



The Massachusetts Lafayette Society Newsletter

www.lafayettesocietyma.com

President's Letter – September 2010



Alan R. Hoffman

Dear Friend of
Lafayette:

This year Massachusetts Lafayette Day, celebrated on May 20, the anniversary of Lafayette's death, became "Lafayette Week."

It was kicked off on Tuesday evening, May 18, at the Armory in Faneuil Hall when the premier of a documentary about Colonel Robert **Murphy**, a decorated veteran of World War II was held. Present at this event were Count de Pusy **Lafayette**, the sixth generation grandson of **Lafayette** who has been a long-time member of our society, the most decorated General in the French Army, Marcel **Ceroni**, a leader of the French Military resistance in World War II with his lovely wife, also a resistance fighter, and the director of the film, John **Kapelos**. Madame Michele **Vlahos**, a long-time member of our society, played a major role in the financing and the production of the film, as well as the event at the Armory held by the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, of which Colonel **Murphy** was a member. Congratulations Michele!

On Wednesday morning, May 19, New Hampshire having rediscovered that it had a statute requiring the Governor to proclaim May 20 "New Hampshire Lafayette Day," celebrated it – albeit a day early – in a major way. The back story is

this: In June of 1825, when **Lafayette** visited Concord, NH while on his Farewell Tour of America, an elm tree was planted on the State House Lawn in his honor on the very spot where **Lafayette** had been seated at a banquet. That tree died in 1955 and the Legislature passed legislation identical to the Massachusetts statute (1935), except for the substitution of New Hampshire for Massachusetts.

There were speeches by the Governor of NH, John **Lynch**, the Count de Pusy **Lafayette**, and Consul General Christophe **Guilhou** in the Hall of Flags. Then the Count, the Consul General and Governor **Lynch** broke ground for the planting of a new Liberty Elm. In the Hall of Representatives, the Speaker of the House introduced the Consul General, General **Ceroni**, Count Gilbert and me. I was privileged to address the House of Representatives from the well of the House Chamber for 10 minutes on why New Hampshire should celebrate Lafayette Day. Gilbert spoke to the House from the Speaker's rostrum. It was quite a thrill.

The next event of Lafayette Week was our traditional cocktail reception on Wednesday evening which was held at the Ritz Carlton on the Common. The room was beautiful and the food was superb. The event was well-attended – approximately 55 – and we were joined by Marblehead's Myriam **Zuber** and a delegation of seven from Grasse, France who had come to Massachusetts to reactivate the sister-city relationship between Marblehead and

