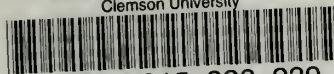


Clemson University



3 1604 015 928 239



GENERAL MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE STATUE Lafayette Park, Washington, D.C.

The statue of General Marquis de Lafayette in Lafayette Park, Washington, D.C., honors a great French patriot of the American Revolution. While a tribute to a Frenchman and executed by French sculptors Alexandre Falguière and Antonin Mercié, it is a monument entirely conceived, legislated, and funded by the United States Congress during an era of self-conscious celebration and examination of the American past. The centennial of the American Revolution in the late nineteenth century was an important hallmark in the history of the United States. By 1876, the nation had successfully nurtured the great republican experiment for 100 years. The anniversary spurred a flood of public monuments and events that celebrated the legendary figures from the founding of our nation. The statue to General Marquis de Lafayette and his compatriots, erected in 1891, was one such monument.

Although known as the Lafayette stat-

ue, the monument is actually an assembly of figures that includes four additional French officers who fought in the Revolutionary War. It is intended to remind generations of Americans of the highest level of patriotism and democracy. As the *Washington Evening Star* noted in 1891, "This new monument is not a portrait, it is a gallery; it is not a memorial to one man or even five. . . . It is an ideal, not a mass of stone and metal, and in this enlarged capacity, wider by far than anything else here, it will be sure to produce an educational effect upon hundreds of thousands of Americans."

Conception of the Statue

Congress's commemoration of American history at the end of the nineteenth century included the October 1881 centennial celebration of the Siege of Yorktown, the last major military battle of the Revolutionary War, in which the British

PRESIDENT'S PARK NOTES



U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Capital Region

Office of White House Liaison

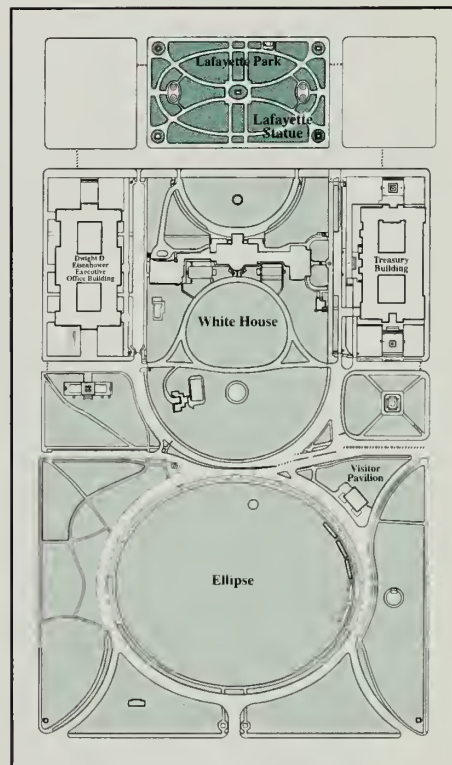
STATUES

NUMBER 3

PUBLIC DOCUMENTS
DEPOSITORY ITEM

JUL 21 2004

CLEMSON
LIBRARY



Site plan of President's Park indicating the location of the Lafayette Statue in Lafayette Park.

2004-0218-P

surrendered and in which Lafayette and several other Frenchmen played an important part. The Yorktown Monument, begun at this time, celebrated some of these men but not Lafayette. A year and a half later, in January 1883, the same senator who orchestrated the Yorktown celebration, John Johnston of Virginia, introduced a bill for an equestrian statue to the memory of General Marquis de Lafayette. Although Senator Johnston's initial proposal failed, he launched a movement for a Lafayette statue. Other bills for the statue were introduced, and in March 1885, Congress passed a \$50,000 appropriation for a statue to the Marquis de Lafayette and his compatriots. Congress appointed a three-member Lafayette Monument Commission composed of the chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library, the architect of the Capitol, and the secretary of war as the commission chairman to oversee the design, location, and erection of the Lafayette statue. Architect of the Capitol Edward Clark and Chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library Senator William Maxwell Evarts remained members of the commission through the statue's completion. Secretary of War William C. Endicott was the commission's original chairman; Secretary of War Redfield Proctor took over the role in 1889.

The Marquis de Lafayette

Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette (also La Fayette) was born in France on September 6, 1757, as the only child in a family with aristocratic ties. Lafayette inherited an immense fortune and large estates early in life, and his marriage to Adrienne de Noailles in 1774 assured a military career in the Noailles Dragoons. Yet any hopes of an illustrious military career in France ended in the summer of 1776 when reforms within the French military forced Lafayette from active service to the reserve. The American colonists' insurrection against the British in 1776, however, provided the theater and opportunity for military glory.



Marquis de Lafayette, 1779, by Charles Willson Peale, Washington-Custis-Lee Collection, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia.

Lafayette sailed to America to aid in the struggle aboard his own ship, *la Victoire*, in April 1777. On July 31, 1777, Congress granted the commission of major general to the Marquis de Lafayette. By December of that year, Lafayette had also received command of his own troops, and he had cemented a strong friendship with General George Washington, who became Lafayette's "adopted father." Lafayette's popularity in both American and French circles was an important factor in the treaties of February 1778 that ensured French support for the American cause. In February 1779, Lafayette returned to France and succeeded in helping secure 6,000 French soldiers for the war. Lafayette returned to America in April 1780.

The deciding military battle of the Revolutionary War came just one year after Lafayette's return. In late spring 1781, Lafayette, General Anthony Wayne, and General Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben confronted 7,500 British troops headed by the British commander General Lord Charles Cornwallis in Virginia. To preserve his

lines of communication, Cornwallis retreated through Virginia toward the coast, taking a fortified position in Yorktown. As Lafayette held Cornwallis at Yorktown, Washington marched with his troops and additional French soldiers under Lieutenant General Comte de Rochambeau from New York toward the head of the Chesapeake Bay, where twenty-four ships under the Admiral Comte de Grasse transported the combined French and American forces to Yorktown. As de Grasse's sea blockade successfully prevented any British reinforcements from reaching Yorktown, the Franco-American forces, including Lafayette's soldiers, steadily advanced on the British position. The Siege of Yorktown that had begun on September 28 ended on October 19, 1781, with Cornwallis's surrender. Although the formal end of the Revolutionary War did not come until 1783, the victory at Yorktown essentially confirmed America's independence.

