the following eleven months he traveled throughout the country. During this bicentennial year 2024-2025, events are planned in many of the places he visited.<sup>5</sup>



The White House from the south portico shown by an anonymous artist in 1827, three years after Lafayette’s visit. For the image:

<https://www.whitehousehistory.org/photos/fotoware?id=6B66FB78A3E44F58%20913A1ADA141A4A43>

On December 16, 1824, Lafayette left Washington for Annapolis, stopping for the evening at Northampton, the plantation in Prince George’s County owned by Samuel Sprigg.<sup>6</sup> Sprigg had accompanied Lafayette as he made his earlier progress from Baltimore to the District of Columbia, and in December, following his visit, accompanied him with several other Maryland notables to Annapolis, where the general addressed the Maryland Assembly. A family story of the visit was told years later, and it involved the young Sally Sprigg, then a twelve-year-old child.<sup>7</sup>

[The general] was very loquacious and at “High Tea” absentmindedly helped himself to preserves on the plate where he still had some Potomac herring. On Mrs. Sprigg's

horrified expostulation, General Lafayette paused, spoon in hand, glanced at the herring, and then, to the little Sally's delight, cheerfully proceeded. "It all goes the same road," he remarked, pointing down his open mouth with one slim forefinger.



Northampton Plantation, the home of Gov. Samuel Sprigg, Prince George's County.  
His daughter Sally married William T. Carroll and lived in DACOR Bacon House for sixty years.  
Library of Congress, taken in 1895.

After the stay in Annapolis, Lafayette returned to Washington and remained in the capital for almost two months, making occasional sides trips to Maryland and Virginia to be received with honors. In late February 1825, he embarked on a long circuitous route around the southern and western states of the then United States. By the beginning of August, he was back in Washington.

Ringgold accepted an invitation to accompany Lafayette on a visit to the retired president James Monroe at Oak Hill, his refurnished estate in Loudoun County about 40 miles from Washington. On August 3, Ringgold dined with a party of fifteen at the White House with Lafayette and his son, and then on August 6, set out for Oak Hill. The party consisted of Lafayette, his son George Washington Lafayette, Lafayette's secretary, Auguste Levasseur, President John Quincy Adams and his son John, Lafayette's two *valets de chambre* who rode in a carry-all, and concluded with the White House groom John who followed on horseback. They proceeded to Fairfax Court House where they lodged for the evening, and then proceeded the next day to Oak Hill. En route there was a mishap: the carriage with Lafayette and President Adams broke down, and the general and President Adams had to be accommodated in the second carriage, obliging Ringgold and Lafayette's son alternately to walk or ride in Adams' son's carriage. Eventually they were

rescued by George Hay, Monroe's son-in-law, and traveled more comfortably the final distance to Oak Hill.<sup>8</sup>



Oak Hill Plantation, home of James Monroe in Loudoun County, visited by Lafayette, President Adams, and Tench Ringgold in August 1825. Image National Park Service.

The Lafayette-Adams entourage remained there for two days in hot and sweltering weather before going to Leesburg, where the local Committee of Arrangement produced an elaborate dinner for 100 people near the courthouse. Adams and Lafayette then repaired to Belmont plantation, the home of Ludwell Lee, a cousin of Ringgold's second wife, Molly Aylett Lee Ringgold.<sup>9</sup> It is unclear from Adams' diary whether Ringgold was invited to stay the evening at Belmont, but it seems likely he did. His mother-in-law, Fannie Carter Lee, was probably residing at Belmont at this time, having been forced to sell off her nearby home, Coton plantation, to acquit the debt her deceased husband left her, and Ringgold would have wished to greet her. They were back in Washington by August 10<sup>th</sup>.

Adams discussed arrangements for Lafayette's final departure from the Nation's Capital with Ringgold on September 2 at the White House.<sup>10</sup> The farewell ceremonies were to take place on Wednesday, September 7. The plans were elaborate and included many features of pomp and circumstance that had been staged throughout the country during Lafayette's visit over the last ten months. Key to the planning was the local Committee of Arrangements, one of dozens of citizen groups that had been formed from the very beginning of the general's visit to coordinate local events. Ringgold was not a member of the District Committee, but, as marshal, he had a crucial role to play.

**ESCORT OF GENERAL LA FAYETTE.**

Order of arrangement on the 7th of September, 1825, at the final departure of the NATION'S GUEST from the seat of the National Government.

Advance Guard of Cavalry.  
Corporate Authorities of Washington,  
Corporate Authorities of Alexandria,  
Corporate Authorities of Georgetown,  
Military and Naval Officers of the United States,  
Marine Corps.  
2d Marshal } LA FAYETTE, } Marshal of  
              } and Suite.       } the District.  
Revolutionary Officers,  
Heads of Department,  
Civil Officers of the Government,  
Brigade of Volunteers.