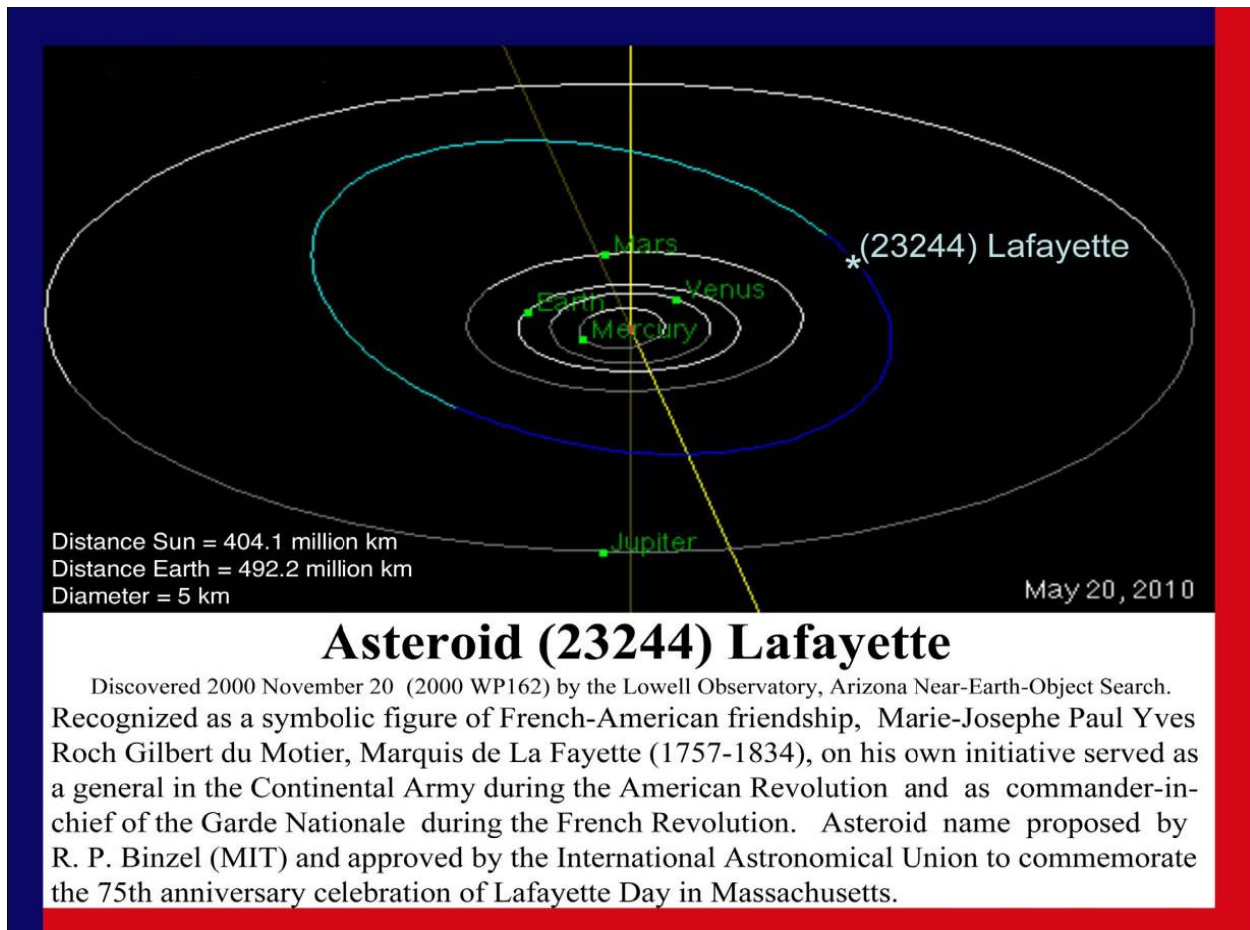


Grasse. We were also joined by Marvin E. **Gilmore**, Jr. who was to receive the French Legion of Honor Medal at the State House on the 20th. A highlight – if not the highlight – of the event was the announcement by long-time member Richard **Binzel**, an MIT Astrophysicist and Francophile, that he had succeeded in having a asteroid named for **Lafayette**. See below on “Asteroid (23266) Lafayette.”

The next day, May 20, 2010, was beautiful in more ways than one. About 350 people joined us in the Gardner Auditorium at the State House to celebrate General **Lafayette**'s memory and to observe the award of the Legion of Honor Medal to Marvin E. **Gilmore**, Jr., an accomplished octogenarian who is the first African-

American to receive that award in New England. Just as **Lafayette** was a hero of the American Revolution, Marvin and the other Americans who participated in the D-Day invasion were heroes of World War II.

Speakers that day included Count Gilbert, the Mayor of Grasse, Jean Pierre **Leleux**, Governor **Patrick**, Charles **Ogletree**, the Consul General and Mr. **Gilmore**. I, of course, could not resist giving an introductory statement and then a talk in which I tried to make the connection between the 1st Rhode Island battalion of slaves in the Revolution – the Jackie **Robinsons** of the American Army – Lafayette, his abolitionist work, and our honoree, Marvin E. **Gilmore**, Jr.





We then repaired to our traditional luncheon at the Union Club where attendance was at an all-time high of 125. At this luncheon, Mr. **Gilmore** received his American Medals and we dined with old friends – Lynn **Breaux** of Lafayette, Louisiana was present, having attended Tuesday's and Wednesday's events as well – and new friends including four members of a New York organization called the Order of Lafayette.

