



Fairfield Museum

EXPLORE *the past*, IMAGINE *the future*
370 Beach Road, Fairfield, CT | 203-259-1598
www.fairfieldhistory.org

American Revolution & Colonial Life Programs **Pre and Post Lesson Plans & Activities**

The French, Connecticut and the American Revolution

After the Continental Congress formed in 1775, **Benjamin Franklin** and **Silas Deane** were sent to gather support from France for American independence. Franklin and Deane were joined by Arthur Lee to negotiate a Treaty of Alliance and Treaty of Amity and Commerce with France, signed on February 6, 1778.

Benjamin Franklin was the first American ambassador received by a foreign government.

<http://www.benjamin-franklin-history.org/ambassador-to-france>



Franklin in France

Franklin made himself part of the upper society in France using his charm, wit, and learning, despite his struggles with the language. On December 17, 1777, after nearly a year in France without making much visible progress, Franklin engineered a **gigantic diplomatic victory** for the United States. The French foreign minister, Charles Gravier, the Count of Vergennes, **officially acknowledged the United States** as an independent country.

In his subsequent years in France, Franklin helped to keep supplies flowing to the United States. **“For having extracted the equivalent of \$13 billion dollars today and the bulk of the gunpowder used in the Revolution, Franklin went to his grave without any thanks whatever from Congress. In the end his greatest mission proved very costly to him,”** said Pulitzer Prize-winning author Stacy Schiff

<https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/americas-first-rock-star-benjamin-franklin-in-france>



Marquis de Lafayette

Lafayette was born into a noble family in France. He inherited a fortune from his grandfather's estate, however he was most interested in a military career. He entered the French military in 1771 at the age of 13. Later he became fascinated by the plight for independence in the United States.

On June 11, 1776, he resigned from the French army and began actively conspiring with Silas Deane and Arthur Lee, two of the Continental Congress's agents to France. He received a commission in the Continental Army and disembarked for America on April 20, 1777. He

was given no active command until he met George Washington met Lafayette, now 19 years old, at a dinner.

This began a lifelong friendship between the two men. In Washington, Lafayette found his hero, his mentor, and his model of republican virtue. Lafayette eventually named his son George Washington du Motier, and named his youngest daughter Virginie, after Washington's home state. The American commander-in-chief greatly admired the patriotic enthusiasm of the young French aristocrat, and placed Lafayette on his private staff.

<https://www.historyisfun.org/learn/learning-center/colonial-america-american-revolution-learning-resources/american-revolution-essays-timelines-images/people-of-the-revolution/lafayette/>

Lafayette for Kids: <http://revolution.mrdonn.org/lafayette.html>

Lafayette in Connecticut

The Marquis de Lafayette memorial, at the corner of Capitol Avenue and Lafayette Street in Hartford, CT, stands on a traffic island across from the State Capitol building.

<http://ctmonuments.net/2013/10/lafayette-statue-hartford/>

Rochambeau & Washington

As a result of diplomatic relations with France, French troops were sent to aid General George Washington on several occasions. Several attempts failed, until Rochambeau arrived in Newport, Rhode Island. The Comte de Rochambeau was the commander of all French forces in America during the War for Independence.

King Louis XVI gave Rochambeau, promoted to Lieutenant General, command of the expeditionary force sent to America to support France's new alliance with the United States. He and 5,500 French troops arrived in Newport, Rhode Island, on July 10, 1780. He waited. And he waited. Washington was extremely cautious about how to use the French troops and how to build trust with Rochambeau.

In 1781, the moment was finally right for the French troops to march across Connecticut. The **Culper Spy Ring** was instrumental in thwarting British attention away from Rhode Island, who planned to attack. Given this information, Washington moved his troops to draw the attention of the British away from Rhode Island.

The French army crossed the middle of Connecticut through Lebanon, Andover, Southington, Waterbury, Newtown, and Ridgefield, meeting up with General Washington's army near White Plains, New York. Finally, the two armies marched together to Yorktown, Virginia, winning the pivotal battle of Yorktown and the Revolution and forcing the surrender of a major British army under Charles Cornwallis.

In 1782 the French army returned to Connecticut on its way to Boston, Massachusetts and the Caribbean.

Follow the Connecticut trail here:

http://www.hseh.org/CT_MARKERS.pdf

<http://www.ouramericanrevolution.org/index.cfm/people/view/pp0028>

<https://www.amrevmuseum.org/updates/reflections/washington-and-rochambeau-revolutionary-collaboration>



Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, October 19, 1781 by John Trumbull. Yale University Art Gallery, Trumbull Collection

The arrival of 55-year-old General Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau, with an army of 450 officers and 5,300 men in Narragansett Bay off Newport, Rhode Island, on July 11, 1780, marked the beginning of a most successful military cooperation that culminated 15 months later in the victory at Yorktown. France had aided the colonies since the summer of 1775, well before their final break with Great Britain on July 4, 1776, and had formalized the relationship in two treaties of February 1778.

<https://www.nps.gov/waro/learn/historyculture/washington-rochambeau-revolutionary-route.htm>

Additional Resources Online:

America's first rock star: Benjamin Franklin in France

<https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/americas-first-rock-star-benjamin-franklin-in-france>

The Rise and Fall of Silas Deane

<https://connecticuthistory.org/the-rise-and-fall-of-silas-deane-american-patriot/>

<https://webb-deane-stevens.org/historic-houses-barns/silas-deane-house/>

Rochambeau in Connecticut

National Historic Trail: Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association

<http://w3r-us.org>

Historic Markers in Connecticut - Marking Rochambeau's Route

http://www.hseh.org/CT_MARKERS.pdf

Timeline: State of Connecticut

<http://w3r-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Timeline-for-W3R-in-CT.pdf>

New England Historical Society:

Washington and Rochambeau Map Out The Revolutionary Route in Wethersfield, Conn.

<http://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/washington-rochambeau-map-revolutionary-route-wethersfield-conn/>

Rochambeau Maps Collection

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/rochambeau-maps/about-this-collection/>

The *Rochambeau Map Collection* contains cartographic items used by Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau (1725-1807), when he was commander in chief of the French expeditionary army (1780-82) during the American Revolution. The maps were from Rochambeau's personal collection, cover much of eastern North America, and date from 1717 to 1795.