In January 1782, Lafayette returned home, having become "the Hero of Two Worlds." The reputation Lafayette incurred in America carried over to France. He engaged in political life, becoming an advocate for religious tolerance and abolition of the slave trade. In 1784–85, Lafayette again returned to America to celebrate the end of the Revolutionary War. In 1789, Lafayette supported the French Revolution, authoring the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen that was adopted by the French National Assembly. He was appointed the commander of the national guard of Paris. His support of the French Revolution and the rise of the bourgeoisie became complicated, however, when property rights came under attack. During a protest calling for the abdication of the king so that a republican government could replace the system of constitutional monarchy, Lafayette's guards opened fire, an incident that destroyed Lafayette's popularity. When the French monarchy was overthrown on August 10, 1792, Lafayette fled to Austria where he was held captive until 1797. He

returned to France after Napoleon Bonaparte assumed power. From 1814 to 1824, Lafayette served on the Chamber of Deputies; in 1824, he returned to America for a final visit. Lafayette died in Paris on May 20, 1834.

It was on his fourth and final trip to America that Lafayette's image matured in the American mind. Nearing the fiftieth anniversary of the Revolutionary War, Congress voted on a motion to invite Lafayette to America in January 1824. Lafayette accepted the invitation from President James Monroe and arrived in New York on August 15, 1824. Lafayette, now the sole surviving military figure from the American Revolution, was celebrated as the "Nation's Guest." He visited the grave of his adopted father at Mount Vernon and participated in the anniversary celebration of the Siege of Yorktown. Lafayette had intended to visit the original thirteen colonies, but his travels quickly blossomed to include all twenty-four states during his yearlong stay in America. In late 1824, Congress passed a bill giving \$200,000 and land to Lafayette in gratitude for the personal

sacrifices he had made during the Revolutionary War. At the age of sixty-seven, Lafayette saw firsthand the fruits of the struggle he had actively supported at the age of nineteen.

Lafayette's visit in 1824–25 solidified his hero status. His actions in the Revolutionary War were viewed as the pinnacle of "disinterested patriotism" and self-sacrifice for the ideals of liberty. Lafayette, although a Frenchman, became the standard-bearer of American citizenship. Besides embodying personal virtues, Lafayette also embodied the ideals of the nation itself. His visit served as a symbolic checkpoint for Americans, a moment at which to judge the success of the young nation fifty years after its founding and an opportunity to look toward its future. This self-reflection at the fiftieth anniversary was not unlike the self-reflection at the 100th anniversary in the late nineteenth century. For both, Lafayette served as the touchstone for evaluating the higher goals of democracy and freedom. Whereas in 1824–25 the nation had the person of Lafayette himself to spur self-reflection, in 1891 the nation had a stat-

ue of Lafayette and his compatriots to remind its citizens of patriotic virtues and the origin of the country.

Lafayette's Compatriots

From the beginning, the legislation proposing a statue to Lafayette included a provision for memorializing Lafayette's compatriots. The Lafayette Monument Commission, not the sculptors, determined the identities of these other figures. According to the *Washington Evening Star*, the commission consulted "almost every historical society in America, and with many noted authorities on American history" to decide what supporting figures should be placed on the statue. Ultimately, the commission chose four men, two representing the French navy and two representing the French army.

On the east face of the statue, the figure standing to the north with sword in hand is Charles-Hector, Comte d'Estaing (1729–1794). D'Estaing was the commander of the first French fleet sent to aid the American colonies in the War of Independence. In 1778, Vice-Admiral d'Estaing commanded twelve ships and four frigates to America, but his military efforts met with little success. He failed to block British Admiral William Howe in the New York Bay in July 1778, and he failed to eliminate a smaller British squadron. D'Estaing incurred serious wounds in a failed attack on Savannah, Georgia. After a damaging tempest, d'Estaing sailed to the West Indies and then to France, despite the pleading of Lafayette to return to America. D'Estaing was commemorated in the Lafayette statue despite the fact that his actions are often regarded as damaging to the relationship between France and America in the early years of the Revolutionary War.

The figure to the south of d'Estaing is another naval officer, François-Joseph-Paul, Comte de Grasse (1722–1788). De Grasse led forty-three vessels to America in 1781 and was commissioned a lieutenant general by the American Congress. De Grasse was pivotal in holding the naval lines at the Siege of Yorktown. At the request of Lafayette and Rochambeau, he sailed from the West Indies to the Chesapeake Bay in fall 1781, preventing the escape of Cornwallis from Yorktown on British ships. French forces from de Grasse's ships were placed on land to supplement the Franco-American troops. De Grasse maintained his position in the bay, giving Washington and Rochambeau time



East face of the Lafayette Statue with the Comte de Grasse to the left (south) and the Comte d'Estaing to the right (north).



West face of the Lafayette Statue with Chevalier Duportail to the left (north) and the Comte de Rochambeau to the right (south).

to arrive from the north for the Siege of Yorktown. De Grasse's victory over British Admiral Thomas Graves in early September 1781 prevented relief for the British forces at Yorktown. Importantly, although d'Estaing and de Grasse are depicted in the statue as engaged in conversation, their service to the American cause differed in time and locations.

Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau (1725–1807), commissioned by the U.S. Congress as a lieutenant general commander of the French auxiliary army in America, is the south figure on the west side of the statue. He placed himself under the command of General Washington on his arrival in America in the summer of 1780. Rochambeau led 6,000 French soldiers in coordination with Washington and de Grasse in the Siege of Yorktown. A monument was erected to Rochambeau in 1902 on the southwest corner of Lafayette Square, facing his own figure on the west side of the Lafayette statue.

