

# The Gazette



VOL 42 No. 7

Published by the Bristol Cultural and Historical Foundation, Box 215, Bristol, PA 19007 Sponsoring Historic Bristol Day—Third Saturday of Each October BCHF is a 501 (C) (3) non-profit, all volunteer Organization.

SEPTEMBER 2024

# Corner

## Lafayette's Experiment in Emancipation

President's This year as we celebrate Lafayette's final visit to the United States, we remember his bravery on the battlefield and his determination to fight alongside his American hero, George Washington. However, there was another aspect of Lafayette's life that is equally compelling, his deeply rooted commitment to the equality of all men. He abhorred slavery and, rather than just discuss it in drawing rooms and at dinners, followed through on his principles by conducting his own experiment in emancipation.

The Marquis de Lafayette was born in 1757 in the rustic village of Chavaniac. His father was a member of an ancient noble family, and his mother could trace her lineage to the medieval King Louis IX. In short, the young Lafayette was solidly a member of the Second Estate, a minority of the French who ruled the kingdom and claimed a host of entitlements as their birthright. As a member of the nobility and of the Lafayette family, he was destined to become a military officer. At 14, Lafayette was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Musketeers with ceremonial duties. Only 2 years later, he married the 14-year-old Adrienne de Noailles whose family was related to the French royalty. As one of the benefits of the marriage, his father-in-law arranged for his appointment as a captain in the Noailles regiment of dragoons posted to the citadel at Metz. While in Metz, Lafayette became acquainted with the members of a Freemason lodge. Among themselves, the Freemasons discussed the idea of the equality of all free men, the hypocrisy of the Catholic church, and the futility of a class system that oppressed most of its citizens. Lafayette would embrace the ideals of egalitarianism for the rest of his life, and it may have begun with his association with the Freemasons.

France's defeat in the Seven Years' War made it apparent that the army was badly in need of reform. There were too many ineffectual officers appointed to the upper ranks based on their social position and who were more interested in how they appeared than in learning the principles of military command. Even though Lafayette had a genuine interest in acquiring the skills of his military position: his wealth, social status, and association with the very aristocratic Noailles family resulted in his being relegated to reserve status. Thwarted in his plans for a grand career in the French military, Lafayette was receptive to the overtures of an American agent who recruited him with the rank of Major General. In addition to the chance of distinguishing himself as a military officer again, Lafayette was deeply excited about having the opportunity of helping the Americans in their noble quest for liberty. Ignoring the prohibitions of his father-in-law and even his king, Lafayette purchased a ship in secret and left to fight alongside the American Revolutionaries.

The Lafayette who arrived in the colonies in 1777 was pleased with everything he saw and experienced. His enthusiasm for his adopted cause could not be checked despite inhospitable treatment by the Continental Congress. Eventually, Lafayette was accepted partly due to his persistence and partly because the Americans recognized his worth as a means to obtain France's assistance. Once accepted into Washington's camp, Lafayette won over Washington and the other military personnel through his good nature, good sense, courage, and, indeed, his unending zeal. On his part, Lafayette accepted the disorganized American military and revered General Washington. Lafayette remained pleased with this new country and its citizens with one exception, their treatment of the native population and enslaved Africans.

The American Declaration of Independence was signed the year before Lafayette's arrival. Lafayette took seriously, and without exception, the words "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, . . . ". In 1783, prior to Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown and the Treaty of Paris, Lafayette wrote to Washington proposing that they jointly purchase a small plantation, free the slaves, and use them instead as tenant farmers. Lafayette thought that the enterprise would go a long way as an example for other plantation owners. Although Washington praised Lafayette and agreed to the scheme, he never followed through. Although Lafayette was probably disappointed with Washington's inaction, he retained his intention of conducting the experiment.

