Hallowed Ground

The Alliance
How the French Helped America Win Its Freedom

PLUS:
Long-awaited grave markers for two French officers
The Beatles famously asserted that we each “get by with a little help from our friends,” a sentiment with widespread applicability in both historical and contemporary settings. This issue of Hallowed Ground examines the friendship without which America likely would not have come to be: the Franco-American Alliance that won the Revolutionary War. Truly, the scope and scale of French assistance in that conflict is vastly overlooked in most teachings of American history. Their materials, expertise, manpower and more were all integral to our ultimate victory. And yet, in singing along to the Hamilton soundtrack, how many teenagers proudly proclaim that “the codename is Rochambeau” without having any idea what or who that is?

In truth, the French did more than engineer the bombardment of Yorktown or block the British fleet from recapturing Cornwallis, the two feats for which they are most often given credit. After entering the war, French ships and troops were engaged across the Caribbean, throughout the North Atlantic and even as far afield as the Indian subcontinent. Their involvement grew in the Spanish and the Dutch, transforming our struggle for independence into a worldwide war. In fact, the final battle of the struggle that began on Lexington Green in April 1775 was fought near Guadaloupe in the Bay of Bengal, 98 months later and more than 13,000 miles away.

In a more modern sense, the work that the American Battlefield Trust undertakes is never done in isolation. We have excellent partner groups on the local level, helping us stay alert to acquisition opportunities and turning out to undertake ambitious stewardship and maintenance projects (Site registration for our 26th annual Park Day is now open! See page 8 for details). Nor could we operate effectively without lawmakers and officials at the state level, who oversee programs that assist in transactions and create the infrastructure to safeguard special places like our battlefields. Recently, both Kentucky and North Carolina have taken firm and visionary steps on behalf of American history, for which we are honored to publicly applaud them on pages 9 and 10.

Our chief national colleague remains the National Park Service, as seen so clearly in this issue. First the American Battlefield Protection Program created an entirely new grand infrastructure to support battlefield interpretation — with a further mechanism for restoration projects still in development and welcome its first applications. Then, just in time for Thanksgiving, that entity announced the single-largest battlefield lands acquisition grant in its 20-year history. The $4.6 million awarded to us to acquire 250 acres at Williamsburg, Va., is a powerful testament to how profoundly that program has grown since its inception, on the strength of our most important partner of all.

That most indispensable ally is YOU, our individual members. Without your support, we simply would not exist as the organization we are today. Not is it a matter of just your financial contributions, for which I am profoundly grateful. More fundamentally, it is your enthusiasm and your passion — your unshakable belief that there is power in place and that American history is more deeply understood for having access to the sites where it unfolded.

You are the driving force behind what we do, the reason that I — and the team of dedicated professionals that the Trust has assembled — come to work every day. Because people like you will learn from these places, will pass along those lessons to their children and grandchildren. It is for you that we most earnestly count our blessings, and upon whom we know without any shadow of doubt that we can depend in the new year that is dawning.

David N. Duncan
President, American Battlefield Trust

Carving History
Go behind the scenes — and back in time — at the John Stevens Shop, a three-century-old stone-carving institution, with our mini-documentary produced in collaboration with the Washington-Rowe-Mower Revolutionary Trails National Historic Trail. These talented artisans, masters of a dying craft, carry on a fine tradition. As their predecessors’ work graces still-standing headstones and other tablets or ornamentation across the country, so does a new generation leave its mark on modern monuments — from the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., to a pair of freshly dedicated markers for French dead in the American Revolution. www.battlefields.org/SurvivelThese
FROM THE TRENCHES
BREAKING PRESERVATION NEWS

TRUSTLaunches
ComprehensiveInventory
of battlefield markers & monuments

Earlier this year, a Trust-led network of historians undertook the massive task of researching and cataloging the commemorative markers, monuments, plaques and tablets located on America’s battlefields. The Trust has a well-established reputation as a nonpartisan historical authori-

ty and, through this project, will provide essential context in response to the ongoing conversation around remembering and memorializing our collective history.

After months of work to capture as much information as possible, especially contextual details often missing from summaries, the Trust has launched a beta version of our Battlefield Monuments and Markers Database. While still in work in progress — while the data for many key battlefields are fully input, our full vision to capture all Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and Civil War battlefields is so vast that it will take years to com-
plete — we invite our members to explore this fascinating articulation of the array of place-based commemorative and educational objects.

There has never been a comprehensive resource of this kind, capturing not just monument text and date erected, but also the artist, dedication speeches and any subsequent alterations made to the object, all of which are necessary for gaining a complete understanding of these cultural resources. Such comprehensive review also lays the groundwork for digital interpretation of monuments and markers when necessary for full appreciation and understanding. We will further use this information to inform conversations with lawmakers and get the public with an authoritative resource that helps tell the important and sometimes difficult story of America’s hallowed battlegrounds.

In conjunction with this launch, we have also added a number of contextual articles that shed light on nuanced aspects of how America’s battlefields came to be populated with place-based markers and monuments. These feature notable voices, like Timothy B. Smith, the author of multiple volumes on the early decades of the preservation movement and expert on the process by which the War Department placed myriad tablets on battlefields to educate future officers; Brian Matthew Jor-
dan, whose Peace in the Break of Dawn: Marching Home, Union Veterans and Their Unconquered Civil War made him well suited to address the role that veterans had in shaping practices; and Don Pfanz, now retired after decades with the National Park Service, but also celebrated as a founder of this organization.

Visit www.battlefields.org/monuments to explore all this existing content.

A MONUMENTAL SURPRISE
At Gettysburg’s Seminary Ridge

After serving as the president of the nation’s premier battlefield land preservation organization for more than 20 years, O. James Light-
"A small surprise to Jim Lightizer, NOEL KLINE

President David Duncan reveals a big
these

A small surprise to Jim Lightizer, NOEL KLINE

A small surprise to Jim Lightizer, NOEL KLINE

A small surprise to Jim Lightizer, NOEL KLINE

A small surprise to Jim Lightizer, NOEL KLINE
FAMILIAR FACES
Civil War Twin application finds your historical doppelgänger

HAVE YOU EVER come across a historical image and done a double-take wondering if that same person bears a striking resemblance to someone alive today—whether a celebrity or an acquaintance? Now you can quantify the degree of that phenomenon with Civil War Twin, a fun web application stemming from minds at the American Battlefield Trust and brought to life by the team behind Civil War Photo Sleuth (CWPS), a program designed to identify unknown Civil War portraits using a combination of facial recognition and object identification.

Both efforts were created by the Crowd Intelligence Lab at Virginia Tech, led by Dr. Kurt Luther, with support from the Trust and Military Images magazine. Vivian Mohamed, Marisha Kuruma, Marq Wang and David Thomas served as key technical advisors.

To find their Civil War Twin, users upload a photo, which the algorithm matches—after detecting roughly 27 facial landmarks—to faces from a historical photo database, narrowing results to most selected specifications that include race and gender, as well as military or civilian roles. The photo database consists of more than 30,000 period portraits within the Civil War Photo Sleuth project, which come from public collections like the Library of Congress and the National Archives, as well as uploads from individual history lovers.

While there are some 15,000 identified photos in the database, that’s only a drop in the bucket compared to the estimated 3.3 million soldiers and 27 million civilians who comprised the conflict. It’s also important to note that the database reflects historical biases; there are markedly fewer images of women and ethnic minorities compared to what is found in modern society.

Please note that the team behind Civil War Twins respects your privacy. Sample photos are available, and if you choose to upload your own image, it will not be stored or used to train AI models. Your photo and any facet will be deleted after use. The facial recognition service is provided by Microsoft, which does not store any information associated with your image. If you wish to receive downloadable photos of your Civil War Twin(s), it will not be stored unless you sign up to receive promotional emails.

Find your Civil War Twin at https://www.civilwartwin.com/

TRUST CONTINUES SUPPORT OF VETERANS ARCHAEOLOGY PROGRAM
Helps underwrite crew that will explore Texas’s Medina Battlefield

The American Battlefield Trust marked Veterans Day 2021 by pledging $10,000 to support a February 2022 project led by American Veterans Archaeological Recovery (AVAR). This effort intends to determine the true location of the Battle of Medina, which — despite being the bloodiest battle in Texas history — has long been historical hazy.

“The American Battlefield Trust understands keenly the power of place,” said Trust President David Duncan. “Archaeology projects the historical record onto a physical space and can deepen, or even reshape, our understanding of past events. And when it is under- taken by a uniquely qualified team like AVAR, it takes on even greater significance.”

AVAR CEO Dr. Stephen Humphreys agreed enthusiastically: “Over the past three years, AVAR has conducted a battery of laboratory-documented, non-invasive surveys at Medina, and we are ready to move forward with full-scale, open-dig excavations. As we combine the emotional impact of the battle site with the insights gained from the AVAR effort, we are uniquely positioned to provide insights about this critical event in American history that will be invaluable for both those veterans who have been fighting to identify the site of this battle as well as those who grew up generations later.”