The identities of these three figures—de Grasse, d'Estaing, and Rochambeau—were decided from the

start, but the identity of the fourth figure remained undecided until 1888. Several other French officers were considered, but in the end, the Lafayette Monument Commission chose Chevalier Louis Lebèque Duportail (1743–1802) as the statue's fourth figure. A great friend of Lafayette, he was made brigadier general in the Continental army in 1777 and was promoted to major general four years later. He served with Washington at Morristown, Brandywine, Germantown, Valley Forge, and Monmouth. An engineer, Duportail directed the siege operations at Yorktown. He became minister of war of France later in his career but returned to America during the French Revolution. He died on the voyage back to France in 1802.

The biographies and the likenesses of these men and their importance in the war were recounted numerous times in contemporary accounts of the statue, ensuring that the public was reminded of their backgrounds and importance to the American cause. The figures encountered varying degrees of familiarity among Americans. *The New York Times*

in 1890 noted, "The commanders of the fleets [d'Estaing and de Grasse] are too well known to require comment, and Rochambeau is even better known to American school boys, but Duportail [*sic*] is not so familiar." But generally, the Revolutionary War heroes were part of the nineteenth-century American memory; today, the identities of these men are largely forgotten.

The Lafayette Monument Competition

The Lafayette Monument Commission, charged by Congress with the duty to select a design for the Lafayette statue and oversee its erection, sent out a request for proposals for the statue's design in 1885. Reportedly, a number of French and American artists submitted designs, but only three American sculptors—Daniel Chester French, Larkin Goldsmith Mead, and Augustus Saint-Gaudens—and three French artists—Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, Alexandre Falguière, and Antonin Mercié—were invited to compete for the commission. After deliberating for nearly two years, the Lafayette Monument Commission announced its decision. The sculpture of the General Marquis de Lafayette, a Frenchman, would be formed by the hands of the two French masters Alexandre Falguière and Antonin Mercié. Although the United States Congress had entirely conceived of and paid for the monument to reside on American soil, the monument's artistic authorship would belong to France.

The selection of the French sculptors signified the enormous influence of French art in the nineteenth century. The École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, a school sponsored and controlled by the French government, trained artists and architects through classical precedents. It became the center for art, painting, and sculpture in the western world and the proving ground for American artists in the nineteenth century. Training at the school included rigorous competitions culminating in the Prix de Rome, whose winners enjoyed five years of study in Rome. In the sphere of sculpture, the winners of the Prix de Rome—including Pierre-Jean David d'Angers, Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, Alexandre Falguière, and Antonin Mercié—became the dominant sculptors of the nineteenth century particularly in public art commissions.

The entries in the Lafayette monument competition illustrated the state of French and American sculpture in the

late nineteenth century. Little is known about how the Lafayette Monument Commission addressed the issue of patriotism in considering French and American artists for the commission. By the winter of 1885, the commission received its first entries, from French, Bartholdi, and Mead.

American sculptor Daniel Chester French (1850–1931) was no stranger to Revolutionary War commemorations. His life-size *Minute Man* (1874), a memorial to the Battle of Concord in Massachusetts, remains one of his most important works. Yet French's entry for the Lafayette statue in Washington received less than favorable reviews. As *The Richmond Daily Times* noted, French's sculpture of Lafayette offering his sword to the United States proved "too stiff," and it was thought that "the seeing of Lafayette standing in such a position throughout generations would be decidedly painful." Significantly, French greatly improved his technique during a trip to Paris in 1886–87 following the Lafayette statue competition. By the early 1890s, French's reputation nearly equaled that of Augustus Saint-Gaudens as a leading American sculptor. Later in his career, French designed two Lafayette statues, one in 1917 for Brooklyn's Prospect Park (New York) in which Lafayette stands in front of a horse, and another in 1922 for Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, where Lafayette stands with a sword upon a pedestal. This latter statue probably most approximates French's competition entry for the Lafayette statue in Washington.

By the mid 1880s, the French sculptor Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi (1834–1904) had become a kind of ambassador of Franco-American relations. His 1886 *Liberty Enlightening the World* in New York Harbor, one of the greatest symbols of American freedom and democracy, was a gift from the French government to the American people to commemorate French aid during the American War of Independence. Bartholdi had already created a Lafayette statue: In 1876, he presented a statue of Lafayette to New York City on behalf of the French government. For the Lafayette statue in Washington, Bartholdi submitted two similar designs, both portraying Lafayette dressed in a Continental uniform holding the French and American flags in one hand and his hat in the other. The more expensive design included a pedestal adorned with bas-relief designs depicting Lafayette's Revolutionary War battles and eagles

grasping globes on each corner of the pedestal. This design was discounted due to its estimated cost of \$55,000, which came in over budget. His second design, which was identical to the first save for the omission of the bas-relief and eagles on the pedestal, was considered too plain.

If French's entry was too stiff and Bartholdi's too extreme, then the entry by Larkin Goldsmith Mead (1835–1910) was the most palatable. Mead already had experience with large groupings of statuary. In the early 1890s, he sculpted the bronze figures adorning the Abraham Lincoln tomb in Springfield, Illinois, including the main statue of Lincoln. Mead was also familiar with Washington, D.C. He sculpted *Ethan Allen* (1875), which resides in the United States Capitol's Statuary Hall, and he assisted in the completion of the Washington Monument (1833–88). Mead's concept for the Lafayette statue was very close to that of the winning Falguière and Mercié design. He positioned Lafayette with one hand on his sword and the other clutching his hat, standing above several French officers including de Grasse and Rochambeau. Mead specified the inscription on the monument to be Lafayette's request on offering his services to the American Congress: "After my sacrifice I have the right to ask two favors—one is to serve at my own expense; the other to commence by serving as a volunteer."

Although the Lafayette Monument Commission received the designs by French, Bartholdi, and Mead by late 1885, an entry from Augustus Saint-Gaudens, arguably the most important American sculptor of the nineteenth century, never arrived. One contemporary account characterized Saint-Gaudens as thinking himself "of enough note to get designs without competing for them." However, Saint-Gaudens's reluctance to submit a design was not the result of arrogance, as this account assumed. After losing the competition for the Charles Sumner Monument in Boston to a sculptor whose entry had not conformed to the original rules, Saint-Gaudens vowed never to enter another competition. Importantly, Saint-Gaudens had strong ties to the Lafayette Monument Commission member Senator William Maxwell Evarts, for whom he had sculpted a marble bust portrait in 1874 as well as copies of classical busts.

