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LAFAYETTE

Address delivered by Colonel H. J. de la Vergne on September 6th, 1916, at the Cabildo, in New Orleans, on the occasion of the celebration of the birthday of General Lafayette.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen. The de La Fayette family is one of ancient chivalry, made illustrious under the old French monarchy by several of its remarkable members, and immortalized by General Lafayette who took a most prominent part in the French and American Revolutions. The patronymic name of that house was Motier, and its antiquity is traced back to 1240 to Pons Motier, seigneur de la Fayette. La Fayette was a considerable estate situated in the Commune d'Aix, near St. Germain l'Herm, in France. Pons Motier married Alix or Hélie Brun, daughter and heiress of Gilles Brun, seigneur de Champétières. They left several children, among others Gilbert, who continued the eldest branch, and Pons, who founded the branch of Champétières. There were three principal branches of the Motier de la Fayette family: 1st. That of the de Motier de la Fayette. 2nd. The de Motier de la Fayette de St. Romain (which is now extinct). 3rd. The de Motier de Lafayette de Champétières de Vissac, of which General Lafayette is a descendant. They were lords, counts, and then marquis de la Fayette, seigneurs de Pontgibaud de St. Romain, de Rochedagoux de Champétières de Vissac de Chavagnac, and many other fiefs. Among the members of this illustrious family was Jean Motier de la Fayette who was killed at the battle of Poitiers in 1356. Gilbert II, his brother, was knighted in 1338 and married Catherine de la Roche-Tourmeille, of whom Guillaume de Motier de la Fayette, father of Gilbert III, one of the heroes to whom France was indebted for the expulsion of the English from its territory. By his hand fell the duke of Clarence at the battle of Baugy and he took prisoner the count of Arundel at the battle of the Guibray. He was made field-marshal of France for his valor, in 1421. His son, Gilbert IV, seigneur de St. Romain, was equester to Kings Louis XI and Charles VIII from 1474 to 1486. He married Isabelle de Poignac. They had fifteen children—4 sons and 11 daughters.—Two of the sons continued the lineage: Antoine de la Fayette, seigneur de Pontgibaud and François de la Fayette, seigneur de St. Romain. Antoine was born in 1474, was governor of Boulogne and died in 1531, leaving from his marriage in 1497, with Marguerite de Rouville, three sons and three daughters. After his death his eldest son became governor of Boulogne. The latter, named Louis, had

married Anne de Vienne Listenois and left two children: François de la Fayette, killed at the battle of Saint Quentin in 1557; and Jacqueline, lady of Pontgibaud, who had married Guy de Mailion, comte de Lude and Knight of the Order of the King. Jean de Motier de la Fayette, their uncle, was slain at the battle of Cognac in 1568. From his marriage with Françoise de Montmorin were born, Pierre de Motier de la Fayette, who lost his life at the battle of Moncontour in 1569; and Claude de la Fayette, seigneur de Hautefeuille. The latter married Marie d'Aligre, daughter of Gaspard, seigneur de Vayrols and de Beauvoir and of Charlotte de Beaucaire. Jean, their son, seigneur de Hautefeuille, died on the 3d of December, 1651. He had married on the 10th of April 1615, Marguerite de Bourbon-Busset, daughter of César de Bourbon, count de Busset and de Chalus, and of Charlotte de Montmorillon. They left, among others, the following children: François, who continued the lineage; Charles-François, who was killed at the battle of Estampes in 1652; Jacques, Knight of Malta; Louise, lady-in-waiting to the Queen, Marie d'Autriche. François de Motier, comte de la Fayette seigneur de Nades, de Hautefeuille, etc., served in the company of the field-marshal d'Albert. He married in 1655, Marie Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne, daughter of field-marshal Aymar de la Vergne, governor of Havre. That lady wrote several novels and her literary merit was universally recognized. She was one of the most celebrated women of the XVII century, and was a lady-in-waiting to Henriette d'Angleterre, duchess of Orleans, who honored her with the greatest esteem and friendship. Francis de Motier de la Fayette left two children, Louis de la Fayette, who died in 1729, and René Armand de Motier, marquis de la Fayette, captain of the regiment of the King, (1769), colonel of the Regiment de la Ferre (1680), brigadier general in 1693. He died in Landau, August 12, 1694, leaving from his marriage with Marie Madeleine de Marillac, an only daughter, Marie Madeleine de Motier de Lafayette, who married on the 17th of April 1706, Charles Louis Bretagne de la Trémouille, prince de Tarente, duc de Thouars, and peer of France. By her will on the 3rd day of July, 1717, the duchesse de la Trémouille, last of her branch of the family, disposed of her estate of la Fayette in favor of Jean Roch de Motier, marquis de la Fayette, seigneur de Vissac, uncle of General Lafayette and descendant, in the 12th degree, of Pons Motier de la Fayette, common ancestor of all the branches of the family. The branch of the de Motier de la Fayette and seigneurs de Champétières and de Vissac of whom general de la Fayette was the only descendant traces its genealogy to Pons Motier de la Fayette, as already said. For centuries, members of that branch of the family were, like the others, noted for their indomitable courage and valor. The grandfather of general de la Fayette was Edouard de Motier de la Fayette, baron de Vissac, seigneur du Bouchet and other fiefs. He served at the siege of Philipbourg in 1688 and three years afterwards at the siege of Mons, where he was wounded. He took part in the battle of de la Marsaille on October 14th 1693 and in the sieges of Gironne and of Barcelona under the duke de Vendome in 1697. He was at the battle of Eskeren in Flanders in 1703 and the same year at the battle of Spire, where he was seriously wounded. He was the son of Charles de Motier de la Fayette in favor of whom, René Armand, marquis de la Fayette made his will in 1692, which will was ratified by the testament of the duchess de la Trémouille, his daughter, on the 3rd of July 1717, in favor of Jean Roch de Motier de la Fayette, grandson of Charles de Motier de la Fayette, and uncle of general Lafayette. Charles de Motier de la Fayette, baron de Vissac married Marie de Pons de la Grange, dame du Bouchet. He was the grandson of Jean de Motier de la Fayette-Champétières, captain in the regiment of Chevreuse in 1617. He was the one who bought the barony of de Vissac and added its name to his. In 1622 he had married Gabrielle de Murat de Saint-Ebles. Edouard de Motier de la Fayette, baron de Vissac, married on the 9th of January, 1706, Catherine de Suat de Chavagnac. They had two sons: Jean Roch de Motier, marquis de la Fayette in favor of whom, Marie Madeleine de la Fayette, duchess de la