In 1785 Lafayette purchased an estate in the French colony of Guyane (today called French Guiana) with about seventy slaves. Although the slaves would be emancipated only gradually, they were all paid for their labor and schooling was provided. The sale of slaves was prohibited, and any punishments were applied uniformly to both Black people and whites. By the standard of that day, the model plantation was a radical departure from the norm. Tragically, the experiment eventually failed because of Lafayette's growing involvement in the French Revolution. In 1789, Lafayette's wife Adrienne took over the running of the plantation. In 1792, Lafayette left France and became a prisoner of war in Austria. His property was seized and sold in May 1794. It is unclear what happened to the tenant farmers as slavery in the French colonies had been abolished three months previously, in February 1794. Although they were technically freed by the time of the sale, according to the French archives, at least a portion of them were sold to the French navy.

The trajectory of Lafayette's enlightenment, from privileged aristocrat to determined progressive is inspiring. Even though he lost his wealth and his cherished experiment in emancipation failed, he gave comfort to the abolitionists and influenced others, causing them to question the despicable practice of enslaving a fellow human being for their gain. Although slavery persisted in the United States almost 30 years after Lafayette's death, I imagine that his example as a staunch believer in the rights of all men inspired many.

Sources: "Hero of Two Worlds: The Marquis de Lafayette in the Age of Revolution" Mike Duncan; "Lafayette at Brandywine: The Making of An American Hero", Bruce E. Mowday; "The Gazette of the American Friends of Lafayette", May 2023 Part I.



# Strike Up the Band —The BCHF Bristol Community Band

On June 2nd, the weather was pleasant and the doors were open at 321 Cedar Street, home of BCHF. The BCHF Bristol Community Band was scheduled to play their inaugural performance at 2 PM. And what a performance it was! It was only the second time they had performed in public since their creation, only six months before, and they were a huge hit.

The 23 member band, led by musical director Logan Gupta played a wide variety of selections including patriotic songs (Star Spangled Banner), contemporary pop music (California Dreaming, Spinning Wheel), Jazz (Gospel John), R & B (Harlem Nocturn, Georgia on my Mind), show tunes (Summertime, When I fall in Love), and even period music from the Revolutionary War era (Chester). The band played to a full audience of friends and fans as well as people unacquainted with their music. Everyone was impressed.

The band will be playing in and around the Bristol area in the future and I predict that they will be in great demand. You can contact their executive director, Phil Bigelow, at 609-670-5682 or their business manager, Diane McDevitt, at 215-820-1089, to inquire about arranging for a performance. I guarantee you will not be disappointed.



### Patricia Mervine Presentation: "Lafayette, the Abolitionist"

We are very pleased that Patricia L. Mervine will be speaking at BCHF on Sunday, September 22 at 2 PM. In keeping with the Bicentennial celebration of Lafayette's return to Bristol during his Farewell tour, Ms. Mervine's presentation is entitled "Lafayette the Abolitionist".

Pat enjoyed a 30-year career as a speech/language pathologist and assistive technology consultant in Bucks County schools. For her second act, Pat has become immersed in researching local history. Her first book, "Boone Farm: Its People and Place in Middletown History," tells the stories of the 21 owners of the Boone Farm, a 1716 stone farmhouse on the banks of Core Creek. That property is soon to be the permanent home of the African American Museum of Bucks County.

Pat's next book, due out this fall, is entitled "Slavery, Friends, and Freedom in Bucks County." This book explores the African American journey in Bucks County from the 1600s through the post-Civil War period. She has uncovered stories of remarkable courage and compassion of more than fifty people, Black and White, who were involved in the abolition movement and the Underground Railroad right here in Bucks County. Both books are fundraisers for the African American Museum of Bucks County.

In researching the history of abolition in Pennsylvania, Pat was surprised to learn that the Marquis de Lafayette was very much against slavery in the colonies and was opposed to the enslavement of others long after the American Revolution was won and for the remainder of his life. Her presentation will highlight this aspect of Lafayette's life.

