

Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de La Fayette or “Lafayette” and “Laugh-ayette” *dans les nouvelles.*

[A]



By Ferdinand Meyer V

Lafayette was on the Federation radar the first couple weeks of the new year, so we titled this piece in French, “La-fayette...in the News.”

The first Lafayette “touchpoint” was when west coast collector, Brian Bingham, sent a link to the website of the New-York Historical Society, Museum & Library showing their cobalt blue “Laugh-ayette” impostor flask. The second was the inclusion of a rare pint “Lafayette” pictorial bust jar that was added to the FOHBC Virtual Museum Jar Gallery, and the third was a series of very interesting “Lafayette” emails supporting the “Every Bottle has a Story” mantra that many of us subscribe to.

For a quick history recap, *Wikipedia* says Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de **La Fayette** (September 6, 1757–May 20, 1834), known in the United States as **La-fayette**, was a French aristocrat, freemason and military officer who fought in the American Revolutionary War, commanding American troops in several battles, including the siege of Yorktown. After returning to France, he was a key figure in the French Revolution of 1789 and the July Revolution of 1830. He was considered a national hero in both countries. His nicknames were “The Hero of the Two Worlds (Le Héros des Deux Mondes),” and “America’s Favorite Fighting Frenchman.”

Lafayette is pretty familiar with antique bottle collectors because his portrait is embossed on historical flasks. In the FOHBC Virtual Museum, we have eight G-I Lafayette portrait flasks in various stages of development and three that are on display; GI-80, GI-81 and GI-86 which are pictured on the left.

[B]



[C]



[D]



[A] Lafayette as a lieutenant general in 1791; portrait by Joseph-Désiré Court.

[B] GI-86 Half pint “La Fayette” Bust of Lafayette “Coventry C-T”–Liberty Cap on a Stick “S & S” Historical Flask, Coventry Glass Works, courtesy Rick Ciralli, FOHBC Virtual Museum.

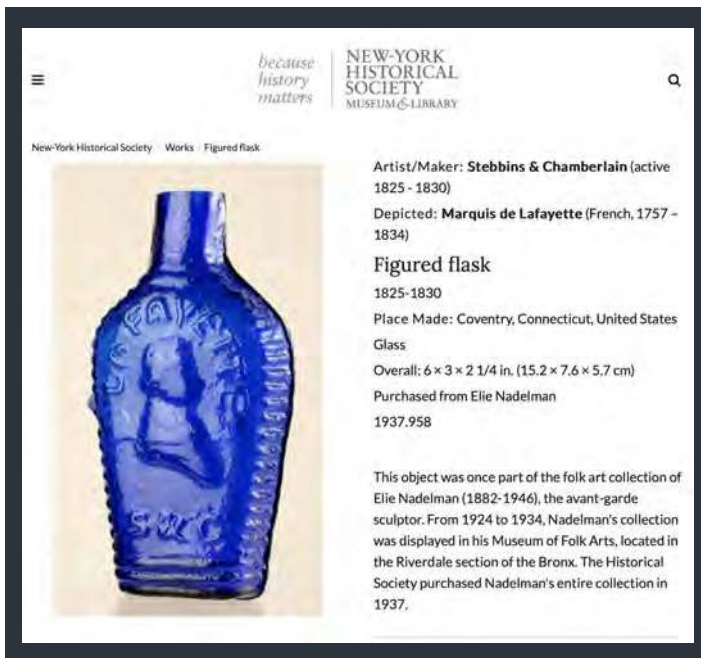
[C] GI-80 Pint “La Fayette” Bust of Lafayette “T.S.”–“De Witt Clinton” Bust of Clinton “Conventry (sic) C-T” Portrait Flask, Coventry Glass Works, courtesy Rick Ciralli, FOHBC Virtual Museum.

[D] GI-81 Half pint “La Fayette” Bust of Lafayette “S & C”–“De Witt Clinton” Bust of Clinton “C-T” Portrait Flask, Coventry Glass Works, courtesy Rick Ciralli, FOHBC Virtual Museum.

[E] New-York Historical Society website example GI-81 half pint “La Fayette” Bust of Lafayette “S & C”–“De Witt Clinton” Bust of Clinton “C-T” Portrait Flask.

[F] Elie Nadelman with his bronze sculpture Man in the Open Air, c. 1915. George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[G & H] “Lafayette” (Profile of Lafayette) pint aquamarine jar imaged on location by Alan DeMaison, FOHBC Virtual Museum Midwest Studio. Phil Smith collection. “Lafayette” jars on display at the FOHBC Virtual Museum Jar Gallery.



