

SEVERAL IN MILITARY HISTORY HAS THERE BEEN SUCH A CONVERGENCE OF GREAT COMBINED MILITARY STRATEGY, DISTINGUISHED CHARACTER OF SENIOR COMMANDERS, AND SUCCESSFUL ALLIANCE COOPERATION AS THAT WHICH WAS DISPLAYED IN THE DECISIVE CAMPAIGN THAT WON THE NEW NATION'S FREEDOM FOR INDEPENDENCE. THIS BROCHURE COMMEMORATES THIS EPISODE WITH

A WATERCOLORED, PICTORIAL AND ANNOTATED MAP HIGHLIGHTING THE ALLIED STRATEGIC CAMPAIGN.

DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE HISTORICALLY RICH AND SCENIC ROUTE OF MARCH MADE BY THE GENERALS WASHINGTON AND ROCHAMBEAU FROM MOUNT VERNON TO YORKTOWN.

AND A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE VITAL FRENCH MILITARY CONTRIBUTION TO THE WAR

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the FRENCH ALLIANCE in the AMERICAN WAR for INDEPENDENCE IN BRIEF

Various motives were behind the French assistance to the American colonies in their revolt from British rule. Revenge for losses to England in the Seven Years War was one factor. However, many French saw the ideas espoused by the American independence movement to be the embodiment of idealistic political theories popularly appreciated in some sectors of the French intellectual society.

Credit must be given to the French Foreign Minister, Comte de Vergennes, who was planning for the possibility of the American rebellion as early as 1775 and was the architect for the overall French involvement in the war. Prior to a formal alliance, France provided the Americans money, military engineers and ships for privateers. Of equal importance was Benjamin Franklin's role as the American representative in Paris. Already a popular figure with the French before the revolution, he proved to be exceptionally adroit in alliance diplomacy.

The American victory at Saratoga, New York in 1777 helped persuade the French to formalize their alliance with a treaty and to send military forces. Initially, many Frenchmen served as volunteers in the American army under General Washington. The Marquis de Lafayette was the most famous. He demonstrated a strong commitment to the cause and was a close friend to Washington. Lafayette distinguished himself in several battles and commanded a division of American forces as a major general.

The first French military expedition was in 1778 under the Comte d'Estaing. This was a disappointing venture and his departure from America in 1778 left serious doubts about any successful American-French combined military operation.

In 1779, the Chevalier de la Luzerne became the new French envoy to Congress. He proved to be an energetic and skilful representative. In this same year, Lafayette returned to Paris to argue for an adequate naval and land force to aid the Americans.

In response, France sent in 1780 a French force of 5,500 soldiers under the highly experienced Comte de Rochambeau along with a small French naval squadron. The ultimate success of this expedition and the resultant victory at Yorktown can be attributed in a large degree to Rochambeau's leadership in this most difficult and unique allied military campaign.

The extraordinary cooperation between Washington's and Rochambeau's armies is one of the remarkable stories of the war. It was certainly essential to their prudent campaign around New York and their rapid response to the arrival of Comte de Grasse's fleet in Virginia in late summer of 1781.

There were many variations to the French military uniforms. However, the majority of the French infantry wore white uniforms with the distinctive colors of their regiment on the facing and cuffs of the coats.



Four French infantry regiments arrived with Rochambeau (Bourbonnais, Soissonnais, Saintonge and Royal Deux-Ponts), along with Lauzun's Legion and the Royal Corps of Artillery of Auxonne.

Three more regiments arrived with Saint-Simon for the seige of Yorktown: Agenois, Gatinais and Touraine.



As a symbol of the alliance, Rochambeau ordered the addition of black to the white cockades of the French troops. In turn, Washington recommended that the Continental American Army add some white to their black cockades.



DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE WASHINGTON — ROCHAMBEAU ROUTE

In the last phase of their strategic march from positions around New York, Generals Washington and Rochambeau made their march between Mt. Vernon and the Town of York (Yorktown) along a well worn path of the time which lay approximately on the modern day routes cited in this text.

SEPTEMBER 12, 1781 — Leaving Mount Vernon by the grounds leading northeast, the generals and their personal staffs turned west on State Route 235 to U.S. Route 1. They turned south on U.S. Route 1 to its intersection with Secondary Route 611 at Pohick. They continued south on 611 to its intersection again with U.S. Route 1. Washington and Rochambeau crossed the Occoquan River by ferry to Woodbridge.

The American and French wagon trains along with the French cavalry of the Duc de Lauzun followed the generals and their staffs by approximately two days. The main body of allied forces making the overland route left Alexandria on what is now U.S. Route 1 and took the same route of Washington and Rochambeau west of Mount Vernon. The wagons forded Occoquan Creek near the little town of Occoquan.

The allied march continued on U.S. Route 1 passing Woodbridge, Dumfries, Stafford Court House, eventually to Falmouth. They forded the Rappahannock River on the west side of U.S. Route 1 and turned southeast along U.S. Business Route 17. Washington and Rochambeau spent the night of the 12th in Fredericksburg.