The August 18, 1833, Battle of Medina was a critical moment in the Texas Revolution and the Mexican–American War (including a victory of the Revolutionary War). Euro-American (Civilians, former royalist soldiers, Native Americans and at least one enslaved Black man was destroyed by a superior Spanish force. Republican casualties, most executed following the surrendering defeat, remained unburied for years. Antonio López de Santa Anna, present with the victors as a young lieutenant, later replicated the decision to offer no quarter to his opponents when he led Mexican forces against the Alamo and Goliad in 1836.

At Medina, AVAR will be collaborating with local historical expert Brandon Seale, producer of the A New History of Old Texas podcast, and archaeologist and historian Kay Hines. Work will be carried out in the support of the County of Atascosa and the Texas Historical Commission, with technical supervision provided by Dr. Raymond Mauldin of the Center for Archaeological Research at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

In two previous seasons, Trust donations distributed PAH volunteers alongside National Park Service archaeologists on an award-winning interdisciplinary cultural resource team at Saratoga National Historical Park. Working alongside the Defense POW/MIA Accountability Agency, AVAR volunteers have assisted in projects to recover the remains of U.S. service members downed in WWII plane crashes over the U.K. and Sicily.

Donations in support of the Trust’s archaeological work—alongside AVAR and more broadly to other battlefield donations—may be made at www.battlefields.org/archaeology/.

LANDMARK GRANT will fuel major effort at Williamsburg!

JUST BEFORE THANKSGIVING, the Trust announced its contract to purchase 250 acres on the Williamsburg Battlefield in York County, Va. With its site, location and development potential, the tract’s master’s $2.2 million price had long posed a challenge. But buoyed by a landmark $4.6 million grant from ABPP, generous contributions from the Commonwealth of Virginia and a substantial land-owner donation, the Trust is confident that its preservation is on the horizon. Although much work remains before an ultimate victory, this is a major milestone in securing a major portion of a battlefield long considered virtually lost.

From the 1600s to the mid-19th century, a series of owners operated the land as a plantation, and as such it is rich in archaeological resources. Then, in 1861, Confederates built a second defensive line on the Peninsula, with No. II through IV on the site. The Civil War Fortification Study Group deems it one of the best-preserved early war redoubts in the state.

During the spring of 1862, Union forces moved to threaten the Confederate capital of Richmond from the southeast, with the Battle of Williamsburg as the first pitched battle of this offensive. On May 5, 1862, members of the local enslaved population—who had built the works—notified the Union army that two Confederate redoubts were unoccupied, allowing Brig. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock to overtake the Confederate forces. Despite being temporar- ily pushed back by an attack that swept across this property, Hancock’s forces were able to repel General Jenkins and Robert E. Lee, requir- ing the Confederates and earning the commander his sobriquet “Hancock the Superb.” Following the battle, the Union army used the nearby Curtis farm buildings as a field hospital.

AFTERNearly Thirty years of aide preservationists and $150,000 in matching funds to facilitate the pro- tection and study of battlefield landscapes, the Na- tional Park Service’s American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) has expanded its purview by awarding a first round of grants toward interpretation projects designed for public education. The new program awarded $197,273 to projects that use technology to bring the stories of sites of armed conflict alive for modern audiences, from tactile maps that expand accessibility, to smartphone apps with augmented reality, to videos and more. Innov- ative interpretation is especially critical as we prepare for commemorations marking the nation’s 250th anniversary in the coming years.

The American Battlefield Trust, which received five of the 11 grants awarded, celebrated the announcement along with other recipients. “This endorsement of the Trust’s work underwrites our industry-leading commitment to use the best 21st-century innovations to bring the 18th and 19th centuries alive,” said Trust President David Duncan.

The Trust-funded projects that rose to ABPP’s matching standards are: the creation of virtual field trips that will allow students across the country to explore Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and Civil War sites in a digital environment; a hi-def animated video series focused on diverse first-person narratives; an interdisciplinary drive to tell the stories of African American combatants who took up arms for a nation that did not consider them free or full citizens; a dynamic vision to work alongside the Preservation Battlefield State Park to transform the visitor experience at the climactic site of the Revolutionary War’s Ten Crucial Days; and an augmented reality undertaking that will allow visitors to downtown Charleston, S.C., to stand in the literal shadow of the imposing Hospital that defended the city against British siege forces, as well as other transformative experiences along the Liberty Trail.

‘Now more than ever, we know how modern technol- ogy can bring people together. Harnessing powerful stories at these battlefields and sites of armed conflict can open our eyes to the lessons from the past and lead us to greater understanding of our shared history. The National Park Ser- vice is proud to support local communities as they improve universal access, engage new audiences and broaden our perspectives around these important places,’ said NSF Deputy Director Shum Way-Bing.


ABPP’s Battlefield Interpretation Grants empower preservation partners nationwide to modernize and enhance battlefield interpretation—to inspire wonder, understanding and empathy at the places witnessed some of our nation’s most challenging events. In addition, the program also supports three other grants: Battlefield Land Acquisition, Preservation Planning and the newly authorized Battlefield Restoration Grants. This financial assistance gen- erates community-driven stewardship of historical resources at the state, tribal and local levels.

FROM THE TRENCHES
BREACHING PRESERVATION NEWS

Princeton Battlefield State Park
Princeton, N.J.
MERRIDETH BARNES

CELEBRATING NEW FEDERAL MATCHING GRANTS
for battlefield interpretation

www.battlefields.org AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST

6 HALLLOWED GROUND WINTER 2021

www.battlefields.org AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST
ACH YEAR, thousands of history enthusiasts, families, Boy and Girl Scouts, ROTC units and more come together to help keep our nation’s heritage not only preserved, but pristine. In 2022, volunteers will muster at battlefields, museums, cemeteries and historical sites on April 9.

Since 1996, community-minded citizens have taken part in Park Day events at various sites across the country. Activities are chosen by each participating site and can include building trails, raking leaves, painting signs, putting up fences and contributing to site interpretation. In addition to the satisfaction that volunteer work brings, participants receive official Park Day water bottles and may have the chance to hear a local historian speak on the importance of their site. Park Day can also be used to fulfill the service requirements associated with Scout groups, student organizations, training corps programs, school graduation requirements, civic organizations and more.

While Park Day is an annual tradition for many locations, new sites are always welcome to join the movement. Site managers are invited to register online at www.battlefields.org/parkday. As the event grows closer, specific details for individual locations will be posted so that volunteers can identify an opportunity near them.

ON NOVEMBER 9, American Battlefield Trust President David Duncan travelled to Kentucky to visit key allies in the fight to protect Bluegrass State battlefields. Pictured, left to right: Chad Greene and Jani House of the Kentucky Military History Preservation Alliance, longtime advocates of preserving Perryville Battlefield; Rep. David Meade, Speaker Pro Tem of the Kentucky House, and Robert Rivers, President of the Kentucky Senate; Sen. Rick Giddrell, Senate sponsor of legislation that created the Kentucky Battlefield Preservation Fund; and Trust President David Duncan. Also on hand: displays of local history, including photos of the famous Germania Bridge over the Cumberland River.

BENTONVILLE PLAQUE HONORS LEGENDARY HISTORIAN ED BEARS

THREE GENERATIONS of the Bears family gathered at Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site on October 30 for the dedication of a plaque honoring the memory of Ed Bears, a site that benefitted singularly from his preservation activism. Left to right: flanked by longtime Trust Celor Bearers and Carolina Campaign Civil War Roundtable activists Gene and Carolyn McEwen; Ed’s daughter Glynis; her son Todd and wife Danahie with their three-year-old twins Oliver and Tristan; and her son Andy.

CALL VIRTUAL SHOT GUN!
Travel with a Trust historian for a two-hour video tour of Gettysburg

THE POWER OF PLACE drives the American Battlefield Trust’s dual preservation and education mission through the understanding that a protected landscape is one into which captivating stories of the past can be best projected. Just shy of the 150th anniversary of the dedication of the Soldiers National Cemetery, the Trust debuted a two-hour online video tour of the Gettysburg Battlefield, approximating what it was like to drive past and walk around iconic landmarks like Little Round Top and the Bloody Angle. The free tour, created with the content of the National Park Service, is now available on the Trust’s YouTube channel and website.

“It is easy to get lost in the wonder of Gettysburg, but here at the American Battlefield Trust we do working drawings to both preserve this magnificent place of history and help students and history lovers navigate it with ease,” said Trust President David Duncan. With Google cameras affixed to his car and a wealth of stories stashed in his mind, Trust Chief Historian Gary Adelman — also a lifelong licensed battlefield guide at Gettysburg — acts as viewers through the historic town and national military park. Whether it be through small details or big-picture ideas, the expert storyteller weaves together an exciting arrangement of Gettysburg videos that will keep viewers glued to their screens.

“Gettysburg is a place where stories live, and at the Trust we’re always looking for new and dynamic ways to bring stories to life,” said Adelman. “While this tour gives online audiences an in-depth look at the battlefield, I cannot emphasize enough how profound it is to see Gettysburg with your own eyes.”