Even without entering the competition, however, Saint-Gaudens had an enormous impact on the final form of

the Lafayette statue. Although the exact reasons for it are unclear, the Lafayette Monument Commission wanted several other French artists beyond Bartholdi to compete for the commission. After a failed attempt to elicit suggestions from the French government, the commission turned to Saint-Gaudens for a list of eligible French sculptors. Saint-Gaudens was eminently qualified to provide such a list for he had attended the École des Beaux-Arts from 1868 to 1870. Not surprisingly, Saint-Gaudens recommended his peers at the École, Alexander Falguière and Antonin Mercié.

Falguière and Mercié

Jean-Alexandre-Joseph Falguière was a prominent French sculptor in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Born in Toulouse in southwestern France in 1831, Falguière entered the École des Beaux-Arts in 1854 to study under François Jouffroy. Four years later, he was the joint winner of the Prix de Rome for the bas-relief of the *Wounded Mezentius Aided by His Son Lausus*. He won medals at the Salons of 1864 and 1868 for *The Winner of the Cockfight* and *Tarcisius, Christian Martyr*, respectively. By the 1870s, Falguière's reputation as a major French sculptor was confirmed. He produced many figures for public buildings, including *Drama* (1869) for the Paris Opera, the *Triumph of the Revolution* (1882) for the Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile, and the *Monument to the French Revolution* (1890–1900) for the Pantheon in Paris. Falguière became known for his rather scandalous nudes, including *Diana* (1882). With five workshops, Falguière was an extremely productive sculptor. He sculpted more than thirty statues or monuments and executed over fifty portrait busts. He received the Légion d'honneur and became a professor at the École des Beaux-Arts in 1882; he died in Paris at the age of sixty-nine in 1900.

Marius-Jean-Antonin Mercié, born in 1845 and Falguière's junior by fourteen years, also quickly became a leading sculptor in France. Like Falguière, Mercié also came from Toulouse, and he studied under Jouffroy and Falguière at the École des Beaux-Arts. Near the age of twenty-two, Mercié won the Prix de Rome with a marble statue named *Theseus, Vanquisher of the Minotaur* (1868). While at the Académie de France in Rome, he received a first-class medal and cross of the Légion d'honneur for his *David Victorious*, an unusual honor for someone still studying at the

Académie. His bronze group *Gloria victis!* was exhibited at the 1874 Salon and widely copied for monuments to the dead of the Franco-Prussian War. Mercié worked as a collaborator with Falguière throughout his early career and became a professor at the École des Beaux-Arts in 1900. He died in Paris in 1916.

The works of Falguière and Mercié made their mark in the United States. In 1890, Mercié completed the *Robert E. Lee Monument* in Richmond, Virginia, an equestrian monument to the leader of the Confederate army, with the architect for the pedestal Paul Pujol, who would become the architect of the Lafayette statue. Mercié also sculpted the *Francis Scott Key Monument* (1911) in Baltimore, Maryland. Works by Falguière and Mercié were exhibited in the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, including Falguière's *Diana* and Mercié's *Quand Même!* Both men were also the teachers of illustrious American sculptors: Not only had Falguière instructed Saint-Gaudens, but both Falguière and Mercié had instructed Frederick William MacMonnies.

The four designs for the Lafayette

statue by Falguière and Mercié did not reach the consideration of the Lafayette Monument Commission until 1887, nearly two years after the submissions by French, Bartholdi, and Mead. Only two of the possible four entries by Falguière and Mercié are known. One of the designs was likely an equestrian statue that was changed to a standing Lafayette, possibly at the request of the commission. The revised proposal showed Lafayette standing on a great mound of earth with an allegorical figure at his feet symbolizing war. Revolutionary War soldiers surrounded the base, and large American eagles adorned each face of the pedestal. Contemporary accounts deemed this entry "the more original and striking, and possibly the superior" to a design possibly created by both artists. In this collaborative design, they had created an image of Lafayette dressed in military uniform, cloak thrown over one arm, sword in one hand and the palm of the other turned downward. A female figure of America

extended a sword toward Lafayette as four French patriots surrounded the base. The sculptors' entries to the competition carried a condition: If any one of their designs was selected, they should execute the design together. Their collaboration perhaps put them at an advantage above the other competitors.

The Lafayette Monument Commission thus had a rather illustrious pool of sculptors, French and American, from which to choose. Ultimately, the commission chose French over American artistry, awarding the contract to Falguière and Mercié in the fall of 1887 for their collaborative entry of a standing Lafayette surrounded by four French officers. The commission had awarded the contract to two of the most highly regarded sculptors of their time.

Execution of the Statue

On December 21, 1887, Falguière and Mercié signed the contract for the Lafayette statue in Paris; the three mem-

bers of the commission—Secretary of War William C. Endicott, Senator William M. Evarts, and Architect of the Capitol Edward Clark—signed the contract in Washington on January 26, 1888. In creating the figure of Lafayette, Falguière and Mercié relied on information housed at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The casting of the bronze statues by Maurice Denonvilliers of Paris occurred according to the usual course. The statue was modeled in clay by the artists at one-quarter scale, and a plaster cast was then made from this clay model. From the plaster cast, a full-scale model was formed, which in turn was cast in plaster. The creation of sand molds was the final step before casting the bronze figures. French architect Paul Pujol, who had worked with Mercié on the *Robert E. Lee Monument*, was the designer of the marble pedestal. The quarry of Derville and Company supplied the marble.

Although the contract stipulated that the statue be completed and erected by January 26, 1890, the Lafayette statue was delayed by nearly eight months due to the need to adjust the bronzes to the marble pedestal. It arrived in New York



Engraving of the one-quarter scale plaster model of the Lafayette Statue, south face. From Theodore Child's "The Lafayette Monument at Washington," *Harper's Weekly*, January 5, 1889. Library of Congress.