Ms. Mervine has requested that in lieu of an honorarium, we donate funds to the African American Museum of Bucks County.

### TICK, TOCK. TIME'S A WASTIN'!

Since the Gazette took its annual hiatus in July and August, there have been no reminders since June about the October 8 bus trip to New York. The itinerary includes a tour of the Tenement Museum, a National Historic Site on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Its two tenement buildings were home to an estimated 15,000 people from over 20 nations, between 1863 and 2011.

Our group will be divided, with each group going on one of the following three Tenement tours: (1) Family-Owned Building (5 stairs up, 4 down) - This tour starts with a visit to Schneider's Saloon, which served food, beer and entertainment but also acted as a living room for German immigrants and families to socialize, and a meeting place for local clubs and political organizations. Then, you'll travel forward in time to the Great Depression where you'll learn how Max Marcus made a living, in an interactive multimedia exhibit in the space that once held his auction house. (2) Finding Home (elevator access) - You'll visit the shared tenement homes of the Epstein and Saez families, who shared a changing Lower East Side yet had very different experiences as Jewish Holocaust survivors and Puerto Rican migrants. (3) Tenement Women 1902 - This apartment tour takes you into the world of tenement families, to explore the challenges and changes faced by Jewish immigrant mothers in 1902, and how women asserted their rights before they had rights as citizens.

From the Tenement Museum, we head to Little Italy where a three-course luncheon will be served at Da Nico Ristorante. There will be free time following lunch to shop in the many Italian food specialty stores or to explore Mulberry and surrounding streets where the famous San Gennaro Festival is held every September.

The all-inclusive cost of the trip is \$165 for BCHF members and \$175 for non-members, based on a minimum of 45 paid passengers. The reservation deadline has been extended to **September 11**. Talk it up among your relatives, friends and coworkers! For a detailed flyer/reservation form, call 215-788-9043 or print it from our website, www.bristolhistory.org.

MORE TIME TO CONSIDER: Our annual holiday excursion will be on Tuesday, December 3, to the Nemours Estate in Delaware. The mansion was built by Alfred I. duPont in the early 20th century for his wife, and fondly named "America's Versailles." It sits on a 3,000-acre plot in Wilmington and consists of 77 rooms which will be decked out in holiday splendor during our visit. Our first stop of the day will be at Buckley's Tavern in Centreville, DE, where we'll be served a three-course luncheon. The all-inclusive cost of this trip is \$135 for BCHF members and \$145 for non-members, based on a minimum of 45 paid passengers. Reservation deadline is **October 25**, or earlier based on demand. For a detailed flyer/reservation form, call 215-788-9408 or print it from our website, www.bristolhistory.org.

### Mahogany and Steel Car and Boat Show: A Winner

The 3rd Annual Mahogany and Steel Car and Boat Show came off without a hitch on the rain date of Sunday, July 14th. Due to the extreme heat the turnout was much lighter than usual with 60 cars participating and 20 boats both in the water and under the wharf. The borough is making an attempt to move all outdoor events out of the months of July and August. The Mid -Atlantic Classic and Antique Boat Society, our partner in this event, agreed to have it in the month of May in the future. That works for us as well since it does not compete with our Bristol Day Car Show in October.

In spite of the heat, all who attended had a great time voting for their favorite antique and classic car. As was the case at our last Bristol Day Show, everyone was able to vote with their cell phone. We still had paper ballots available, but very few used them. Based on the voting 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place People's Choice trophies were awarded for both antique and classic cars. The people attending really enjoy being able to participate in the show. In addition to Michele Hager selling her famous sausage and pepper sandwiches and breakfast items we had a food truck selling kabobs, fries, and hotdogs. As always, King George gift cards were chanced off at the conclusion of the show before awarding the trophies. The car cruise down Radcliffe Street was pushed up to 2 PM due to the extreme heat.

