

SENATOR ROBERT MORGAN
Dedication of Lafayette bust
Fayetteville, North Carolina
September 27, 1980

GENERAL LAFAYETTE

We gather here today to dedicate this bust in memory of General Lafayette, a man who left his country to fight for American independence. This city takes its name from this gallant and brave man, and during his tour of the United States in 1824, he visited this city. Although there are many other cities and towns named for him, this is the only one that General Lafayette ever visited.

First, I want to welcome to our country and to Fayetteville, Brigadier General Morbieu and Madame Morbieu. We owe so much to the French for the support of our Revolution, General Morbieu, that I hesitate to count all those debts. But let me stress that we have never forgotten this contribution. When the first American troops landed in France during World War I, General Pershing marched off the troop ship and said: "Lafayette, we are here." We hoped that our forces would be able to repay in part the contribution made by the French in our fight for freedom.

General Lafayette was born in 1757, and he followed in his father's footsteps by entering military service. He first joined the King's Musketeers and rose rapidly through the ranks. At a dinner in honor of the Duke of Gloucester in August 1775, his imagination was stirred by the Duke's sympathetic talk about the American struggle for independence. He then withdrew from active service in the French army and in June 1776 offered to serve in the American army without pay.

Congress commissioned him a major general in July 1777, and General George Washington practically adopted him and attached him to his staff.

Lafayette was wounded at Brandywine in September 1777, but he nevertheless took over a division of Virginia light troops in December. During the winter at Valley Forge, he won the title of "the soldier's friend."

In 1779, he returned briefly to France but returned to the United States in 1780 in time for the final campaigns of the war. He was responsible for preventing Lord Cornwallis from taking Richmond and then pursued the British to Yorktown.

The battle of Yorktown proved to be the decisive battle of the American Revolution. In that operation, the French played a significant part. The fleet under Admiral DeGrasse combined with 5,000 French troops and the American army. Cornwallis, hopelessly outnumbered and outmaneuvered, was cut off by land and sea--and he surrendered.

As historian John Richard Alden has written: "The land operations of the Franco-American plan were superbly executed. Cornwallis remained immobile at Yorktown until September 7, when the troops carried by DeGrasse joined Lafayette and took positions covering the British base on the land side. The British General was then confronted by a superior army."

It is with this role in mind that we dedicate this handsome bust by the noted French sculptor Hundon. General Lafayette was a freedom fighter, a man who believed in freedom enough to leave his homeland to aid our cause. This act of generosity and bravery will always be a proud part of our history. Lafayette's memory is etched in our history books, found in the names of our towns and cities, and is today commemorated by this bronze bust.

It is also significant that his grave in Picpus Cemetery in Paris was covered with earth from Bunker Hill, linking Lafayette forever to our Revolution. It is appropriate that in Fayetteville, a town named for the general and one that he visited, ~~we~~ we gather to honor his memory and dedicate this bust.