Engraving of Alexandre Falguière in his studio. From Theodore Child's "Modern French Sculpture," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, January 1888. Library of Congress.

City from Paris on the French steamer *La Normandie* on August 18, 1890. The statue, packed in thirty crates—the “heaviest boxes that ever came into this part of the country”—arrived in Washington, D.C., by train on August 26, 1890. The entire statue weighed 62,546 pounds. The statue’s arrival came in the middle of an intense congressional debate over its location. The statue was held in the Senate stables until the matter was resolved in early 1891.

The statue of General Marquis de Lafayette stands at the southeast corner of Lafayette Square in Washington, D.C., at the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and Madison Place. The main face of the statue looks to the south, parallel to Pennsylvania Avenue. The monument, nearly thirty-one feet high and twenty-six feet square at the base, is a grouping of eight heroic bronzes composed in three parts: a granite foundation, a marble pedestal with seven bronze figures, and the surmounting figure of Lafayette. The statue of Lafayette himself, nearly eleven feet high, is a youthful Lafayette clothed in military uniform. A cape is draped over his left arm while his left hand rests on the hilt of his sword. On his coat is displayed the insignia of the Society of the Cincinnati, the nation’s oldest veterans organization founded by the American and French officers of the American Revolution. He stands with right hand outstretched and left leg slightly forward, a motion commonly interpreted as Lafayette pleading to the French National Assembly for France’s support in the War for Independence. A bare-breasted female figure—variously known as the figure of America, the “Genius of Gratitude,” and the symbol of liberty—sits beneath a massive cartouche inscribed TO/ GENERAL/ LAFAYETTE/ AND HIS/ COMPATRIOTS/ 1777–1783. Her face is turned upward toward Lafayette as she offers him the hilt of a sword with an extended right arm.

On the east face of the monument stand Comte d’Estaing to the north and Comte de Grasse to the south. These French admirals, symbolized by an anchor at the foot of Comte de Grasse, appear engaged in conversation. On the west side, the Chevalier Duportail and Comte de Rochambeau represent the French army in America, symbolized by a cannon. On the north side of the statue, two infantile figures, called Amours by the sculptors and “Children of



Lafayette competition entry by either Alexandre Falguière or Antonin Mercié. Unidentified News Clipping, Vertical Files, The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.



Detail of the Marquis de Lafayette figure on the Lafayette Statue.

Liberty” by the newspapers, hold hands and point to the inscription on a cartouche, which reads:

BY THE/ CONGRESS/ IN
COMMEMORATION/ OF THE
SERVICES/ RENDERED BY/
GENERAL LAFAYETTE/ AND
HIS COMPATRIOTS/ DURING
THE STRUGGLE/ FOR THE/
INDEPENDENCE/ OF THE/
UNITED STATES/ OF AMERICA.

This inscription clearly indicates that the United States Congress, not the French government, sponsored this monument.

The south face of the statue carries the marks of the French artists. On level with the marble on which the minor figures rest and to the east of the figure of America is the inscription: ALEXANDRE FALGUIERE/ ANTONIN MERCIÉ/ STATUAIRES/ PAUL PUJOL/ ARCHITECTE. Just above the granite plinth on the south face, the inscription DERVILLE ET C[O]/ MARBRES indicates the quarry from which the marble pedestal came. The founder’s mark appears in two places: first, on the cannon on the west face, MAURICE DENONVILLIERS FOUNDEUR PARIS 1890; second, on the east base of the Lafayette bronze itself, FONDU PAR MAURICE DENONVILLIERS.

The foundation of the statue, constructed by the United States government under the direction of the commissioner of public buildings and grounds, Colonel Oswald H. Ernst, is composed of American granite, which was to contrast symbolically with the French statue. The marble pedestal is of square proportions. Simple, classical moldings cap the pedestal below the feet of Lafayette. The marble cartouches on the north and south sides are rather elaborate shields with foliage and animal-like heads surrounding the inscriptions. The statue and its foundation rest on a slight mound of earth, which is encircled by granite curbing.

“Solving the Knotty Problem of Its Location”

Before its final erection at the southeast corner of Lafayette Square in 1891, the statue of General Marquis de Lafayette became the subject of an intense debate about public sculpture, location, and association in Washington’s commemorative landscape. In the late nineteenth century, the “city of magnificent distances” was maturing, and, with the simultaneous explosion in public statuary following the Civil War, Washington’s open spaces were quickly becoming filled. The location of a monument was nearly as important as its design. Although statues themselves conveyed meaning through figural representation and inscriptions, their placement within the landscape added another level of instruction. A poorly chosen site could damage the intention of a statue, whereas a proper site could heighten the monument’s didactic and commemorative implications. Thus, the site for a monument was at times brokered more heavily than the conception of the statue itself. Such was the case for the



North face of the Lafayette Statue with the Amours.

Lafayette statue. Three sites—Lafayette Square, the Treasury building, and the United States Capitol—were strongly considered. Ultimately, Lafayette Square became the setting for the Frenchman's statue, but the statue's southeastern location in the square was less than ideal.

From the beginning, Lafayette Square appeared to be the logical place for the Lafayette statue. As early as December 1884, during the Congress that granted the appropriation for the statue, a senator suggested that it be placed in Lafayette Square, located just north of the White House across Pennsylvania Avenue.

However, an equestrian statue to General Andrew Jackson, erected in 1853, already stood at the center of the square. This preexisting condition would plague the Lafayette Monument Commission, Congress, and even the public for the next six years. Would it be possible to have a square named for Lafayette and for that square not to hold the Lafayette statue? Or was Lafayette Square large enough to hold tributes both to an American president and to a French hero?