While the new video resource delivers unprecedented digital access to a Gettysburg licensed battlefield guide experience, it is no substitute for an in-person visit with one such guide. Arrangements for touring with a licensed battlefield guide can be made through the Gettysburg Foundation, on site at the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum & Visitor Center or directly through the Association of Licensed Battlefield Guides.
FROM THE TRENCHES
BREAKING PRESERVATION NEWS

NORTH CAROLINA EMBRACES ITS HALLLOWED HISTORY
$1.6 million investment will protect historic sites from encroachment

WHEN GOV. ROY COOPER’S signature was affixed to the North Carolina budget on November 18, the future of the Tarheel State’s hallowed ground became brighter. The state included $1.6 million in its budget to preserve and restore North Carolina’s battlefield land, a measure that received bipartisan support from both chambers of the North Carolina General Assembly and will help pave the way for a meaningful 250th anniversary commemoration. The measure is much needed at present, as the state is experiencing rapid growth that carries the possibility of encroachment upon battlefield land. Recognizing that this measure enables the Trust applies the General Assembly and all those involved in this effort.

"Investing in our national heritage opens doors for meaningful impact," said American Battlefield Trust President David Duncan. "Whether it is sought after in open green spaces; outdoor classrooms for current and future generations; or identity builders for towns seeking to showcase their profound past — North Carolina’s battlefields can serve their communities in multiple ways."

Representing the largest-ever appropriation for battlefield preservation in North Carolina history, the $1.6 million accounts for the preservation of nine tracts — roughly 700 acres — across the Bentonville Battlefield, the Averasboro Battlefield and the Wyse Fork Battlefield. The Trust will build upon these financial resources by leveraging them against federal matching grants and private donations, which, in combination, would be applied to the acquisition of the nine tracts — valued just below $3.2 million.

Separately, the budget also includes $50,000 to establish a North Carolina Road to Freedom program. First introduced in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Road to Freedom project undertakes alongside heritage tourism experts at Civil War Trails, Inc., highlights the under-told stories of the African-American experience during a state’s Civil War-era by linking together historic sites.


FIELD REPORTS
LOCAL PARTNERS AND ALLIES

PICTURING THE REVOLUTION
New MOAR exhibit helps visitors envision the era

REDATING PHOTOGRAPHY — and even before the advent of lithographic printing enabled detailed images to be mass-produced — the American Revolution lacks the images that students of later eras find invaluable to immerse themselves in the emotional resonance of a conflict. However, the work of exacting and talented historical artists can help overcome this dearth of pictorial representation.

In October, the Museum of the American Revolution (MOAR) in Philadelphia debuted a new exhibit designed to engage visitors with a visual world that brings the compelling stories about the diverse people and complex events of the American Revolution to life. Liberty: Don Troiani’s Paintings of the Revolutionary War, the first major exhibition of the work Troiani has devoted much of his career to, will run through September 2022.

"It is my hope that my paintings help people today grasp the significance of the Revolutionary struggles of the people who lived 250 years ago, whose brave actions continue to shape our lives," said Troiani, in advance of the unveiving.

In addition to showcasing more than 30 original works, the exhibit is intended to highlight the depth of research that goes into each painting by including artifacts used as references and other tools of the trade. Alongside renderings of personal narratives like Washington’s during 1776 attack on Trenton and the Franco-American victory at Yorktown in 1781 are a number of images that drive home the often-overlooked diversity of the Revolutionary War story. These include paintings showing the contributions of Native American troops at Saratoga and King’s Bridge, as well as the most recent of Troiani’s works: Brave Men as Ever Fought.

Commissioned by MOAR and funded by the National Park Service Washington, D.C. Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Grant National Historic Trails, Brave Men as Ever Fought depicts the First Rhode Island Regiment, consisting of Black Patriot soldiers, passing through Philadelphia en route to Yorktown, where its troops would play an important role in that dynamic action.

Special activities and resources are available to enhance the exhibit experience, including first-person theatrical performances written by local playwright Marissa Kennedy about the life of young sailor James Porton, a key figure in the painting. A free audio tour and family tour guide are available, while a 360-degree virtual tour and teacher guide will debut in early 2022.★★

SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI CONTEMPLATES
"Why Is America Free?"

FOUNDED IN 1783, the Society of the Cincinnati is the nation’s oldest patriotic organization. Today, its more than 4,400 members — qualified male descendants of officers of the Continental army and navy and their French counterparts during the Revolutionary War — reside across the United States, France and more than 25 other countries. The oldest members are great-great-grandsons of those Patriots, while the youngest are nine generations removed from their Revolutionary ancestors. While fellowship is at the heart of the Society, education is its al, as members strive more to learn America’s revolutionary ideals be forgotten. New activities and educational programs related to the principles and ideals of its founders, the modern Society maintains its headquarters, library and museum in Washington, D.C. In 2022, the Society created the American Revolution — Why Is America Free, a joint Society of the Cincinnati as an advocacy organization dedicated to promoting understanding and appreciation of the American Revolution and its legacy. Its chief goal is to ensure that the strength of the Revolution, the constructive accomplishments of the revolutionaries and the legacy of the Revolution are widely recognized within history education. Amid advocating for the memory and ideals of the Revolution, the Institute strives to protect tangible aspects of that heritage, including books, manuscripts, art and artifacts, as well as battlefields, and encourages the study, exhibition, interpretation and enjoyment of these treasures. The Society and Institute maintain that the history and ideals of the American Revolution are the foundation of our national identity. If they are forgotten, we will have nothing to hold us together. Future generations, unaware of the historic sacrifices that secured our liberty, will fail to value that liberty and sacrifice and survive their ignorance.

In service of this vision, the Institute has launched Why America Is Free, a new narrative history of the American Revolution from its origins in the social and demographic experience of mid-18th-century British America, through the Crisis in the British Empire that followed the French and Indian War, to the Revolutionary War and the creation of the first great republic in modern history. Written for teachers, secondary classrooms and America’s Interest on understanding our national origins, Why America Is Free argues that the American Revolution was the central event in our history — the turning point between our colonial origin as a society in which freedom was limited and in which everyone was subject to a distant monarch and a republican form of government expressing ideals of liberty, equality, natural and civil rights and responsible citizenship.

Why America Is Free is an ideal enrichment tool for classroom and remote use and the foundation for a series of online lesson plans on the pivotal events of the Revolution discussed in the book. Learn more at www.americarevolutioninstitute.org/why-america-is-free.

ABOVE: "Brave Men as Ever Fought" Painting ©DON TROIANI

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10 KILLED GROUND WINTER 2023

11 KILLED GROUND WINTER 2023
SUCCESS STORIES

ACHIEVEMENTS ABROAD

CREATING A ROUTE TO VICTORY
National Historic Trail traces a physical and thematic journey

by ROBERT A. SELIG

THE WASHINGTON-ROCHAMBEAU Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail was created in March 2009, making it the youngest of the 19 national historic trails (NHTs) in the National Park Service (NPS) system. It began as a private-public effort in Connecticut in 1995 with the eventually successful attempt to preserve and protect the Base Farm in Bolton, site of two encampments of French forces under the comte de Rochambeau from June 21 to 25, 1781, and November 4 to 5, 1782, from commercial development. In October 2000, it became a national effort with the passage of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Heritage Act of 2000, which required “the Secretary of the Interior to complete a research study of the 600 mile route through Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Virginia, used by George Washington and General Rochambeau during the American Revolutionary War.”

Thus the route is designated to tell the story of the movements of Continental army and allied French forces from bases in New York and Rhode Island south to Yorktown, how this journey contributed to the British surrender on October 19, 1781, and how Patriot and French troops returned north again, the Continental army in November and December 1781, and French forces in July and August 1782.

The themes, goals and unifying purpose of the route are defined by the National Trails System Act of 1968, which requires NHTs to “follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel of national historical sig-

ificance,” and by the NPS Final Review Document of October 2006, which states that the route is to “serve interpretive, educational, commemorative, and reenactment purposes through recreational, driving, and water-based routes.” The route’s intent is to preserve and interpret campsites, surviving road sections, buildings and other architectural or landscape features.

This goal was achieved through resource studies and site surveys for the nine states and the District of Columbia through which the NHT runs. The studies, beginning in Connecticut in 1999, and ending in New Hampshire in 2018, were funded by various public and private donors, the NPS, and the National Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association (WRR), a nonprofit corporation incorporated in Delaware in 2003, and its state affiliates.

This research identified hundreds of resources and added the State of New Hampshire, where a number of vessels in the fleet of Admiral Louis-Philippe de Rigaud, Marquis de Vau-creul, charged with transporting French forces to the West Indies, anchored from August to December 1782. Research also showed that, with the exception of battlefields related to the Burgoyne Campaign, allied forces visited or marched across every Revolutionary War battlefield along America’s East Coast from Bunker Hill to Newport, White Plains, Morristown, Princeton, Trenton, Germantown, Redbank, Goose’s Bridge and Yorktown, French diaries, journals and letters describing these sites constitute invaluable resources of the appearance of these sites, supplementing American and British descriptions.

The racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious makeup of the Continental army reflected the diversity of the nascent United States. French troops reflected the vast empire from which they originated. As these soldiers met their allies, and the civilian populations through which they marched, their encounters made them aware of who they were in part by choosing them who they were not. French observations of life in America, particularly of slavery, of customs, habits and foods, often contain information not found in American sources.

The route provides an opportunity to show how victory at Yorktown, indeed in the War of Independence, could only be achieved through the non-military contributions of thousands of Americans who provided cattle, grain, firewood and lodging, and who served as ferriesmen, wagon drivers and guides to the troops marching to Virginia. No single community was large enough to supply the roughly 2,400 Americans and 4,500 French troops commanded by hundreds of officers and accompanied by well over 1,000 servants, riding on at least 1,300 horses and hundreds of wagons drawn by as many as 2,000 oxen as they made their way to Virginia. Access to supplies could only be ensured if the troops spread out across a larger area. The legislation establishing the NHT takes this into account when it defines the route as “a corridor” of multiple routes rather than as a single route.

In 1776, France became the first nation to support the rebellious colonies in their struggle, first clandestinely and then openly after the treaties of February 1778. Few Americans realize the extent of that support or how crucial it was in achieving independence. The Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail celebrates that victory and the Franco-American friendship that has endured until today.

Robert A. Selig is a historical consultant with a PhD in history from the Universität Würzburg in Germany and has served as project historian for the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route since 1997.
THE TIPPING POINT

From French arms to French fleets, how France changed the tides of the American Revolution

by BOB ZELLER

When 70-year-old Benjamin Franklin boarded the Continental troop-of-war Republique in Philadelphia on October 16, 1778, for a month-long voyage to France, General George Washington’s Continental army was losing the American Revolutionary War.

Franklin knew his mission was straight-forward, if not simple. He would use his intellect, charm, wit and experience to convince France to war with the side on the Beringing United States of America. Franklin’s popularity and persuasive powers, and a key American battlefield victory, were crucial factors that led France to join the war in 1778.

France provided the money, troops, armsment, military leadership and naval support that tipped the balance of military power in favor of the United States and paved the way for the Continental army’s ultimate victory. When British General Charles Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown on October 19, 1781, his vanquished troops marched through a corridor formed by the victorious forces. On one side were the Americans; on the other side stood the French.

Wars between the British and French date back to the 17th century, escalating as European powers established and expanded their colonial empires. France had suffered bitter defeat in the most recent conflict, the Seven Years’ War (1756–63), called the French and Indian War across the Atlantic. It had lost a majority of its claims to North America, forced to cede to England most of its land there, including all of Canada.

As England’s American colonies became ever more rebellious in the 1760s and 1770s, France was naturally predisposed to favor the American revolutionaries and saw an opportunity to try to blunt the power of its longtime adversary. It began providing covert support — beginning with badly needed gunpowder — in the spring of 1776. The Declaration of Independence was well received across France, and Franklin was warmly welcomed when he arrived in Paris in December, charming his way to celebrity status.

In the face of the dreadful final weeks of 1776 — “the times that try men’s souls,” as Thomas Paine wrote — Washington scratched out miraculous victories at Trenton and Princeton that brought new hope and life to his ragged Continental. Covert support from France expanded to include field guns, arms, ammunition, money and other assistance. Some of this aid came in the form of 20-year-old French aristocrat Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, who paid his way to America in 1777 to fight with distinction for the Continental army as a major general in Washington’s command.

When American troops, commanded by General Horatio Gates, defeated the Brit- ish at the Battles of Saratoga on September 19 and October 7, 1777, it is estimated that as many as nine out of 10 American soldiers carried French arms, and virtually all had French gunpowder. French field guns also played a critical role in a decisive triumph that forced the historic surrender of British General John Burgoyne and his entire army.

The stunning success at Saratoga gave Franklin what he had been pleading for — explicit French support in the war. King Louis XVI approved negotiations to that end. With Franklin negotiating for the United States, the two countries agreed to a pair of treaties, signed on February 6, 1778, that called for France’s direct participation in the war.

At Valley Forge that day, Washington’s army was suffering. More soldiers were dying of desenting with each new frigid winter day. The Res were just trying to survive. But by May 1, when Washington received word of the good news from Paris, the harsh winter was a bad memory. He assembled the entire army at Valley Forge for a martial celebration. The ceremony included Washington’s request that “upon a signal given, the whole army will huzza. Long Live the King of France.”

A French fleet conducted operations in America in 1778–79, but the support that made the difference came in 1780, when French General Jean-Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau, arrived in Rhode Island with more than 5,000 French soldiers.

Though he spoke no English, Rochambeau immediately hit it off with Washington. The two formed an effective team, and their combined forces became, as Washington put it, seemingly “acquainted by one spirit.”

Beginning in August 1781, they moved south into Virginia on the offensive, with a plan to trap British General Cornwallis and his 8,000-man army encamped at Yorktown. Lafayette’s force was already there, blocking escape routes.

The plan’s success hinged on French naval support. Washington and Rochambeau had requested and received the assistance of the French fleet in the West Indies commanded by Admiral François Joseph Paul de Grasse, who was sailing to Virginia. If de Grasse could wrest control of the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay from the British fleet protecting Cornwallis, the British Army would be surrounded.

Beginning on September 5, 1781, in the Battle of the Capes, one of history’s most consequential naval battles, de Grasse defeated the British fleet, damaging it badly enough to force its withdrawal to New York. Cornwallis was surrounded, and the Siege of Yorktown began. On October 19, 1781, Cornwallis surrendered. His defeat broke the back of Britain’s war effort and led to the formal end of the war in 1783.

Lafayette was one of many French heroes in the Revolutionary War, but his name came to shine the brightest in the United States, especially after he returned to America for an enormously popular, year-long farewell tour in 1824–25. The aging commander visited all the young nation’s 24 states and received a hero’s welcome at many stops. He was the last surviving French general of the Revolutionary War.

Bob Zeller is one of the country’s leading authorities on Civil War photography and co-founder and president of the nonprofit Center for Civil War Photography. He has published 20 books, including Fighting the Second Civil War: A History of Battlefield Preservation and the Emergence of the Civil War Trust.

FRANCE was naturally predisposed to favor the American revolutionaries and saw an opportunity to try to blunt the power of its longtime adversary.
RETRACING OUR STEPS

The Joint Reconnaissance Tour in the Winter of 1780—1781
by DR. IRIS DE RODE

Studying the terrain to analyze how the action unfolded on Revolutionary War battlefields isn’t just a modern pursuit. It was the first order of business when the French Army arrived on American soil, seeking to understand the war they had just joined.
TODAY, the American Battlefield Trust preserves America’s hallowed battlegrounds and educates the public about what happened there and why it matters, an imperishable legacy. On it’s 240th anniversary, during the Revolutionary War, America’s French allies already recognized the importance of the protection, research and documentation of those very recent battlefields. The individual’s actions, intended, in the words of French Major General Francois Jean de Chastellux (1734–88), to protect those for the mighty British Royal Army, but also to inform future generations on the war they fought.

Contrary to popular belief, rather than waiting for their respective leaders to dispatch more troops and supplies, the French and American officers did not sit idle over the winter of 1780–81. Rather, the French organized a joint reconnaissance examine to previous battlefields of the American Revolution under the initiative of Chastellux, an overeager figure who played a crucial role as a liaison officer between the French and Americans, and in the logistical and strategic planning of the allied army. My discovery of an unpublished letter, in the ancestral chateau of the Chastellux family in Burgundy, reveals numerous details about his role, especially on this forgotten reconnaissance mission.

After arriving in Newport, Rhode Island, in July 1780 with the French expeditionary force of more than 3,500 men under command of the Comte de Rochambeau, Chastellux and his French brothers in arms realized that the relationship with their American allies was troubled by mutual prejudices, sharp cultural differences and the fact that less than a generation previous, they had been bitter enemies on the battlefield during the Seven Years’ War (known in North America as the French and Indian War). Furthermore, the low numbers of soldiers their respective armies had at their disposal to fight the powerful British Army disheartened both sides. The French were also disappointed by the quality of the Continental Army troops. The soldiers were “untutored, ill-disciplined,” and in contrast to their own splendid French military uniforms, American soldiers were dressed in “rags.” In addition to all of this, the French realized they had outdated maps and that many crucial details on the war they were fighting were unknown to them. This alliance seemed doomed.

However, to prevent disaster, Chastellux secured the blessing of Generals Washington and Rochambeau to send a small group of officers on a reconnaissance tour through different North American states. This “Gallic-American” team—Chastellux’s term—was sent on a joint mission to study the American theater of war to find out what could be done to get out of the allies’ desperate situation, but also to spend time together to overcome their prejudices and differences.