SEPTEMBER 13, 1781 — Washington and Rochambeau left Fredericksburg early in the morning heading south on State Route 2 to its intersection with U.S. Route 17 at New Post. They continued on Route 2 that passed Wilderness and Villboro to the intersection of Secondary Route 626. They traveled south along Secondary Route 626 to Secondary Route 609. On Secondary Route 609 they proceeded southeast to the intersection with State Route 2. On State Route 2, they journeyed south to Secondary Route 631. On Secondary Route 631, they proceeded in a southerly direction until they rejoined State Route 2 north of Bowling Green. Continuing south along State Route 2, they traveled a portion where U.S. Route 301 and U.S. Business Route 301 overlap until reaching Secondary Route 695 south of Bowling Green.

The generals kept the southerly direction on Secondary Route 695 to the intersection of U.S. Route 301 and State Route 2. They continued along U.S. Route 301 and State Route 2 to Secondary Route 721 south of Anoch Fork. At this point their route zigzagged east and west of the main U.S. Route 301 and State Route 2 heading south. They went southeast on Secondary Route 721 to Secondary Route 627, south on Secondary Route 627 to Secondary Route 623, west on Secondary Route 623 to Secondary Route 654, west on Secondary Route 654 to Secondary Route 601, and northwest on Secondary Route 601 to Secondary Route 654. They went west-southwest on Secondary Route 654, crossing U.S. Route 301 and State Route 2 enroute to Secondary Route 656. On Secondary Route 656, they proceeded southeast to the intersection of U.S. Route 301 and State Route 2. Crossing U.S. Route 301 and State Route 2, they proceeded to Secondary Route 648. They traveled along Secondary Route 648 to its intersection with Secondary Route 649 at Loore, and continued west on Secondary Route 649 to Secondary Route 600. Traveling southwesterly on Secondary Route 600, they again crossed U.S. Route 301 and State Route 2, continuing to Secondary Route 602. They took Secondary Route 602 in the southeasterly direction to Secondary 651. On Secondary Route 651, they crossed State Route 30, U.S. Route 301 and State Route 2 three times enroute to the intersection of U.S. Route 301 and State Route 2 near the north end of Little Page Bridge over the Pamunkey River. They entered the little hamlet of Hanover Court House.

It is believed that Washington and Rochambeau stayed at the Hanover Court House Inn, or at the Inn in Hanover Town. It was approximately 55 miles from Fredericksburg to Hanover Court House, and 8 miles further to Hanover Town.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1781 — From Hanover Court House they headed south along Secondary Route 605. At its intersection of Secondary Route 604, they took Secondary Route 604 to Secondary Route 606, east of Studley. They continued southeasterly along Secondary Route 606 by way of Old Church, Tunstall and took a southern direction on Secondary Route 609 to its intersection with State Route 249 at Talleyville. Proceeding along State Route 249, they passed by New Kent Court House and Angelfirma Church to State Route 30 at Bathomsville. Heading south on State Route 30, they traveled to U.S. Route 60 at Ambersons Corner. Proceeding south on U.S. Route 60, they passed Toano, Norge, and Lightfoot until they intersected State Route 162 in the City of Williamsburg.

They had traveled approximately forty seven miles this day. On arrival, they reviewed the French and American troops and received a 21 gun salute.

While Generals Washington and Rochambeau were in Williamsburg, wagon trains of the main force were on Colonel William Dangerfield's plantation called Bellisfere. Here they obtained large quantities of hay. Bellisfere was east of State Route 2 and north of U.S. Route 17 on the southside of the Rappahannock River.

The Duc de Lauzun's cavalry had separated from the main forces on September 13th. The cavalry proceeded east on Route 721 to Gloucester Court House and took up positions in the siege of the British troops at Gloucester Point across the river from Yorktown.

SEPTEMBER 28, 1781 — With their assembled allied forces, Washington and Rochambeau left Williamsburg to initiate their seige of General Cornwallis at Yorktown. They departed Williamsburg on State Route 162 to intersect State Route 5 and State Route 31. They traveled easterly along State Routes 5 and 31 to intersect with U.S. Route 60 in the City of Williamsburg. Along U.S. Route 60 their march continued southeastward to the intersection of State Route 238. From there they deployed north to their seige positions in front of Yorktown.



MAP NOTES

1. *General Washington made his first return to Mount Vernon after six years of war on September 9, 1781. Comte de Rochambeau arrived with his and Washington's staffs on Sept. 10.*

2. *The beautifully reconstructed stonework of Washington's Grist Mill is open to the public.*

3. *Pohick Church was built between 1768 and 1770. Washington was one of the supervisors of its construction.*

4. *To the east of a Prince William County marker, is a preserved segment of the original Potomac Path used by Washington and Rochambeau on their march to Yorktown.*

5. *Washington and Rochambeau remained over night at Fredericksburg on Sept. 12. This is the town of George Washington's youth. It contains the elegant Kenmore house, built in 1752 by Washington's sister; the home of Mary Washington, his mother; and the Rising Sun Tavern built by his brother in 1760.*

6. *The old route diverts from the modern main roads in several places. Care must be taken not to go far from the main routes indicated, just in case one should miss the Washington-Rochambeau Route direction signs.*

7. *Washington and Rochambeau remained overnight at Hanover C.H. on Sept. 13.*

8. *The French Government 1776-1976 Bicentennial Committee has provided special markers at Mt. Vernon and at the Yorktown Victory Center.*