The Lafayette Monument Com-

mission, aware of the contentious issue of placing the Lafayette statue in Lafayette Square, did not formally take up the issue of the statue's location until April 1888. The commission discussed the possibility of placing the Lafayette statue in the center of the square, displacing the statue to General Andrew Jackson that had stood at that spot for more than forty years, but acknowledged that only an act of Congress could remove the Jackson statue. The commission, however, took no decisive action in 1888, leading the *Washington Evening Star* to say that the commission "avoided. . . as far as possible" the "knotty problem" of the statue's location. In early 1890, with the arrival of the completed statue just six months away, the commission resumed discussion of the site. As the frenzy of suggestions for the location of the Lafayette statue continued, the *Washington Evening Star* observed in February, "There has never been any doubt in the minds of the members of the commission but that Lafayette square is practically the only place for the [Lafayette] statue, but the historic figure of "Old

Hickory" has been a bugbear in the way of the final selection of that site. There was a feeling of patriotic compunction against removing the old hero from the place where he and his horse have been a landmark for so many years. . . ."

Even though "Old Hickory" had claimed the location first, the commission felt compelled to select Lafayette Square as the site for the Lafayette monument because of the common but erroneous belief that the square had been given its name by George Washington himself, friend and adopted father to Lafayette. By placing the statue within the square, the commission was trying to link two great figures of the American War of Independence and the founding of the country. Here, early American history was embodied within a place and articulated by a name, and the commission sought to capitalize on these associations.

By May 1890, the commission struck what it thought to be a compromise in the Jackson-Lafayette statue debate. It proposed placing the Lafayette statue on the south-central side of Lafayette Square facing Pennsylvania Avenue and the White House, 200 feet directly south of Jackson on his horse. The commission even envisioned the development of a "statuary square, with Lafayette as the main figure and Jackson near by" with four other statues representing "four epochs of the history of our country" placed in the corners, as reported in the *Washington Evening Star*. As the granite foundation was laid in the spring of 1890 at this south-central position, the matter of the statue's location appeared resolved.

The small construction project in Lafayette Square, however, did not escape the attention of Senator William Bate from Tennessee, the home state of Andrew Jackson. Senator Bate objected to the fact that the Lafayette and Jackson statues were to be aligned along the same axis, in effect blocking the view of the Jackson statue from the White House and causing "marked injustice to both of those great works of art by mixing and mingling their outline in such confusion of vision that it will be impossible to determine whether Jackson is riding over Lafayette or Lafayette is dodging under Jackson." He introduced a resolution requesting information on whose authority the site had been selected.

The Lafayette Monument Commission defended its decision, saying that Congress had given it full power over the selection of the site and that the dis-

tance of nearly 200 feet between the statues and the fact that the Jackson statue was practically unobservable from the edge of the square due to the foliage meant that there was no conflict in placing the Lafayette statue in front of the Jackson statue. The commission also explained its major considerations in locating the statue: first, that the statue should be placed on a public thoroughfare; second, that the site should have some relation to the Capitol or the Executive Mansion. The commission argued that other sites along Pennsylvania Avenue would most likely become occupied with monuments connected to buildings on the avenue. Despite these arguments, and with one day until the completed statue reached Washington, Senator Bate introduced a concurrent resolution proposing to halt work on the pedestal and commanding that a new site be located.

The debate over Senator Bate's resolution intensified with the arrival of the statue in Washington on August 26, 1890. The central point of contention was which monument should retain the strongest relationship to the Executive Mansion. When Senator Evarts of the Lafayette Monument Commission argued that Lafayette must be associated with the Executive Mansion because of its symbolic relationship to George Washington, Bate suggested that Andrew Jackson had the stronger association with the residence, having actually occupied the White House for eight years, and further that Congress had located Jackson's statue "with special reference to proximity and an unobstructed view from the Executive Mansion." The issue of nationalism also entered the debate. Bate reminded Congress that the Jackson statue "is a creation of the brain of Clark Mills, an American. . .," a reference to the fact that the sculptors of Lafayette were French and a suggestion that an American-born work should not be displaced by a statue wrought by foreign hands. Evarts noted that a change in site resulting in the delay of the monument's erection would hurt the terms of the contract with the artists, who could not be paid in full until the monument was put in place. In the end, both the Senate and House of Representatives supported the concurrent resolution to halt work on the foundation and locate another site for the Lafayette statue.

Although the concurrent resolution did not legally bind the Lafayette Monument Commission to abandon the site at the south-central side of Lafayette Square, the commission did take the opinion of

Congress seriously. In early September, with the Lafayette statue still packed in its crates and stored in the Senate stables, the commission chose yet another site, this time at the southeast corner of the Treasury building. This site, at the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and Fifteenth Street, would require that the fence surrounding the Treasury building be moved back and a large gatepost be removed. The location had the advantage of being the focal point of Pennsylvania Avenue, creating a link with both the Capitol and the nearby Executive Mansion and ensuring the statue high visibility. *The New York Times* opined that ". . . it is by no means an ideal site. The land is low. The association of Lafayette with the Treasury is incongruous, and it will not be effectively displayed so close to a large building." A further concern, brought up during debate in the Senate, was that, should the statue be placed in that location, it might have to be moved because of an anticipated annex to the Treasury building to the south.

Yet while the commission seemed satisfied with the Treasury location, apparently the secretary of the treasury was not. Treasury Secretary William Windom, in a letter to the commission, voiced his decided opposition to the location of the statue near the Treasury building. Reportedly, he objected to the fact that Lafayette "never was intimately connected with the Treasury Department during his lifetime, and there did not seem to be any good reason why his statue should spoil the architectural lines of the Treasury building." Secretary Windom also wryly suggested that because Lafayette had been connected with the War Department, his statue might be located in front of the War Department building. With Secretary Windom's objections so strong, the Lafayette Monument Commission went in search of still another site.