The use of military reconnaissance and the study of former battlefields is as old as warfare itself, but the practice of these research missions became more institutionalized and organized during the 18th century in France. Standardization in the practices of documentation had expanded greatly after the Seven Years’ War, and English and French military administrations established a separate “départ” to preserve and collect maps and military reports based on reconnaissance missions. Additionally, officers, cartographers, and engineers were trained in the “art of reconnaissance” and “soldiers in warfare” in newly formed military colleges. The Enlightenment heavily inspired all of this: Based on the use of reason and observations, French officers collected, catalogued, systemized and organized their knowledge about war. In America, the Continental Army had also performed reconnaissance missions, but its officers were eager to cooperate with the French in their mission, not only to show them the lands, but also to learn from them on the art of reconnaissance and share their own ideas.

Starting in early November 1780, the French party left Newport, then it was onward to Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, and Delaware, with relevant American officers joining along the way. The French group consisted of Chastellux and his aides-de-camp, Theodore Lynch and Charles-Louis Montecquieu (grandson of the famous philosopher), and Rochambeau’s aide-de-camp Mathieu Dumas (a cartographer), Charles de Damas and Baron de Turpin (an engineer-cartographer). They met with the officers of the Continental Army during their travels, amongst whom were the Marquis de Lafayette, Alexander Hamilton, John Laurens and Philip Schuyler. On two occasions, George Washington himself joined the party. A reflection of this reconnaissance expedition would be the publication of this book in 1786, with 13 reports and drafts (today unpublished) on this reconnaissance tour in his private collection. He also included some of his observations in his travel diary, which he published in 1786.

As a typical French “soldier-philosopher” of the Military Enlightenment, Chastellux believed that “The best method for military men in following the campaigns of great generals or the ground, is not to have the different positions pointed out and explained to them; it is much better, before they are made acquainted with these details, to visit the places, to look well about on every side, and to propose to themselves little problems on the nature of the ground and on the advantages to be derived from it; then to compare their ideas with the facts, by which means they will be enabled to rectify the former, and to appraise the latter.”

Chastellux and his research team visited West Point, Stone Point, Princeton, Trenton, Germantown, White Marsh, Brandwytwe, Barren Hill, Stillwater, and Saratoga, all sites of battles fought within the past four years. They always visited a site with Continental army officers who had been present and brought different British and American (to have both sides) military accounts and maps of the Comte de Rochambeau, Chastellux and his French brothers in arms realized that the relationship with their American allies was troubled by mutual prejudices, sharp cultural differences and the fact that less than a generation previous, they had been bitter enemies on the battlefield during the Seven Years’ War (known in North America as the French and Indian War). Furthermore, the low numbers of soldiers their respective armies had at their disposal to fight the powerful British Army disheartened both sides. The French were also disappointed by the quality of the Continental Army troops. The soldiers were “untutored, ill-disciplined,” and in contrast to their own splendid French military uniforms, American soldiers were dressed in “rags.” In addition to all of this, the French realized they had outdated maps and that many crucial details on the war they were fighting were unknown to them. This alliance seemed doomed.

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by this precaution, he would have been at liberty to have approached the Delaware, and to have crossed it as soon as Clinton.

After visiting the “buzzing town” of Philadelphia, the group went to the battlefield of Germantown. There, they analyzed many details, including the specifics of the Continental army’s organization and its strengths and weaknesses. Based on the observations Chastellux had made under the guidance of John Laurens (Washington’s aide-de-camp), he wrote that the Americans had shown a remarkable will to fight, and concluded: “Perhaps this army, notwithstanding the slowness of its maneuvers and its inexperienced in the war, may merit the praises of Europeans.” Despite this will to fight, the Continental Army presented many weaknesses to Chastellux. They had made many mistakes at Germantown, and overall, Chastellux commented: “One can only be persuaded that they were devoted to destruction, and that the alliance with France alone proved the means of their preservation.”

In his personal notes on this battle, Chastellux commented on the ill-disciplined, slow-moving columns and inexperienced army, and made long remarks on how they could be improved by different column formations and better communication, training and discipline measures, something Chastellux had been thinking about for his own French Army for more than 30 years. There was hope for the American army, if a reorganization were put into place, if more soldiers were recruited and trained, and especially if the Continental’s worked together with enough French troops and the French fleet.

In addition, during his research Chastellux found another reason for hope for the French collaboration with the Continental Army: its general, George Washington. This can be illustrated by his visit to Pennsylvania’s Whitemarsh Battlefield with the Marquis de Lafayette. “It was a bold position which the English never dared to attack… The position is excellent…” the more respectable this position was, the more honors it did to Gen. Washington, who had devised, rather than discovered it. This was really an eagle eye’s view, for it seems he must have hovered above the trees to examine the ground concealed by them.” These kinds of positive remarks on Washington are abundant in Chastellux’s papers, as well as those of

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DION MENHEZ

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his colleagues. They show an evolution in the French mind on the capabilities of the general of the Continental army, which strengthened their hopes on the alien’s potential, and especially for their future campaigns.

After Germantown, the “Galio Américan” group continued to the battlefield of Barren Hill, Pennsylvania — today known as Lafayette Hill. The eponymous general led the tour, and Chastellux wrote a detailed description of the general’s actions there, based on his and other testimonies. He wrote: “I followed the exact road of the left column, which heads to Schofick Falls, where there is a sort of scattered village, composed of several beautiful country houses.” He was not left untouched by the “pleasing landscape that would not escape the pencil of Robert and le Prince.” This passage shows the research methods employed: The French officers talked to participants first, and then formed their own ideas and analysis on the ground.

During the time of travel, a severe winter had set in, as Chastellux remarked: “I turned my face towards the north, to seek after the traces of General Gates and General Burgoyne, amidst heaps of snow.” He was eager to visit the famous site of Saratoga, New York. The French group did this with Colonel Alexander Hamilton and Brigadier-General James Clinton. Before leaving, they stayed at General Philip Schuyler’s house in Albany to discuss the “Northern campaign.” Chastellux commented: “Mr. Schuyler, to give the best answer to our questions, proposed to us to read his political and military correspondence with General Washington, which we accepted with great pleasure. The General opening his pocketbook, the Vicomte de Noailles and I divided the different manuscripts containing upwards of sixty pages of close writing.”

A few reports and correspondences detailed the “dangerous and ineffective campaign on Canada,” in the words of Chastellux; others covered past battles. Chastellux and the others read military reports the whole day, and only had “supper at ten.” This tiring day showed that researching war was not only about going to the ground, but was additionally based on reading different accounts of battles and reports of military planning. Chastellux had copies made of these correspondences and kept them in his private papers, which are today kept in the Château de Chastellux.

After staying with Schuyler’s team, the French continued with their research on the ground, this time at the famous battlefield site of Saratoga, where, Chastellux wrote, “I continued reconnoitering here till night, sometimes walking in the snow, where I sunk to the knees, and sometimes traveling still less successfully in a sled... After surveying [British General John] Burgoyne’s lines, I at length got down to the high road, passing through a field where he had established his hospital.” He asked his mapmakers to draw accurate maps of the battlefield, including the positions of the armies. Escaping the snows and returning south, the French team continued to Brandywine, Pennsylvania, noting that they passed “the road where M. de Lafayette wounded as he was, stopped the fugitives, and made the first discoveries for rallying them behind the creek.” Lafayette and his aide-de-camp, Jean Joseph Gimat, and the Generals Anthony Wayne and John Sullivan now accompanied the French travelers, and these American gentlemen provided the French with valuable information on the past battles and the American lands.

Chastellux also had received “information from General George Washington himself,” in the form of reports or letters. He wrote: “We got on horseback at nine, provided with our breakfast, under the direction of General Howe, and engraved in England, but we got more information from an American major, with whom M. de Jouvenceau had appointed a place of meeting. This officer was present at the engagement, and his house being on the field of battle, he knew it better than anybody.”

In Brandywine, Chastellux reconnoitered the events prior to the battle, and described George Washington’s preparations, commenting:

“When a general has foreseen everything, when he has made the best possible dispositions, and when his activity, his judgment and his courage in the action correspond with the wisdom of his measures, has he not always accomplished everything with every impartial judge? And, if by unforeseen accidents, the laurels he has meritied drop from his head, is it not the general’s duty easily to collect, and place them on his head again? Let us hope that posterity will perform this study better than us, and let us be such wise dispositions were discovered by the mistakes of some officers, and the inexperience of the troops.”