Trémouille had made her will, and who was killed at the siege of Milan, in 1733. He died a bachelor. 2nd. Michel Louis Christophe Roch Gilbert de Motier, marquis de la Fayette, colonel of the Grenadiers de France, who was killed at the battle of Minden. He had married, on the 22nd of May, 1754, Marie Louise Julie de la Rivière, daughter of the marquis de la Rivière, who commanded the second company of the Mousquetaires du roi. MARIE PAUL ROCH YVES GILBERT DE MOTIER MARQUIS DE LA FAYETTE. (General Lafayette) the liberator of the United States, was the only issue of this marriage. He was born in the château de Chavagnac, Haute-Loire, in the province of Auvergne, France, on the 6th of September 1757. While he was still pursuing his studies, his mother died, leaving him the possessor of an immense fortune. At the age of sixteen he was married to Marie Adrienne Françoise de Noailles, d'Ayen, daughter of Jean Louis Paul Françoise de Noailles, duc d'Ayen and of the duchess d'Aguesseau de Fresnes. He was close to the King and to the Royal family and among the most prominent men of France. The independent character of general Lafayette inspired him with a strong dislike for the servility of the court. He had sucked at his mother's breast, ideas of liberty and freedom. He was the most perfect ideal of a young and earnest Republican, of most conservative trend of mind, and yet, strange to say, of an illustrious and proud lineage, scion of a family of ancient aristocracy. By right of title he should have enjoyed the privileges and advantages of the higher classes, and yet he was willing to lay down his life for the principles of Liberty. He was enthused for the cause of American Independence—the first news of the quarrel between England and her American colonies, (the thirteen original States of the United States of America). He said "My heart's sympathies were enrolled, and my only dream was to join my colors." He was then a captain of cavalry. In spite of all kinds of obstacles interposed by his family and by his government he embarked on the 26th of April 1777 on a vessel chartered by himself. The Congress of the United States gave him the rank of Major-General and the command of a handful of men who had the pompous name of "Army of the North." Wounded in the first encounter, he kept on fighting with the greatest valor and bravery. He won the friendship of Washington and the enthusiastic admiration of the Americans who presented him with a sword of honor. In 1779 he returned to France to solicit aid from the French government for the struggling Americans. He was particularly feasted at Versailles and at Paris; he enjoyed his popularity. The young "republican" marquis won the admiration of all as being wonderfully unique. The Queen, herself ordered that a regiment of dragoons be placed at his command. By his courage, and military talents, his disinterestedness the wonderful activity he displayed to obtain the aid of France and of Spain, he is considered as the liberator of the United States of America. He succeeded in obtaining that an auxiliary body of men, 6000 strong, would be sent to America under the command of Rochambeau, but those forces were only ready in the beginning of 1780. Lafayette, impatient, arrived at Boston before that army. In that new phase of the war in which France was engaged, Lafayette displayed the greatest ability and an undaunted bravery. He ended the war, so to speak, by gaining the victory at Yorktown, which confirmed his reputation and created an immense sensation in America and in Europe. He was to be, for ages to come, the connecting link between the two great nations, the United States and France, the cause of their lasting friendship, the one tie extending through the vast expanse of the mighty Atlantic uniting to this day, the souls of our fellow citizens to those of the descendants of our French ancestors. When Lafayette returned to France, he received from Louis XVI the title of field-marshal in the French armies. In 1784 he made another voyage to the United States, which was a continual triumph and he was the honored guest of his friend, the illustrious Washington. The Americans showed their gratitude by giving his name to cities, and erecting monuments in his honor, and bestowing upon him and his posterity the honor of American citizenship. After his return to France he again devoted his life to public affairs. In 1787 Lafayette was chosen to form part of the Assembly of notables; he proposed great reforms and urged the convocation of the "Etats-Généraux"