That evening, several of us travelled to Marblehead to participate in the reactivation ceremony between Marblehead and Grasse at Abbot Hall where I was one of three speakers to put a historical prospective on this event.

Friday morning, May 21, I joined Marvin **Gilmore** to tape a television show – “Urban Update” – about Mr. **Gilmore** and the Lafayette Day ceremonies. This show aired on Sunday, May 23.

On Friday afternoon, I returned to Marblehead with Lafayette re-enactor, Loic **Barnieu**, who had enchanted us in Boston in 2009. There were a series of events – including an art exhibition – designed to deepen the ties between the sister cities which culminated in Loic's performance in the Lee Mansion that was concluded by Huzzahs from the General **Glover** brigade and loud cheering from the audience, over 100 of whom had been packed into a room that held 35 seats. Count Gilbert could not attend these events as he was traveling to Easton, Pennsylvania to accept an Honorary Degree that Lafayette College was bestowing on his remarkable ancestor.

I want to recognize the contributions of our board members who helped to make these events possible and highly successful. While the entire board participated in the planning for these events, Rick **Detwiller** and his wife, Ellen, read the Governor's

proclamation at the Gardner Auditorium in English and French. Deb **Bouras** did a terrific job with lists and name tags for the cocktail reception. She also succeeded in relaunching our website. Madame **Ouellette**, with Nellie **Dunham**, kept track of the attendees at the entrance to the Luncheon, which was quite a mob scene. (Nellie handled that duty at the cocktail party too.) Pauline **Cusson** has been a terrific membership director and has done yeoman's service in getting notices out to members about our Society's events. She has also designed and coordinated our newsletters. Normand **Ouellette** and Polly **Lyman** contributed their ambitious and creative ideas to the planning process. Finally, my special thanks to Bill **Dunham**, President Emeritus, who has served as a my aide-de-camp, Sancho Panza, and mentor all in one.

Best regards,
Alan R. **Hoffman**,
President

More pictures of events on May 20th at our website:

http://www.lafayettesocietyma.com/mls_002.htm

Coming Events:

Join us on **Thursday, September 23, 2010**, at the Lynn Museum and Historical Society from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 to recognize our new honorary members – Dr. Helene Day, Marvin E. Gilmore, Jr., Henry Lee, Marthe Peloquin, and Enoch Woodhouse.

There will be a Wine & Cheese reception and a Lafayette slide presentation followed by tours of the Museum. Admission is free for members. A \$5 admission fee will be charged to nonmembers.



Lafayette Factoid

Do you know how the National Guard got its name? During the Farewell Tour, a militia unit in New York changed its name to “National Guard” to honor Lafayette for his service in the French Revolution as the commander of the National Guard of Paris, a citizen’s militia patterned on the American militia system. By the end of the 19th century, all the State militias in the United States had taken the name National Guard. The following is a quotation from a poster that the National Guard had commissioned in 1989, the 200th Anniversary of the French Revolution:

“New York City, New York, July 14, 1825. The 2d Battalion, 11th New York Artillery was one of the many militia commands that turned out [to] welcome [Lafayette].

The unit decided to adopt the title ‘National Guard,’ in honor of Lafayette’s celebrated *Garde Nationale de Paris*. The Battalion, later the 7th Regiment, was prominent in the line of march on the occasion of Lafayette’s final passage through New York en route home to France. Taking note of the troops named for his old command, Lafayette alighted from his carriage, walked down the line, clasping each officer by the hand as he passed. ‘National Guard’ was destined to become the name of the U.S. Militia.”



Membership Renewal Time:

We’ll be sending a renewal notice via e-mail in the next few days. Dues are due by the end of September. People who joined during the May events do not have to renew until September of 2011. Thank you

everyone for being so supportive of the Massachusetts Lafayette Society.

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