This year's show took on a special significance to us. We honored a former member of our car show team and longtime Bristol Borough resident Ed Kuzma. Ed had a 1965 Pontiac GTO back in the day when he was a teenager like so many of us did during the muscle car era of the sixties. Through his whole adult life he talked about reacquiring a 65 GTO. His dream was fulfilled a little less than a year ago. Shortly after getting his beloved 65 GTO, he was diagnosed with cancer. He went through Chemo and radiation for months. A few months before the show he stopped by with the GTO and was excited about showing it for the first time at our car and boat show. He passed about 3 weeks after that visit. The car still made it to the show. Ed's Son, Eddie Jr., his daughter Erica and wife Linda presented the car with pictures and memorabilia of Ed. Needless to say we awarded his beloved 65 GTO with the Best of Show trophy.

By Mark Gesualdi



Eddie Kuzma Jr. with best of show trophy.

BCHF co-sponsors this event with the Mid-Atlantic Classic and Antique Boat Society. Everyone at BCHF thanks long time member Mark Gesualdi and his family for the excellent work they do putting on this terrific event.

### BIG THINGS HAPPENING FOR BRISTOL'S BRACKEN CADETS

2024 will be a celebratory year for the Robert W. Bracken American Legion Cadets Junior Drum & Bugle Corps, fondly known as "The Bracken Cavaliers." It marks the Corps' Centennial Anniversary and big things have been planned.

On Historic Bristol Day, Saturday, Oct. 19, at 9 a.m., an outdoor mural, honoring Bracken's 100-year history, will be dedicated on the south wall of All Fresh Supermarket, corner of Pond & Walnut Streets. A brief musical performance by the Alumni Corps will be part of the ceremony.

A pictorial and memorabilia display will be on exhibition during HBD at the Bristol Borough Borough Area Active Adult (Bristol Senior Center), corner of Mulberry & Wood Streets. Bracken Alumni will be having celebratory reunions at a "welcoming pizza party" at Cesare's Restaurant at 7 p.m., Friday, October 18; an "anniversary dinner" at Georgine's Restaurant at 6 p.m., Saturday, the 19<sup>th</sup> and ending with a "goodbye breakfast" at the Golden Eagle Diner at 11 a.m., Sunday, the 20<sup>th</sup>.

For more information or reservations, contact Art Younglove, 1-856-296-3740, before October 5.

For the benefit of readers outside the Bristol area, the following is a brief history of The Bracken Cavaliers. The Corps was organized in 1924 and claims the honor of being the FIRST junior drum & bugle corps in the U.S. That year, the Corps became affiliated with and sponsored by the Robert W. Bracken American Legion Post No. 382 of Bristol. It was twelve-time PA State American Legion Champion between its founding and 1981, and three-time runner-up for the National title. Its members, dressed in their orange, black and white uniforms, are fondly remembered by Bristolians for their performances in Bristol Borough parades. The Bristol Cultural and Historical Foundation warmly congratulates The Bracken Cavaliers on this milestone!

### 2024 MEMBERSHIP

In the June GAZETTE we listed all members in good standing. Since then, the following individuals have renewed their membership or joined BCHF. If you have not yet paid your dues, we urge you to renew your membership to continue to get the GAZETTE in the mail, with up to date information on trips and events.

George & Lynn LeQuier Delores Lynam Colleen Sims Isabella DeStefano

Bettie Rarrick Suzanne Antonelli and Darlene Helicke (Spelling Correction)

### **OUT OF THE PAST**

The following items were excerpted from September 1914 issues of THE BUCKS COUNTY GAZETTE.

9/4 – COOKING TO BE TAUGHT AT THE BRISTOL SCHOOLS. First Floor of Old Wood Street Building To Be Equipped. School Board President Leech stated, after the school board meeting, that he has a contribution of \$500 to start the work but would not say who the generous donor was.