In this passage, Chastellux not only praises Washington, he also shows that he’s thinking about future generations and how they’ll study and judge the American Revolutionary War. Furthermore, his lengthy writings on Brandywine once again provide descriptions on how the research was conducted, noting that “there is disagreement in some particulars... I was therefore obliged to draw my conclusions from the different narratives, and to follow none of them implicitly. After this tour of the American battlefields and after visiting George Washington a second time at his head-quarters in Philadelphia, the travelers said goodbye to their new American friends, with whom they had developed a relationship based on mutual trust and recognition of respective strengths. The French slowly made their way back, on slighs, to Newport, where they arrived in early January and promptly began to collect their observations in large military reports. This is reflected in Chastellux’s private papers, which hold maps, long manuscript lists, drawings, descriptions and drafts, as well as the military reports they wrote in February based on their primary sources. In these, they systematically describe the battlefields they visited. They always started with a topographical description of the battlefield, then the details of the battle were discussed, followed by a detailed analysis of successes and problems and ending with what one could learn from this information. The French did this to understand the American theater of war as well as the American army’s officers, but they also sent several of the reports to the French Army administration for preservation in the military depot of Louis XVI. Within that broader body, these reports demonstrate an expanding definition of intelligence gathering to include research on American language, culture, religion and customs, as well as commerce and agriculture. These editions were due to an enlightened interest in discovering and understanding the world, in addition to useful information to wage war. Based on the conclusions of this reconnaissance trip, it is possible to observe a shift from the despoir of the French troops’ first months in America, to hope for the future French-American campaign. This hope continued to evolve in the spring and summer of 1781, when Chastellux was secretly sent on a mission to the Chesapeake Bay and Yorktown in April, and several French expeditionary units, together with Continental troops, organized a “reconnaissance in force” mission on New York in July. The results of the reconnaissance mission were crucial for the outcome of the American Revolutionary War: Based on the French research, with the previous aid of American officers, it had become clear that Washington’s initial wish to attack New York was too dangerous, and that the safe alternative was Yorktown. The March to Yorktown and the following battle and siege, were a success because of the prior research and understanding of roads and waterways, sources for provisions and the potential battlefield itself.”

Dr. Iris de Rode is a Dutch historian who specializes in the French participation in the American Revolution. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Paris 8, based on the personal papers of François-Jean de Chastellux, and teaches at Sorocsio-

Brandywine Battlefield Historic Site, Chadds Ford, Pa. M. MEREDITH BURES
Weathering the Storm

The Battle of Rhode Island was planned as a combined operation between the Americans and their new French allies, to trap and defeat a British army. Unfortunately, this grand design never came to pass.

The British occupied Newport and the rest of Aquidneck Island in December 1778. The city, then the fourth largest in America, provided the Royal Navy with an excellent base of operations, with neighboring Narragansett Bay offering an expansive and protected natural harbor. The occupation inflamed American passions. John Adams wrote that “If they are not crushed I will never again glory in being a N.E. [New England] man.” Samuel Adams echoed the sentiment: “I fear New England will be charged with the loss of her former military pride if it is not done.” There were two attempts to take Newport: with militia forces in 1777, but they both ended in failure. The Americans found more success with smaller raids. A nighttime attack French flagship spotted a British fleet on the horizon. D’Estaing hailed the landing of the French troops and sortied out to meet the British. On August 11, 1778, a two-day nor’easter known as “the Great Storm” inflicted serious damage to both fleets. D’Estaing reappeared off Newport on August 20 with 12 battered ships. He informed General Sullivan, who had begun a siege of the city, that his fleet needed repairs and he would be sailing immediately for Boston. The decision left many American officers fuming. Sullivan was so jealous in his criticism of the French that it was rumored that the Marquis de Lafayette was going to challenge him to a duel.

The departure of the French fleet caused many American militia units to leave the army, and it left the Americans unable to block any British reinforcements. General Sullivan decided to end the siege and withdraw. The American army, which had shrunk to just over 5,000 men, lost its siege works on the evening of August 28, 1778. The next morning, the British discovered that the enemy was gone. General Pigot ordered an immediate pursuit, hoping to catch the Americans on the march.

The opening engagement of the Battle of Rhode Island began at 7:00 a.m. on August 29, 1778, when British and Hessian troops made contact with the American rear guard. The Americans conducted a successful fighting retreat to a defensive line anchored on Butler Hill and Dorset’s Hill. Dorset’s Hill became the center of battle and the target of several attacks by Hessians and Loyalist troops and, under Major General Friedrich von Losberg. The hill was defended by the First Rhode Island Regiment — a unit with a large number of Black soldiers, including enslaved men who received their freedom in exchange for their service. Even with the support of cannon fire from British warships offshore, the British were unable to break through the First Rhode Island. The battle ended in a draw.

The British had pushed the Americans back from Newport, but the American position had held against sustained attack. Total casualties were 30 American soldiers killed and more than 100 wounded, while the British force lost 38 killed and more than 200 wounded.

Sullivan completed his withdrawal off Aquidneck Island on August 31, 1778 — only one day ahead of a British fleet carrying more than 4,000 reinforcements. Newport remained in British hands until October 25, 1779, when British Commander in Chief Sir Henry Clinton redeployed the garrison in preparation for the Southern Campaign. The British left behind a community hard-hit by war. The population had fallen to half its pre-war level, and the closure of the port had devastated the local economy.

The Newport Campaign was the first instance of cooperation between French and American military forces in the Revolutionary War, and it was a positive start. But the story of Franco-American joint operations that began, however unstudied, at Rhode Island would culminate three years later with victory at Yorktown.

Isaac Makos is a Revolutionary War Fellow with the American Battlefield Trust, navigating and creating content pertaining to the war that created the United States of America. He is also an interpretive supervisor at Mount Vernon.
HERO OF TWO WORLDS

by MIKE DUNCAN

The Marquis de Lafayette was only 22 in February 1780. In the French table of ranks, he was only a colonel. Expecting to lead an estate expedition was a dream inspired by foolish culpability. But there were just enough arguments in his favor for Lafayette to hold out hope. Charles Gravier, count de Vergennes, an early supporter of the American Revolution, said at least he thought it would be advantageous to have a man the Americans trusted inside the French command tier after so many mutual recriminations and misunderstandings at the Battle of Newport. But the French minister of war was one of the few men on Earth unschooled by Lafayette’s charms. He let Lafayette make his case, then assigned the command to the count de Rochambeau. Rochambeau was a cultured, smooth, and diplomatic officer who was a general before Lafayette was born. Though a 40-year veteran of numerous continental campaigns — with plenty of scars to prove he was a real soldier and not a soft aristocrat — this would be Rochambeau’s first truly independent command. This was a mission he was more than ready for.

Meanwhile, the French government ordered Lafayette to resume his place as a major general in the Continental army. The French lodged as many complaints about the Americans as the Americans lodged about the French, and Vergennes liked the idea of placing a man he trusted at Washington’s side. For Lafayette, this was not an unpleasant consolation prize — though he insisted it be circulated he requested this return to the Continental army, lest the Americans wonder why he had been passed over.

Leaving Paris, Lafayette made one last trip to the palace at Versailles. A year ago, he returned to the palace with his head bowed submissively; now he departed with his head held high. Dwelling on the uniform of a Continental major general, he presented himself to the king and queen. They bid him good luck and good fortune. Then Lafayette left to rejoin a revolution aimed at overthrowing kings and queens forever.

Lafayette dispatched a letter to Washington in the midst he touched solid ground, saying, “Here I am, my dear General!” The news of his return electrified the Continental camp. The eternally static Washington could hardly contain his elation. Alexander Hamilton, General Nathaniel Greene, artillery commander Henry Knox and the others couldn’t wait to see their friend again. The rank and file also had reason to cheer. Lafayette’s youthful courage and eager generosity long made him a favorite among the common soldiers. Lafayette rode into camp on May 10, 1780, to general rejoicing. As the camp gathered round, he and Washington embraced. Beloved by two families — one in France, the other in America — Lafayette found that whenever he crossed the Atlantic, he was always coming home. Washington’s pleasure at Lafayette’s return only increased when Lafayette revealed another French expeditionary force was on the way. Washington told Lafayette, if anything, he undersold the dire situation of the Continental army. While the winter at Valley Forge has become the proverbial dark night of the patriot soul, this most recent winter in Morristown was even worse.

Ceaseless blizzards pounded the countryside. Rivers and harbors iced over with sheets thicker than anyone could remember seeing. Private Joseph Plumb Martin, who maintained a daily journal during his years in the Continental army, said, “We are absolutely literally starved — I do solemnly declare that I did not put a single morsel of victuals into my mouth for four days and as many nights.” Everyone was miserable. That the horrendous winter in Morristown inspired itself less on America’s cultural memory is fitting. American citizens at the time were letting the war fade into the background. State and local governments neglected to pay and supply their soldiers. The powerless national Congress lacked the authority to impose direct national taxes. The paper money they printed was worthless, the decrees they issued ignored. Five years after Lexington and Concord, the credit, goodwill and attention of the people were exhausted. The handful of stubborn true believers tasked with maintaining the flame of liberty froze to death in its dying light. Many resigned. Many deserted. Few took their place.

In these conditions, Lafayette’s revolution was sending more money, supplies, guns and men west than from heaven. But there was more. Well briefed by Lafayette on the political importance of George Washington, the French government ordered General Rochambeau to consider himself serving under Washington’s ultimate authority. Lafayette told them anything less would be an intolerable insult to American honor. But when the French government classified the hierarchy of ranks, they made no mention of the authority of Congress. Washington was bound by law to consult Congress on the organization, movements, and strategies of the Continental army. Lafayette informed Washington he would be bound by no similar constraints with the incoming French Army. According to the French government, Rochambeau and his men would answer to Washington alone.

