

- **Visit of 'forgotten founder' Lafayette to be recalled**
- **PORTSMOUTH — A guest speaker coming to the Athenaeum will bring attendees into a real-time look at the life of Gen. Gilbert du Motier Lafayette through his 1800s farewell visit to America.**



Author Alan Hoffman will speak on the life of Gen. Gilbert du Motier Lafayette at 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 10. There is no charge for the event, but those who are interested should call the Athena...

- **By Karen Dandurant**
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PORTSMOUTH — A guest speaker coming to the Athenaeum will bring attendees into a real-time look at the life of Gen. Gilbert du Motier Lafayette through his 1800s farewell visit to America.

Alan Hoffman is the author of "Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825," the book being a translation from French of the journal of August Levasseur, who served as Lafayette's private secretary during his final visit to America.

Lafayette is best known for his instrumental role in the American Revolution. Lafayette became a personal friend of George Washington and was a friend to the next five presidents: John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe and John Quincy Adams.

Lafayette gained the love of America for his aid to the country and, when he returned in 1824 to revisit old friends, he was hailed everywhere he went, including visits to Portsmouth, Concord and towns in southern Maine.

In his journal, Levasseur said that when they arrived in Portsmouth, Lafayette was greeted by infantry corps and nearly the entire city population. He was welcomed as the nation's guest by the President of the City Council.

Lafayette stayed at Langdon House. After settling in, he had a conversation with Indians and then visited the Navy Yard.

Lafayette Road was named for the general. Portsmouth resident Nancy Grossman, the author of "The Place Names of Portsmouth," said that at the time of his visit to the city, that part of town was being laid out and it was a natural fit.

Hoffman said there are more than 20 each of Lafayette and Fayette Roads in the U.S., and at least 12 LaGrange Roads, that being the name of the chateau where his wife lived. There are two towns called Lafayetteville.

"I'll talk about all of his travels in New Hampshire," said Hoffman. "I also want to put it in context by talking a bit about his life and reputation in the 19th century. He had an extraordinary reputation."

Hoffman said he came to the project because of his love of history, particularly the Revolutionary War.

"I studied history in college and found a book in 2002 called 'America's Jubilee.' It was about 1826, the 50th anniversary of the war. The first chapter was about the farewell tour of Lafayette. As I started reading more about Lafayette, the more impressed I became. He was a forgotten founder of our country, a man of great integrity and ethics."

In his studies, Hoffman learned of Levasseur's journal.

"I found the French copy at an antiquarian book store in Boston," he said.

Hoffman found his six years each of French and Latin studies had paid off.

"I opened to the preface, and started reading and I realized I could read it," Hoffman Said. "Apparently the grammar was ingrained in my skull."

Translating the book became a project.

"I spent two years translating the 1,100 pages," he said. "I'd translate two to three a night and on weekends, I'd do 10-15 pages. I finally had a stack eight inches high. I got it typed up and published."