In late October 1890, two members of the commission, Secretary of War Redfield Proctor and Architect of the Capitol Edward Clark, revisited Lafayette Square. They considered a location in the center of the west half of the square, immediately to the west of the Jackson statue. In a letter to Senator Evarts, Secretary Proctor noted that "although Jackson is directly facing this location and has his hat up to keep the sun out of his eyes so that he can see plainly, yet there is such a thick growth of trees between it would not probably disturb his temper or that of his friends." The men, however, preferred the south-

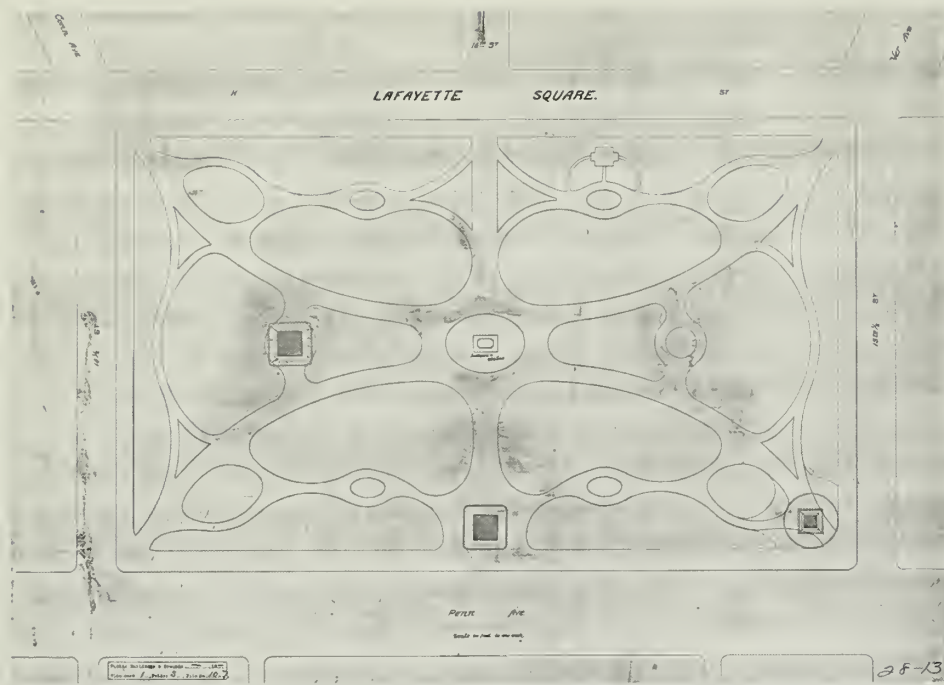
east corner of the square. Proctor wrote to Evarts, "it is nearer the site we favored and so we come that much nearer having our own way than if we moved to another reservation." It was this site that, with no objections, became the final location for the Lafayette statue.

The southeast corner of Lafayette Square, though less prominent than the center of the square or even the Treasury site, resolved the major points of contention. It allowed the statue of Lafayette to reside in Lafayette Square and form an association with the Executive Mansion, and it did not obstruct the view of the Jackson statue. Moreover, placed on the southeast corner of the park, the statue would be encountered by the pedestrians who daily used the diagonal shortcut in Lafayette Square to arrive at the business section of Washington from the northwest. The commission considered placing the statue at an angle but opted for the direct southward position for the main face so as to grant "the best effect from the main point of observation—15th street and Pennsylvania Avenue."

With an additional \$5,000 appropriation for the construction of a new pedestal, the granite blocks from the old pedestal were removed and reused for the new pedestal just a few hundred feet away. In March, the marble pedestal was set; in April, the bronze figures were attached to the marble pedestal. The statue was formally completed in early April 1891.

Other Sites

Numerous other sites for the Lafayette statue were suggested during the debate. Early in 1886, Congress seriously considered placing the Lafayette statue near its own seat of power. The possible removal of the *Naval Monument* (1877), known also as *Peace Monument*, from the bottom of Jenkin's Hill allowed several senators to imagine what appropriate statuary should be placed at the west front of the Capitol. They proposed that the two circles formed by the intersection of First Street with Pennsylvania Avenue to the northwest and Maryland Avenue to the southwest should be occupied "with statuary indicating great historical events and keeping in remembrance great historical personages." They suggested that statues to Columbus and Lafayette, whom they considered exemplary figures, be placed in the north and south circles, respectively. However, the proposed location for the



Drawing of the proposed west-central, south-central, and southeastern sites for the Lafayette Statue by Architect of the Capitol Edward Clark, November 3, 1890. Records of the National Park Service, RG 79, National Archives and Records Administration.

Lafayette statue at First Street and Maryland Avenue to the southwest had already been reserved for the monument to President James A. Garfield. Although the Senate passed a resolution calling for a change in site for both the *Naval Monument* and the Garfield statue with the substitution of statues to Columbus and Lafayette on those sites, the resolution never passed the House of Representatives. Today, the *Naval Monument* remains at the west front of the Capitol, and the statue to President Garfield (1887) stands in its originally intended place.

The debate over the location of the Jackson and Lafayette statues continued well into the twentieth century. In 1967, it was reignited when a representative from North Carolina, Horace R. Kornegay, on the 200th anniversary of the birthday of Andrew Jackson, proposed that the Jackson statue be moved to a small park west of the Rayburn Office Building and the Lafayette statue be moved to the middle of the park. The continued uncertainty of the statues' final locations illustrates the incongruity between the name of the square and its occupants. Visitors to Lafayette Square expect to find Lafayette, not Jackson, occupying the central and most prominent location.

Lack of a Dedication

Statues in the nineteenth century typically were met with spectacular dedications

including large crowds, parades, and speeches, but the statue of General Marquis de Lafayette encountered no fanfare on its completion in the spring of 1891. Both timing and money prevented a dedication for the Lafayette statue. The delay of the completion of the statue, further increased by the debate in Congress over its location, prevented any dedicatory ceremonies in 1890, as had been hoped. And when the statue was finally completed in April 1891, a lack of funds to cover the several-thousand-dollar cost prevented any ceremonies. The American public was aware of this lack of formal introduction. Most people believed that the French government had given the statue, because the inscriptions saying otherwise had not yet been made. Therefore, many Americans believed that the lack of a dedication was "discourteous to France."

In March 1892, nearly a year after the statue's erection, a bill was introduced in Congress to provide \$3,000 for a dedication ceremony on September 19, 1892, concurring with a celebration by the Grand Army of the Republic, a patriotic organization dedicated to remembering American soldiers. Despite support for the bill from the Committee on the Library, the bill was not passed, and the dedication ceremonies did not take place.