[E]

Laugh-ayette

The “Laugh-ayette” touchpoint started on January 7, 2023 with an email from a west coast collector. “I stumbled on this magnificent flask. The NYHS website search/navigation is not very good but they have a considerable collection of old glass, most of which does not have a picture and if they do, they are insufficient. Someone should do something about that.” This prompted a Virtual Museum Facebook post showing this oddity placed with the outstanding GI-81 examples we already have on display.



[F]

Historically speaking, there has never been a mention of a cobalt blue example. Well, the Facebook community erupted with laughter as this flask is a known imposter in some circles. Hence the name “Laugh-ayette.” Why it is on display after all these years is perplexing. The flask is old, maybe 100 years but it was not made at the Coventry Glass Works in 1825 or so. The story behind the flask, according to the NYHS, recounts that the flask was once part of the folk art collection of Elie Nadelman (1882–1946), the avant-garde sculptor. From 1924 to 1934, Nadelman’s collection was displayed in his Museum of Folk Arts, located in the Riverdale section of the Bronx. The Historical Society purchased Nadelman’s entire collection in 1937. The flask was part of “*French Founding Father: Lafayette’s Return to Washington’s America*,” New-York Historical Society, November 16, 2007–August 10, 2008. We understand Mark and Andrew Vuono went to see this flask and confirmed it was made later. The FOHBC will contact the NYHS in person or via letter so this flask can be removed or have the description updated.

“Lafayette” (Bust of Lafayette) Jar

On January 13, 2023 our second touchpoint with Lafayette was when we added a rare aquamarine “Lafayette” (Lafayette pictured in profile) pint from the Phil Smith collection to the FOHBC Jar Gallery. There are at least three primary “appearance” versions of this jar. One is embossed ‘THE LAFAYETTE’ in block letters. The second is embossed ‘Lafayette’ in cursive initial cap underlined letters. The third, like our museum’s primary example, is embossed ‘Lafayette’ in cursive initial cap letters that are beneath an embossed pictorial profile bust. The jar dates from 1883 to 1884. Please visit the museum gallery for the spinner, full history and many other support images.



[G]



[H]

We are not sure it is “the” Lafayette but who else could it be? Maybe the local grocer had his image embossed on a jar? I doubt it. There were at least three different molds made for the “bust”

[I]



variation of the jars and three distinctly different line drawings of the bust. One shows an apparently younger man. It is possible that the “younger” bust variation was made after the other one wore out, or the molds were used simultaneously. The mold makers had their work cut out for themselves as there were many period illustrations and paintings to reference.

Lafayette Follow-up

[Eric McGuire, Petaluma, California] When I see bottles commemorating Lafayette, a true American patriot, it reminds me of my search, about ten years ago, for his burial place. I am a “closet collector” of tombstone images. I knew he was buried in Picpus Cemetery in Paris but had no idea where that was. I had taken many photos at Pere Lachaise and Montmartre but had no idea where Picpus was. After walking down the street where it was supposed to be located, I found the correct address but was confronted with a huge gate and no indication of where a cemetery might be. Taking a chance of being chased out of someone’s private property, Lisa and I opened it but saw no cemetery. I found a man in a little office and asked if a cemetery was nearby. My French is minimal at best, but I clearly understood when he pointed toward the back of a large area at yet another large wooden gate. Lisa and I kept walking, with no indication of a cemetery, but came upon a stone wall with an entrance. We entered and finally found what must have been Picpus. The first attached photo shows roughly one-half of the cemetery. Lisa is at the far right, checking out the stones of many of the graves of those who lost their lives during the French Revolution of 1794.

[J]



After walking nearly the entire cemetery, we finally found the plot for Lafayette in the most distant corner. See the second attached photo. I think what struck me the most is all the funerary additions that have accumulated over the years which have been placed in his plot. They include a variety of plaques and medallions from various organizations—all American—who have had some connection with Lafayette during his lifetime. He was truly a loved patriot for the “American cause.”

[K]



[L]

[I] Assorted examples of how Lafayette was portrayed in paintings.

[J] Roughly one-half of the cemetery. Lisa is at the far right, checking out the stones of many of the graves of those who lost their lives during the French Revolution of 1794.

[K] The plot for Lafayette in the most distant corner.

[L] Funerary additions that have accumulated over the years which have been placed in his plot.

[M] Historical marker approximately 15 miles east of Montgomery, Alabama.