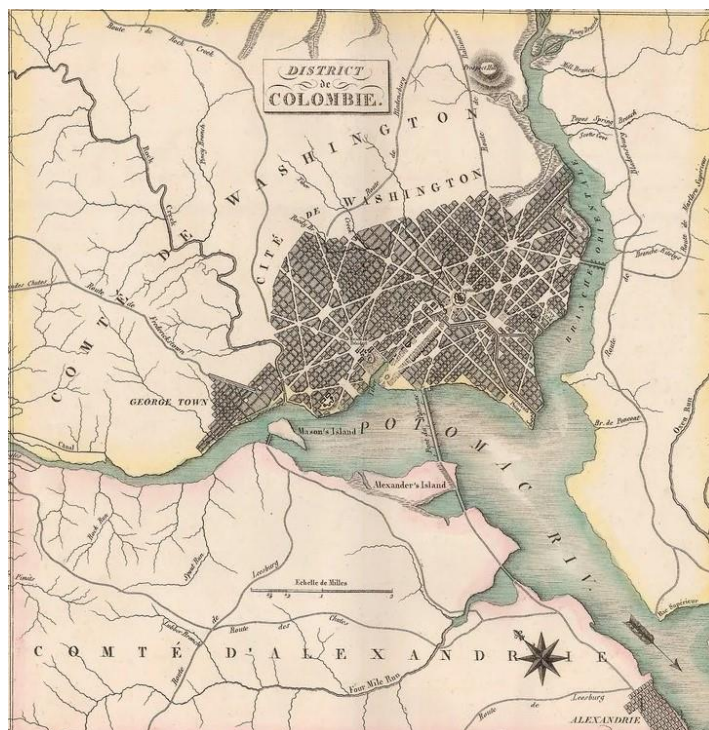
3d Marshal	Cavalcade of Citizens.	4th Marshal
5th Marshal		6th Marshal
7th Marshal		8th Marshal
9th Marshal		10th Marshal

General LA FAYETTE, accompanied by the Secretary of the Navy, and those persons who will attend him to the United States Frigate *Brandywine*, will embark on board the Steam boat MOUNT VERNON, at Cana's Wharf.

By Order,  
**TENCH RINGGOLD,**  
Marshal of the District of Columbia.

Orders for the Escort of General Lafayette from the Nation's capital issued by Marshal Ringgold and published in the local paper. *Daily National Journal*, September 7, 1825, p. 3.

On September 7, the day of departure began when the Boards of Alderman and the heads of the Common Councils from the three cities of the District (see the map below)<sup>11</sup> along with the mayors of the cities, heads of many government departments, military officials and noted civilians, assembled in the President's House and formed a circle in the great Hall of the house. President Adams entered, followed by General Lafayette, accompanied by Ringgold, on one side, and one of the president's sons, on the other. Adams, evidently emotional, read his address, which was reprinted in full in the *Daily National Intelligencer*, and Lafayette made a suitable response. Both men embraced each other with marked feeling.



1825 French map of Washington, showing the three cities of the District of Columbia. The city wharves, where Lafayette's farewell ended, were located near the Navy Yard on the Anacostia and at the bottom of 7<sup>th</sup> Street on the Potomac, near the Long Bridge crossing the river. Image: Library of Congress.

Following the presidential address, which brought tears to the eye of Lafayette, the general departed from the White House and headed toward Cana's Wharf on the Potomac, at the end of 7<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>12</sup> His barouche was followed by contingents of militia, calvary (including one from Maryland led by Capt. Sprigg), and a long trail of carriages carrying government ministers, diplomats, military brass, and local citizens. The general boarded the steamboat Mount Vernon which would take him past Alexandria and Mount Vernon and then to the ship Brandywine, which had been commissioned by the government to return him to France. Thus ended the thirteen-month farewell tour of General Lafayette to the United States.

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful for corrections and suggestions made by Julien Icher, president of The Lafayette Trail, Inc. His website is: <https://www.thelafayettetrail.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/the-nations-guest>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://archive.schillerinstitute.com/educ/hist/lafayette.html>; Franklin House was purchased by John Gadsby in 1823; on the history of the hotel, "What Famous Hotels did John Gadsby Run in D.C.?" <https://media.alexandriava.gov>.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily National Intelligencer*, Saturday, Oct 16, 1824, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> <https://lafayette200.org/events/>.

<sup>6</sup> *Daily National Intelligencer*, December 17, 1824, p. 3. The visit is also mentioned in Lafayette's secretary's account, *Auguste Levasseur, Lafayette en Amérique, en 1824 et 1825: ou Journal D'un Voyage Aux États-Unis*, 2 vols. (Paris: Baudouin, 1829), 2: 32.

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<sup>7</sup> Maria Hornor Lansdale, comp., *Two Colonial Families: The Lansdales of Maryland and the Luces of New England* (privately published, Philadelphia, 1938), 46. Available online at <http://www.seekingmyroots.com/members/files/G004209.pdf> (accessed 6/25/2021).

<sup>8</sup> John Quincy Adams Digital Diary, entries for August 3, 6 and 7, 1825:  
<https://www.masshist.org/publications/jqadiaries/index.php/document/jqadiaries-v49-1825-08-03-p891#sn=44>; <http://www.masshist.org/publications/jqadiaries/index.php/document/jqadiaries-v49-1825-08-06-p891#sn=9>;  
<https://www.masshist.org/publications/jqadiaries/index.php/document/jqadiaries-v49-1825-08-07-p891#sn=46>.

<sup>9</sup> John Quincy Adams Digital Diary, August 9, 1825:  
<https://www.masshist.org/publications/jqadiaries/index.php/document/jqadiaries-v49-1825-08-09-p891#sn=47>

<sup>10</sup> John Q. Adams Digital Diary, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/jqadiaries/index.php/document/jqadiaries-v35-1825-09-02-p295#sn=50>.

<sup>11</sup> Washington City, Georgetown and Alexandria.

<sup>12</sup> Washington Directory 1822: [http://www.theusgenweb.org/dcgenweb/geography/dc\\_business\\_1822.shtml](http://www.theusgenweb.org/dcgenweb/geography/dc_business_1822.shtml).