The United States Congress, which had allocated a substantial amount of money for the erection of the Lafayette

statue and passionately argued about its location, thus failed to formally introduce the Lafayette monument to the American people in the 1890s. Yet the statue has since been the centerpiece for expressions of gratitude and remembrance. The once-annual observance of Lafayette's birthday on September 6 by the Sons of the American Revolution included presentation of a wreath at the statue's base. The anniversary of Lafayette's 200th birthday in 1957 was elaborately celebrated at the base of the statue. The Lafayette statue has served as the backdrop for ceremonies involving the French and American governments.

Condition of the Lafayette Statue from 1891 to the Present

The climate of Washington, D.C., has been a destructive force on the bronze and marble of the Lafayette statue. Only twenty years after its erection, the stains on the statue had become so pronounced as to require cleaning. In July 1910, the attempt to remove the verdigris, or the green patina and stains formed when bronze reacts with exposure to the air, was unsuccessful, as was the attempt at waterproofing to halt the extent of the discoloration using a method called the Caffall process. In 1921, the monument again was treated using the same methods.

Since 1933 the National Park Service has maintained the Lafayette statue. In 1987, it was noted that the marble was "badly streaked and stained," the granite was extraordinarily dirty, and the joints of the granite and marble base had begun to open. Because of the fragile condition of the marble, the stone was pressure washed with hot water and detergent rather than with an acid solution that would have cleaned the marble more thoroughly. The granite foundation was recaulked with sealant, but the joints of the marble pedestal were left untouched. The treatment of the bronze included an air abrasive cleaning with pulverized walnut shells, followed by applications of a corrosion inhibitor and protective wax coatings. The Lafayette statue received another treatment in 2000 when the bronze figures were cleaned and waxed and the oxidation stains on the stone base were removed.

After the 2000 cleaning, the Lafayette statue is in relatively good condition. The marble pedestal, however, remains in a fragile state. The marble below the bronze figures is still stained. The mar-

ble at the juncture with the granite foundation is particularly weathered and contains large cracks. This deterioration is affecting the inscription DERVILLE ET C[O] at the base of the statue's south face. A large crack marks the upper left side of the cartouche on the south side of the statue. Because contemporary accounts noted that the statue survived the journey from France to America without "a single scratch or break or chip" in the marble or bronze, this crack is probably a result of exposure to the Washington climate. Evidence of it appears as early as 1900 in photographs of the statue. The defect does not, however, interfere with the main inscription on the south face.

The bronze figures on the Lafayette statue have been casualties of vandalism. In August 1945, a piece from the scabbard of Comte d'Estaing was broken off and had to be reattached. In the 1950s, the sword that the female figure extends to Lafayette was vandalized and had to be replaced.

The Statue Within the Landscape

When the Lafayette Monument Commission chose the final site for the statue in 1890, Andrew Jackson Downing's 1851–52 design for the square had to be modified in order to place the statue at the southeast entrance of Lafayette Square. This modification included shortening several planting beds and widening the walks. The statue itself rests on a slight mound of earth encircled by granite curbing about 175 feet in circumference. This mound originally included only sod and no plantings. It is believed that the first plantings around the statue came with Lady Bird Johnson's beautification campaign in the mid 1960s. In 1994, dwarf pink azaleas replaced the annual floral beds planted in the 1960s, which displayed tulips in the spring, annuals in the summer, and mums in the fall. In 2003, the azaleas were removed, and sod was laid.

The Lafayette statue has been illuminated periodically throughout its history. According to an 1892 report, two granite block piers with wing walls were placed at the southeast entrance to the square, and ornamental lamp posts and gas lamps were placed on the piers to light the statue. The evidence of these piers has disappeared, and it is unknown how long the statue was illuminated by the gas lamps. Floodlights illuminated the statue for the presidential inaugurations of 1949 and 1953 and for French



Photomontage replacing the Jackson Statue with the Lafayette Statue at the center of Lafayette Park. *Washington Evening Star*, March 9, 1967, *Washington Star* Collection. © *The Washington Post*. Reprinted with permission of the D.C. Public Library.

President Georges Pompidou's visit in 1970. In 1949, the suggestion was made to permanently light the Lafayette statue, but the Commission of Fine Arts adamantly opposed it. Today, the Lafayette monument is not specifically illuminated.

In the statue of General Marquis de Lafayette, the United States Congress provided an example of the highest level of patriotism and self-sacrifice to Americans at the end of the nineteenth century. Lafayette had become a heroic symbol for the beginnings of the nation. His seemingly unselfish involvement in the Revolutionary War and great friendship with George Washington grew into an image of Lafayette as a "disinterested patriot" and someone to be counted among the founding fathers of the country. Congress's invocation of the memory of Lafayette and his compatriots was appropriate as Americans reflected on the centennial of the nation's founding.

The choice of French sculptors rather than American artists for the Lafayette statue illustrated the strong influence of French sculpture and art in the nineteenth century. Sculptors Alexandre Falguière and Antonin Mercié carried considerable reputations, and their final design for the statue was hoped to positively affect future statuary in America. Whereas the selection of the artists

appeared to be largely uncontroversial, the selection of the statue's location was intensely debated, particularly because a statue to President Andrew Jackson already occupied the central position in Lafayette Square. The strong desire to locate the Lafayette statue in Lafayette Square demonstrates the strong association between name and place, and the statue's final location on the southeast corner of the square is a permanent reminder of the struggle to connect the Lafayette statue to a piece of land named for him. The placement of the Lafayette statue in the southeast corner served as the template for later placement of statuary in Lafayette Square.

Although the Lafayette statue remains physically unchanged from the time of its erection in 1891, its reception has changed during the past hundred years. Whereas Americans in the nineteenth century generally knew the stories of the Marquis de Lafayette, the Comte d'Estaing, the Comte de Grasse, the Comte de Rochambeau, and Chevalier Duportail, their histories today are largely unknown. Nevertheless, the Lafayette statue remains a significant example of late-nineteenth-century French sculpture in America and a reminder of the celebration of the centennial of the nation's founding at the end of the nineteenth century.

