

Alexandria Times

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Celebrating the Marquis

This year's Historic Alexandria holiday ornament commemorates the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Marquis de Lafayette's visit to the United States at the invitation of President James Monroe.

The ornament highlights Lafayette's visit to Alexandria on Oct. 16, 1824, which included a processional entrance and ended with him retiring to his quarters at 301 S. Saint Asaph St., depicted in the ornament.

Lafayette visited Alexandria on his way from Washington City to Mount Vernon. On the morning of Oct. 16, he rode a carriage into town with a military escort of local cavalry and 2,000 troops on foot.

The town eagerly greeted the Revolutionary War hero. Three ceremonial arches were constructed across Washington Street. Hundreds of spectators greeted him. Women waved handkerchiefs from open windows along neighboring buildings.

Two hundred young girls and boys dressed in white with blue and pink sashes and badges bearing Lafayette's image spread flower petals along the path. Lafayette greeted the mayor and City Council at Claggett's Hotel, now known as Gadsby's Tavern. The elected officials gave



GRAPHIC/OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA

The 2024 Lafayette ornament commemorating the 200th anniversary of his visit to Alexandria.

speeches extolling the virtues of Lafayette while the militias performed exercises for his review.

After this official welcome, Lafayette proceeded to 301 S. Saint Asaph St., the home of Mrs. Thomas (Elizabeth) Lawrason, where he would be lodging overnight. At 5 p.m., Lafayette returned to Claggett's for a large public dinner. Among the guests was John Quincy Adams, secretary of

state and future president.

The dinner concluded with 33 toasts. Lafayette toasted to "The City of Alexandria: May her prosperity and happiness more and more realize the fondest wishes of our venerated Washington."

The next day, he boarded The Petersburg steamship to visit Mount Vernon.

Lafayette continued to visit Alexandria during his more than year-long visit to the

U.S., but none of those visits matched the grandeur of his stay on Oct. 16, 1824.

This year's holiday ornament is available in the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum gift shop, located at 201 S. Washington St. For more information, please visit: alexandriava.gov/Lyceum.

Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.