His authority over Rochambeau was a pleasant diplomatic formality — Rochambeau was not there to blindly take orders from Washington. Besides, news of the French expedition was exactly the oil of electricity necessary to pred the lethargic American politicians to life. Lafayette threw himself into the task of lobbying Congress, state legislatures and local militia to give everything they had to give. The war had been going on too long. If they all threw their shoulders into one last great push . . . there was no reason the summer of 1780 could not be the last summer of the war.

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OCEANS RISE

EMPIRES FALL

How the American Revolution became a global war

by KRISTOPHER D. WHITE

European involvement in America’s campaign for Independence swiftly spread the war around the world and on the high seas. Suddenly, clashes between the world’s greatest navies erupted in the Caribbean and at the gateway to the Mediterranean. From the Channel Islands to the Indian subcontinent, the British Empire was under threat.
The Revolutionary War on an International Scale: TIMELINE

April 19, 1775: The battles at Lexington and Concord.
April 25, 1775: The British evacuate Boston.
May 10, 1775: The Continental Congress adopts a Continental Army.
May 19, 1775: The British evacuate New York.
June 17, 1775: The Battle of Bunker Hill.
June 18, 1775: The British evacuate Boston.
July 4, 1776: The Declaration of Independence is adopted by the Continental Congress.
August 27, 1776: The British evacuate Boston.
October 28, 1776: The British evacuate Boston.
January 16, 1777: The British evacuate Boston.
February 18, 1777: The British evacuate New York.
May 20, 1777: The British evacuate Boston.
June 17, 1778: The British evacuate New York.
June 23, 1778: Spain signs the Treaty of Alliance with the American Republic.
June 24, 1779: Spain officially declares war on Great Britain.

It was growing MORE EVIDENT to Clinton and other officers that the struggle with the rebellious colonists was no longer the primary theater of operations.

The struggle with the rebellious colonies was no longer the primary theater of operations. Still, this was not the first time that war found its way to the shores of the British islands during the conflict.

In February of 1776, a small American fleet departed Delaware destined for Nassau, Bahamas. In 1779, Lord Dunmore, the royal governor of the Virginia Colony, transformed a large gunpowder magazine from Williamsburg to the Bahamas to keep it from falling into rebel hands. He received word of the location of the desperately needed powder, the Continental Congress approved a task force to capture the store. On March 5, 1776, the task force of naval personnel and Marines attempted to land at daybreak and capture Port Nassau. The operation was aborted when it was spotted by the British, who opened fire from the fort.

Later that afternoon, a second attempt.
The SPANISH watched and waited, receiving overtures from both the French and the British to enter or not enter the war.

The Siege Made by the veterans of Gibraltar against the enemy. In 1779, when British troops attacked Spanish forces of Gibraltar. Stow is the death of Spanish officer Don Jose de Baratoma after refusing to fight the British.

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The SPANISH watched and waited, receiving overtures from both the French and the British to enter or not enter the war.
The Young Man

who boarded a ship to emigrate from Oxfordshire to England’s North American colonies in 1698 had no idea that his name would linger on three centuries later as a standard of outstanding craftsmanship. But the John Stevens Shop still stands on Thames Street in Newport, R.I., where its resident artisans have been producing exceptional stone carvings since 1703.

The Stevens clan etched its way into history over the course of 220 years, before selling the shop to native Newport artist John Howard Benson in 1927 and beginning a new family legacy of tradition and excellence. The eldest Benson was an internationally renowned calligrapher and educator who authored the instructional book The Elements of Lettering and designed the two Lima Marine Memorial inscriptions. Upon his death, the shop passed to a second generation.

John Everett Benson (“Ted”) — who still tinkers in carving, sculpture and other artistic media in a studio behind the shop — continued the tradition of carving onto monumental edifices, designing and working directly in the stone of iconic institutions, including the John F. Kennedy Memorial, the National Gallery of Art, the Vietnam Memorial and the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial.

Like his father before him, Nicholas Benson began apprenticing in the John Stevens Shop at age 15. He was still a teenager when he was handed a chisel and carved the headings for the Trustees inscriptions in the National Gallery of Art West Building, a moment that helped shape his life. After studying drawing and design as an undergraduate in the United States, he undertook a specialized course in calligraphy, type design, typography and drawing at the Basel School of Design in Switzerland. In 1993, five years after completing studies and returning home, Nick Benson took the reins of the business in his steady and precise hands.

For 316 years, the John Stevens Shop has been hand chiseling monuments and grave markers for great leaders, war heroes and everyday people. Recently, they were commissioned to create markers for two French officers who crossed the Atlantic to help save the colonists in 1780. The Trust was lucky enough to observe them at work.

Photography by Greg Kahn
Although careful to describe carving as a craft rather than an art, Benson could easily be mistaken for a virtuoso given the passion he summons to describe his vision and his process. On monumental projects like the Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial, World War II Memorial and Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial, he created custom typefaces meant to evoke specific elements of the overall design. But his work is about much more than aesthetics; legibility and durability must always remain front of mind, as must the physical reality of working in stone.

Despite the passage of centuries, work in the John Stevens Shop is still performed in a rhythm that would be familiar to the many craftsmen who came before. Designs are still created by hand and applied with fine-tip paintbrushes before they are incised into stone. While the cutting implements may now be made of tungsten rather than colonially available metals, the mallets that steadily strike them are typically fashioned by hand, weighted and gripped perfectly for the user. Saws are lined with the tools favored by the generations before, occasionally brought back into circulation.

The shop itself is a kind of time capsule. The original headstone for John Stevens — replaced with a loving copy when it became too damaged to stand — shares space alongside a prototype carving of Harvard University’s installation honoring its Medal of Honor recipient alumni. A larger-than-life, art deco portrait of John Howard Benson towers over the studio. Near the front window and still in use, albeit lightly, is a drafting desk dating to the shop’s early decades, and hanging on the wall, a framed advertisement for the shop’s services in a Newport newspaper, dated 1781.

Thus, Benson took it as a sign when he was approached by the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail to create headstones for two of the earliest French casualties of the Revolutionary War, who had rested in Newport without proper markers since their demise in 1780. That their work would physically and symbolically be joining that of their predecessors in the oldest sections of Trinity Church’s yard was a moving realization. In one way, however, Paul Russu, who specializes in headstones, treated the commission like any other — he immersed himself in learning as much as possible about Major Pierre du Roseau, Chevalier de Fayolle, and Lieutenant Augustin Benjamin Levilmarais as a way of honoring their lives so he could set down their names for eternity.

Watch the exclusive Trust video about Nick Benson and the John Stevens Shop at www.battlefields.org/carvedinstone.

Legibility and durability must always remain front of mind, as does the physical reality of working in stone.
The national historic trail designation came in 2009, "we're still a new trail," von Karajan said. "It usually takes about 20 years to really get your programs together and all your ducks in a row. And, of course, interpretation is always changing as new research comes to light and also as society changes. So, we're still got a lot of work to do."

The timing would appear to be propitious, though, as the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Trail will celebrate its 20th anniversary midway through the semiquincentennial of the American Revolution, an event from 2026 to 2031 that the association has already begun preparing for:

The association is currently developing an online travel app "that's going to be a real game-changer for us," von Karajan said. "When you say 'trail,' people often think of the Pacific Coast Trail or the Appalachian Trail and they say, 'Well, what is this trail? Can you hike it?' Our travel app will provide much more information and will help make the trail more concrete in peoples' minds. We're also developing a teacher tool kit, and right now we're doing a survey to have teachers tell us what they feel they need to make this history interesting to kids."

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The Code Word is Rochambeau
Influential Frenchmen who propelled the Patriot cause

**King Louis XVI**
In 1774, at age 19, Louis XVI assumed the throne and was resolute in his efforts to elevate France as the supreme — and proudly Christian — monarchy in Europe, as well as overcome France’s past losses during the Seven Years’ War. While initially hesitant to provide large-scale assistance to the Americans in their fight against England, the French monarch eventually grew to view a Franco-American alliance as a means to protect French colonial interests and deliver distress to rival England. On February 6, 1778, the Treaty of Alliance and the Treaty of Amity and Commerce were signed, with the American Continental Congress thereafter deeming Louis XVI the “defender of the rights of mankind.” Supplying the American colonists with French military and financial support proved a foreign policy success, but it came with a devastating price tag that put the French government on the brink of bankruptcy. These financial woes ultimately amounted to France facing a revolution of its own.

