



Lexington History Museum Highlights LaFayette's 1825 Visit This Weekend

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LEXINGTON, Ky. -The Lexington History Museum will embrace all things French this weekend with a special presentation on the Marquis De Lafayette and his farewell tour; which brought the Revolutionary War Hero to Lexington in the spring of 1825.

When Lexingtonians hear the name Lafayette, they may think of Lafayette High School, or Fayette County, but this weekend, they will have a unique opportunity to learn about the Marquis himself and his influence on Lexington and America as a whole.

This Saturday, the Lexington History Museum is hosting Boston-based author Alan Hoffman, who has written the only English translation of Lafayette's journal from his "farewell tour" of the United States from 1824-1825. In addition to focusing on the tour, Mr. Hoffman will detail LaFayette's visit to

Lexington in May of 1825.

At the time, the Marquis de Lafayette was the only surviving general of the Continental Army, and according to Jamie Millard, President and CEO of the Lexington History Museum, was the "rock star of the revolution," paying visits to elder statesmen such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, and touring the new nation he fought for in the Revolutionary War.

Students of history will recognize that the Marquis de Lafayette, a nobleman born in Auvergne, France, was instrumental in helping America win the Revolutionary War, particularly the Virginia campaign, which culminated in the Battle of Yorktown.

What people may not remember is that Lafayette was initially given a very cold reception upon his arrival in the United States in 1777. Many American officials thought that he was just another arrogant French noble. According to Hoffman, when Lafayette initially visited the Continental Army, George Washington was "embarrassed" to have a Frenchman see the army in such a ragtag state. Lafayette, however, said that he was there to "learn, not to teach" and worked to organize and train American troops so that they could fight against the British. The most iconic image of this is his presence during the winter at Valley Forge.

Lafayette was quickly swept up in the politics of the French Revolution upon his return home, and spent several years in jail for his status as a moderate royalist. Even abroad, Hoffman notes that Lafayette continued his support of the United States, acting as a sort of "unpaid lobbyist" for the country.

For his contributions in the Revolutionary War, Lafayette has many things named after him in Lexington, including the county's name, Fayette, and Lafayette High School, which is the only institution outside of France permitted to display his family's coat of arms. Aside from this, however, Hoffman notes that Lafayette is something of a "forgotten founder," only recognized prominently in areas such as Massachusetts, where there is an annual "Lafayette Day" and Virginia, where he made much of his military contributions.

In his presentation at the Lexington History Museum, Hoffman will detail Lafayette's 48-hour visit to Lexington May 15-16th of 1825, in particular his visit to the Keene Mansion (on the site of present-day Keeneland), Transylvania University, and the Lexington Female Academy (subsequently renamed Lafayette Female Academy) both of which he praised as fine educational institutions that rival the schools of Europe. He will also provide details about the rest of Lafayette's Farewell Tour throughout the United States. The presentation is at 3 p.m. this Saturday in the museum's third floor courthouse room. Admission is \$15.

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