to which the nobility of Auvergne elected him a deputy in 1789. He made patriotic and liberal speeches, and introduced many important measures. It was Lafayette who first prepared the declaration of the Rights of Man, and it was him, also, who caused to be decreed by the Assembly that when a Nation is oppressed "insurrection is the most pious of duties." In July 1789 he presided the Assembly and during three days received with the greatest dignity the deputation of Revolutionary Paris. Appointed chief of the National Militia, at the Hotel de Ville in Paris, he drew his sword, and in presence of the people, swore to devote his life to the defense of Liberty. He was then at the very height of his glory, in the very flower of youth and at the acme of his popularity. The words from his authoritative lips pacified the people and during all that period he was the idol of France and master of Paris. He was maintained commandant general of the National Guard by the Assembly and the King. When, on the 17th of July, three days after the fall of the Bastille, Louis XVI came to Paris, he was received by Lafayette at the head of 200,000 men and escorted to the Hotel de Ville. Bailly had given to the King the blue and red badge adopted at the taking of the Bastille, but it so happened that the colors of the badge were the same as the livery of the house of Orleans, and in order to conciliate matters, Lafayette proposed to add the colors of the Bourbons, which were white, to those of the Revolution; and this is the origin of the French national flag of to-day. During the dark days of the Revolution, Lafayette saved many intended victims from death on the guillotine and on the 5th of October he rescued the royal family from the mob at Versailles and escorted it to Paris (although he had their hatred). At that time the liberal ideas of Lafayette had been surpassed; his situation was peculiar. Republican in theory and sentiment, he nevertheless protected and sustained Royalty. But, he believed that in accordance with the customs of the past, France should have a monarchy—a constitutional monarchy. The Feast of the Federation in 1790 was for Lafayette a grand day. He was feasted and acclaimed by the National Guards of the Provinces to such an extent that it seemed to him an apotheosis. After many eventful affairs in which he displayed the highest bravery and the greatest freedom of thought, and action, against the Revolution and acting with all his might and energy to save the King and the royal family, he was arrested and sent to the fortress of Olmutz, in Moravia, in May 1791. The dignity with which he bore his long and cruel captivity dispelled all suspicions that may have existed against him. His devoted wife obtained permission in 1795 to join him, with their two daughters in the fortress of Olmutz. Their son, George Washington de la Fayette, being at that time the guest of his godfather, General George Washington. The lot of those illustrious prisoners attracted the sympathy of the whole world, and the American consuls in Europe did all in their power, without avail, to have them liberated. However, the victories of General Bonaparte over Austria, compelled the release of General Lafayette. It was one of the clauses of the treaty of Campo Formio, but Bonaparte added a note, in his own handwriting that Lafayette would not be allowed to enter France. The prisoners were freed on the 49th of September 1797. Lafayette established himself in Holstein, remaining there two years. At the first news of the 18th Brumaire, (November 9th 1799, the day when Bonaparte upset, after his return from Egypt, the Directorate, Lafayette entered France. Bonaparte heard with a great deal of dissatisfaction of his arrival in Paris, but did not dare to molest him. The patriotic general had the highest admiration for Bonaparte who, for a moment, encouraged the illusion that he would establish Liberty in France. Up to the time that Bonaparte was made consul for life, Lafayette was on friendly relations with him, but nevertheless refused the title of senator, and all other distinctions offered him. He could not forgive Bonaparte for the arbitrary regime he had established over France. At that epoch the rupture between Lafayette and Bonaparte became complete. There was no more hope for Liberty. There reigned absolute despotism. In 1808 the great patriot had the grievous misfortune to lose his noble and devoted wife, who had followed him to the dungeons of Olmutz and who had sustained and helped him in all the difficult phases of his life.

