



"Lafayette's baptism of fire" by Edward Percy Moran. c. 1909

### **THIS DAY IN HISTORY — JUN 13, 1777: LAFAYETTE ARRIVES IN SOUTH CAROLINA**

On this day in 1777, a 19-year-old French aristocrat, Marie-Joseph Paul Roch Yves Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, arrives in South Carolina with the intent to serve as General George Washington's second-in-command.

Silas Deane, during his service as the Continental Congress envoy to France, had, on December 7, 1776, struck an agreement with Johann de Kalb and Lafayette to offer their military expertise to the American cause. However, Deane was replaced with Benjamin Franklin and Arthur Lee, who were unenthusiastic by the proposal. Meanwhile, King Louis XVI feared angering Britain and prohibited Lafayette's departure. The British ambassador to the French court at Versailles demanded the seizure of Lafayette's ship, which resulted in Lafayette's arrest. Lafayette, though, managed to escape, set sail and elude two British ships dispatched to recapture him.

Following his safe arrival in South Carolina, Lafayette traveled to Philadelphia. Although Lafayette's youth made Congress reluctant to promote him over more experienced colonial officers, the young Frenchman's willingness to

volunteer his services without pay won their respect and Lafayette a commission as major-general on July 31, 1777.

Lafayette served at Brandywine in 1777, as well as Barren Hill, Monmouth and Rhode Island in 1778. Following the formal treaty of alliance with Lafayette's native France in February 1778 and Britain's subsequent declaration of war, Lafayette asked to return to Paris and consult the king as to his future service. Washington was willing to spare Lafayette, who departed in January 1779. By March, Franklin reported from Paris that Lafayette had become an excellent advocate for the American cause at the French court.

Following his six-month respite in France, Lafayette returned to aid the American war effort in Virginia, where he participated in the successful siege of Yorktown in 1781, before returning to France and the further service of his own country. - [www.history.com](http://www.history.com)

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Other items shared with the group included rare first edition books by Thomas Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia," and John Marshall's "Life of George Washington." A fine portrait of Benjamin Franklin and a very rare set of miniature portraits depicting King George III and his family members were also shared. Our members were equally fascinated to hear a few firsthand accounts of some of the history he participated in.

Mr. Macdonald was born in Nottingham, United Kingdom of Scottish ancestry and became an American citizen in 1953 after a five-year process. During the remarkable and interesting chapters of his life, Mr. Macdonald has been an eyewitness to world history which included a childhood living in and around Hiroshima, Japan from 1935-1939 as the son of the Head of Western Studies of the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy. While in Japan, young Mr. Macdonald took part in a formal review by dignitaries and school children for the Divine Emperor Hirohito. As political, diplomatic and international conditions rapidly deteriorated by the close of the 1930s, his family became the last Westerners to depart the Japanese Empire in