**Marquis de Lafayette**
Born into a French aristocratic family, the Marquis de Lafayette sought his path to glory as a soldier. Barely an adult, he traveled on his own dimes and without any official capacity to Philadelphia in July 1777. To remedy his lack of combat experience, Lafayette served on General Washington’s staff and fought with distinction at the Battle of Monmouth, with the general becoming a valuable mentor in the process. He was thereafter given command of his own division. By February 1779, Lafayette was back in his native France, working alongside Benjamin Franklin and John Adams to convince King Louis XVI of the need for additional troops and supplies. Effective in the venture, he returned to America with news of forthcoming French troop and ships. He would then go on to command Patriot forces in Virginia against those of the treacherous Benedict Arnold. Accompanied by troops under Generals Anthony Wayne and Baron von Steuben, Lafayette tagged Lord Cornwallis across Virginia, eventually trapping him at Yorktown in late July 1781. After surrender came on October 19, 1781, Lafayette became known as the “hero of Two Worlds” and returned to France in 1782.

**Comte de Rochambeau**
During his first combat experience in the War of Austrian Succession, Jean-Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau showed signs of a bright military future when he was promoted to colonel and given command of a regiment at age 22 in 1747. He’d go on to serve in the American Continental Army during the Seven Years’ War before proving an integral part of American history. When King Louis XVI sent a French expeditionary force of 5,500 troops to America in 1780 to support France’s new ally, Rochambeau was its commander in chief. Together with General Washington’s men, this French force would march south with Virginia in 1781 and trap Cornwallis and his 8,000 British troops at Yorktown, ultimately garnering British surrender. Even prior to the surrender, Washington expressed his praise for Rochambeau, stating in a letter to Congress, “I cannot but acknowledge the infinite obligations I am under to His Excellency, the Comte de Rochambeau…”

**Comte de Grasse**
Born to French nobility, François Joseph Paul de Grasse joined the French Navy at age 17. A brilliant sailor, he was given command of his own ship by 32 and reached the rank of full admiral in his late 50s. In 1781, the full admiral sailed with a fleet of 23 ships to protect French interests in the West Indies. Upon arrival in Haiti, he was met with an American dispatch carrying the news of the revolutionary activity in Virginia, Responding quickly, de Grasse sent word to Washington and Rochambeau that the British fleet protecting Cornwallis would soon be contended. In the September 1781 Battle of the Capes, de Grasse’s fleet battered the British and picked up a game-changing victory that left Cornwallis vulnerable, with enemy forces surrounding him on both land and sea. By the time the British were able to send reinforcements, Cornwallis had already surrendered at Yorktown.

**Jacques-Daillon Le Ray de Chaumont**
As a powerful aristocratic force in the court at Versailles and with sympathy toward the American cause, Jacques-Daillon Le Ray de Chaumont acted as a bridge between King Louis XVI and American representatives like Benjamin Franklin. He even developed a close relationship with the eccentric Franklin, allowing the American to live in his estate in Passy for many years. In addition to being a supporter of voice that swayed the French government to aid the Patriots, Le Ray provided a great deal of his own funding to arm, supply and clothe the fledgling Continental army. He also helped equip and manage the combined French and American naval fleet. In addition, he ordered that a merchant vessel be transformed into a warship, which he gifted to the American fleet under the command of John Paul Jones.

**Louis le Bougué Dupont**
The son of a nobleman and a member of the Engineering Corps of the French Army, Louis le Bugué Dupont was recruited to serve in the Continental Army through the efforts of Benjamin Franklin. Arriving in America in 1777, he was named “Colonel-in-Chief of Engineers” and proved vital in surveying areas to gain knowledge on terrain and enemy movements, as well as devising defenses that took these findings into consideration. He partook in the devastating Philadelphia Campaign, helped establish the winter encampment at Valley Forge, assisted Henry Knox in artillery instruction, planned and prepared the winter encampment at Morristown and overall became an integral cog in the Continental machine. He even directed work on the trenches at Yorktown, despite months spent as a prisoner of war after the fall of Charleston in 1780. Lafayette once called him “one of the best and most honest officers upon this continent.” He initially returned to France, but returned to America in 1794.

**Augustin de la Balme**
After serving in the Seven Years’ War in Europe, Augustin de la Balme became an expert in horsemanship. With Benjamin Franklin on his side, he was appointed the Continental army’s inspector general of cavalry. However, when Casimir Pulaski was given command of the cavalry, de la Balme’s injured pride compelled him to resign his position in October 1777. Yet this decision appeared to be later regretted, and in 1778, de la Balme campaigned the Continental Congress to reinstate him. But Congress had grown to distrust him. Not one to be easy to side aside, de la Balme traveled west and — declaring himself a representative of Louis XVI — started a private effort to form a unit to protect the British in the Ohio Valley and Illinois regions. He gathered a force of just over 100 men, who first attacked Fort St. Joseph and gained valuable supplies. Propelled by these supplies, he advanced toward Fort Detroit. However, the Miami war chief Little Turtle intercepted de la Balme before he reached his destination, killing him and many of his men.

**Marquis de Chastellux**
Before reaching his 30th year, François Jean de Beauvoir, Marquis de Chastellux had developed an impressive military résumé from his service in the Seven Years’ War. He was also a prodigious writer of books and plays that were well received in the era of Enlightenment. By July 1789, the then major general set sail for America with Rochambeau’s French expeditionary force. With a strong grasp of the English language, de Chastelluz became an invaluable liaison between Washington and Rochambeau, and embarked on the winding and ultimately victorious Yorktown Campaign. He’d remain in America after the British surrender, with a desire to learn more about the newly liberated nation’s culture and geography. During his journey, he received honorary degrees from the College of William and Mary and the College of Philadelphia. Upon returning to France, he published his travel journal of North America in 1786 and didn’t forget to send a copy to his friend George Washington.

**Toussaint-Guillaume Piquet de la Motte**
Taking to the sea at age 15, Toussaint-Guillaume Piquet de la Motte joined the French Navy as a midshipman. Making naval service a lifelong career, he rose through the ranks. During the American conflict, la Motte served as a squadron commander, leading from the Saint-Éspirit in the July 1778 Battle of Ushant and further pursuing the British as he cruised the English seas. He went on to participate in the Battle of Grenada and the Siege of Savannah. In 1781, as commander of a nine-ship squadron, he advantageously intercepted Admiral George Brydges Rodney’s fleet en route from St. Eustatius, capturing 26 British ships and a plunder of two million sterling — a victory that resulting in his promotion to lieutenant general of the naval armies. To this day, five vessels in the French Navy have been named after the high-achieving admiral.

**Armand Louis de Gonzat**
In his youth, the aristocratic Armand Louis de Gonzat — Duke of Laurantz — found satisfaction in adventure, much to the detriment of his fortunes. But his military capabilities would serve him well, and by 1779, Gonzat was appointed to a command against the English, traveling to Senegal before being sent to aid Rochambeau in the American Revolution. As brigadier general and commander of Laurantz’s Legion, he arrived in Newport, Rhode Island, in July 1780, with approximately 600 horsemen, grenadiers and chasseurs. Upon being ordered to act as the advance party of Rochambeau’s main French forces, Gonzat and his men left their winter encampment in Connecticut in June 1781 to march south along the current-day Washington-Rochambeau Revolution- ary Route. In doing so, they protected the Patriot flank against towns breasting with Tories, and ultimately reinforced General Washington at Yorktown. Along with the good news of Cornwallis’s surrender, Gonzat returned to France in November 1781. He would go on to become a fierce supporter of the French Revolution and victim of its guillotine.
NCOMPASSING the Yorktown Battlefield — where “The World Turned Upside Down” — the Colonial National Historical Park marks the final stop on the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route. The park, founded in 1930 and operated by the National Park Service, covers more than 9,000 acres and is home to significant colonial-era locations, including the battlefield, the site of the original 1607 Jamestown Settlement, Green Spring Plantation and the 23-mile Colonial Parkway. A French expeditionary force of 5,500 troops arrived in America in July 1780, and would soon embark on a long journey. Beginning in Rhode Island, the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route was comprised of winding roads and waterways. With the trek concluding in Yorktown, Virginia, the joint effort became the largest troop movement of the American Revolution. The September 28 to October 19, 1781, Siege of Yorktown concluded with the surrender of Cornwallis’ British forces to the combined American and French forces, and ultimately resulted in the Treaty of Paris and the war’s end. Little would it be known that 81 years after the Revolutionary-era surrender, this field would yet again see combat during the Civil War.

Visitors to the historic landscape can witness the Revolutionary- and Civil War-era earthworks and trenches that were refurbished and re-created by the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s and 40s. Furthermore, this history can be navigated by way of the Yorktown Tour Guide app, produced through a partnership between the Trust and the National Park Service. The free app’s GPS-enabled audio tours include a walking experience through Historic Yorktown and two separate driving tours to fully explore the 1781 siege. And if traveling with kids through the age of 12, consider embarking on the Junior Ranger Program!

To learn more about the Yorktown Battlefield and the expansive park it sits within, check out the Colonial National Historical Park online!
We celebrated many milestones in 2021, with many more on the horizon.

Take our Exclusive Quiz testing how much you remember from the past four issues of *Hallowed Ground*!

Aim your phone’s camera at this Code or use a QR code reader.

Chancellorsville Battlefield
Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park
Spotsylvania County, Va.
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