From 1811 to 1824 his existence was full of arduous duties and of disappointments. On the 13th of July 1824 he embarked for the United States to respond to the invitation of the American people. He was welcomed as a "Father of the Country," and his voyage was a continuous ovation, a regular triumphant march. After a stay of over a year in the different cities of the United States, he set sail for France on the 7th of September 1825. France was then ruled by Charles X. In 1827, Lafayette was elected deputy and he had hopes again for a constitutional monarchy, but those hopes soon vanished. France was swayed by the tyranny of aristocratic despotism. In 1830, Louis Philippe ascended the throne of France. Lafayette was made to believe that he had reached his highest ambition. He imagined the King would be a constitutional monarch and would give freedom and liberty to the French people. Lafayette, at that moment, was master of the situation, and turned the tide in favor of Louis Philippe, who, at the Royal Palace in Paris, on the 7th of August, invited Lafayette to follow him on the balcony of the palace and there, before the whole mass of the people the King embraced him. For sometime, Lafayette was occupied in reorganizing the National Guard of which he was the head. He soon discovered that he was betrayed on all sides, and at the same moment a law was passed suppressing the commandant generalship of the National Guard. Lafayette at once sent in his resignation. In spite of all the deceptions he experienced he never forsook his principles and never despaired to see them realized. He died on the 20th of May, 1834. The funeral pageant was of the most grandiose character and in every way worthy of the illustrious patriot who had rendered such signal services to the cause of Liberty. He was buried by the side of his loving wife, in the cemetery of Picpus in Paris. The people of the United States sent some earth to be mixed with the earth of his sepulchre; for such had been the expressed wish of Lafayette. The same honors rendered to Washington were granted to Lafayette. The entire Union wore mourning for him for thirty days. The memory of General Lafayette is enthroned in the hearts of the citizens of the United States of America, as a Liberator, as the loftiest ideal of Freedom and Liberty, and as the greatest man of the two Hemispheres.

A Tribute From Col. Chas. W. Alexander, of Philadelphia. Philadelphia, September 3, 1916. My Dear Colonel: On Lafayette Day, September 6, the magnificent Pelican State flag of Louisiana, presented to the City of Philadelphia by your patriotic Mayor, Martin Behrman, and "broken out" over Independence Hall, on last flag Day, June 14, will be displayed from sunrise till sunset over Independence Hall, not only in memory of Lafayette, but also in honor of New Orleans. Lafayette visited Philadelphia in 1824, the same year in which he visited New Orleans, so you see how appropriate it is that New Orleans and Philadelphia join mutually in doing homage to the immortal son of France. It was while joyously ringing a welcome to Lafayette, on that occasion, that the old Liberty Bell cracked, and thereafter became silent. Should I live a century longer, I shall never forget the vivid impression the legend of the Pelican made upon me, as, standing, with my hand on the Old Liberty Bell last Orange Day, I listened to Colonel Larondson's lovely and gifted daughter, Laure, granddaughter of the illustrious General Beauregard, as she so eloquently presented the cornucopia of golden oranges, plucked from the bosom of Louisiana, to our Philadelphia Liberty Bell Committee. God surely guided me thirty-one years ago, when, amidst a storm of objection and opposition to the "sacred privilege," I, as official representative of Philadelphia, sent the Old Liberty Bell to your New Orleans Exposition, to help with its wounded side to heal the wounds of the Civil war, the Blue and the Gray, the North and the South. And as I look up on Lafayette Day at your Pelican flag floating out proudly beneath the great memorial album Old Glory, for which your patriotic Governor Pleasant sent me a star embroidered "LOUISIANA," I assure you I shall feel, happily, proud of my work. Vive Lafayette! Vive la Nouvelle-Orléans et la Louisiane! VIVE LA BELLE FRANCE! Sincerely yours, CHARLES W. ALEXANDER Colonel Hugues J. de la Vergne, President and Editor, L'Abelle de la Nouvelle-Orléans.

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