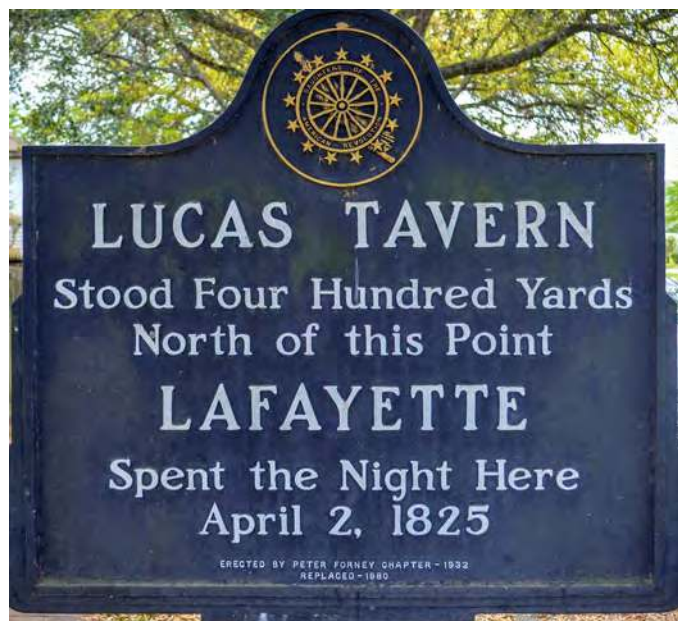
[N] Lafayette Ginger Ale. Lafayette Mineral Springs Company. Derry, New Hampshire.

[O] Promotional glass from the Lafayette Mineral Springs company.

[Doug Simms, Prattville, Alabama] Thanks for this, Eric! Dad and I love Lafayette flasks, and it’s great to see some good research/perseverance in finding his gravesite. Lafayette is/was a big deal around the Montgomery, Alabama, area as he came through here in 1825 as the last surviving General of the Revolutionary War. The state celebrated him with many stops and

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steamboats down the Alabama River, spending \$17,000 entertaining and celebrating him—more than they had in the treasury at the time. Fifteen miles east of Montgomery, just off the old Federal Road, is the site of the old Lucas Tavern, where Lafayette stayed on April 2, 1825. The city moved the tavern building to downtown Montgomery in 1978, and the previous site is now a large and deep gravel pit (much to the chagrin of a hopeful bottle digger). More info and pics of the tavern here: <http://www.goat-hillhistory.com/blog/2016/4/5/lucas-tavern>



[M]

[Ken Previtali, Prattville, Alabama] Hello Doug and Eric, Ken Previtali here (Danbury, Connecticut), whom you may or may not recognize as the “Ginger Ale Guy.” As I watch the parade of bottles entering the Virtual Museum, other than exclaiming about the stellar work Ferdinand and the team consistently do, there is little opportunity for me to comment from my collecting perspective. Then your remarks about Lafayette showed up.

From 1824 to 1825, Lafayette made a “farewell” tour of the states. Of the 24 states he traveled to, New Hampshire, has the most markers noting the details of his visit to each location. On May 4, 2021, Derry, New Hampshire, received its historical marker. But long before that, many honors and place names in New Hampshire were given to Lafayette.

However, the namesake I found most interesting was the Lafayette Mineral Springs Company of Derry. One of my prized ginger ale bottles is a “Lafayette.” The bottle is a BIMAL crown top made before or around 1906. The die-cut image of the General speaks for itself.

In nearly 40 years of collecting, I have seen only two of these, both of which I bought at least 30 years ago. One is in my collection, and the other I gave to a dear friend, an old-time native resident of Derry. Even though she was an antique “browser” and collector, she had never seen one, and it sits proudly in her cabinet. I suspect that there are more of them sitting in dark, dusty corners of New Hampshire houses, waiting to be discovered.

Also pictured is a promotional glass from the Lafayette Mineral Springs company sporting Lafayette in the same finery. Not sure of the age of the glass, but certainly from the same era, if not later. Etched and embossed ginger ale glasses were popular at the turn of the 20th century and beyond.

Thanks for your illuminating thoughts. History is there for us to learn from, and in many ways.



[O]

[Doug Simms, Prattville, Alabama] This is great info Ken provided, and I’m glad to see you are doing a follow up Lafayette story in the magazine. Ken’s promotional bottles and glass make me wonder if there is a Lafayette bottle and glass trail that could be figured out and mapped to go with the magazine story, or as a later expansion. Dad has seven or eight Lafayette molds, most made in New England, and just got the GI-93, which was Wheeling’s tribute. There are two midwestern Lafayettes, GI-92 and GI-93. Helen McKearin goes into great detail about the two. Both have Wheeling on the flask, but she makes a good case for the 93 being made outside of Cincinnati in Moscow, Ohio. So, if we pursued a glass trail based on a map of his visit (<https://www.thelafayettetrail.org/map/>), and the associated glass houses making the bottles, we could come up with something pretty interesting.



[N]