PLAN FOR A SUBURBAN IMPROVEMENT DAY HERE. On Tuesday evening in the Bristol Borough council chambers, a meeting was held for the purpose of forming a preliminary organization which proposes to have what will be known as a Suburban Improvement Day in Bristol. Burgess Thomas Scott stated that the object was to have a big day in Bristol some date in October when officials of all the neighboring

towns and townships could be invited. It is proposed to have prominent speakers here upon that occasion.

BIG THREE-RING CIRCUS AND WILD WEST SHOW, SEPTEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup>. Will Have Two-Mile Parade. Animal acts of all description will be presented at the Kit Carson's Buffalo Bill Ranch. Each performance will end with the superb, spectacular, historical fantasy, "Battle of Wounded Knee."

LOCAL INTELLIGENCE: Walter F. Leedom took his employees to Willow Grove last evening, making the trip in his auto.

There were eight deaths in Bristol Borough during the month of August, two by accidental drowning, two by infantile convulsions, and one each of railroad accident and tuberculosis.

"FOR RENT. \$9 a month. 328 Wood Street."

"Fall and Winter Suits. Built to measure from the world's best fabrics. \$15.00 Up. LA POLLA BROS., Up-to-date Tailors, 215 Mill Street."

"Up the Hudson to West Point or Newburgh. Round-trip from Bristol - \$2.50. Special train, Thursday, September 10, connecting with day line steamer. PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD."

11 – BRISTOL GIRL AMONG NOVICES AT CORNWELLS. Thursday of last week, St. Elizabeth's Convent, the motherhouse of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People, was the scene of the impressive ceremonies of profession and reception. Among the novices professed was Sister Mary Charles Borromeo, formerly Miss Clara Waide, of Bristol.

SUFFRAGE MEETING AT BRISTOL. There will be a meeting of those interested in woman suffrage next Monday afternoon at 3:15 at the home of Mrs. Gledhill. Tomorrow evening at 8 o'clock, there will be an open air meeting at the corner of Mill and Wood Streets.

MOOSE LAWN FETE TONIGHT. The members of the Moose Lodge of Bristol will hold a lawn fete on the grounds of their home on the riverbank this and tomorrow evening. New concrete steps have been erected leading from the river's edge up the embankment, and gangs of men worked all night in order to complete these steps in time for the lawn fete.

LOCAL INTELLIGENCE: The Colonial Theatre has closed for a few weeks on account of the slim attendance.

A stranger came to Bristol Wednesday with a dozen boxes of fine cigars which he disposed of to individuals at \$1.50 a box and then quickly left town.

George Quicksall surprised two boys stealing grapes from his truck patch. After an exciting chase, he caught and spanked one of the boys. Both were glad enough to escape.

More automobiles passed up and down the Pike on Monday, Labor Day, than on any Sunday this summer. All who live along the Pike received their fair share of dust on that day.

"Ice Cream, Soda Water at CLARK'S RESTAURANT, 500 Bath Street. Public waiting room for trolley patrons."

"Oysters – The Best in Town! Our 35c Dinner Is the Talk of the Town. Meals at all hours. TOWNSEND'S RESTAURANT, 227-229 Mill Street."

"Taxi Cab Service. Meets all P.R.R. trains. Day and Night. Cars may be engaged for touring parties and other special trips. CLAUDE HARRIS, 202 Mill Street."

9/18 – BIG MEETING AT RIVERSIDE THEATRE. A large and enthusiastic audience filled the Riverside Theatre last Monday evening to hear the nominees on the Democratic State ticket.

LOCAL INTELLIGENCE: The Bristol Academy of Dance will open in Pythian Hall on September 26<sup>th</sup>.

Charles Waters, the huckster, found a large tarantula in a bunch of bananas one day this week and says he is shivering yet over what might have been.

The Bristol Dramatic Association has begun rehearsals on a new four-act drama which will be presented at a future date not yet decided upon.

The Guarantee Clothing Company is remodeling the store recently occupied by Herbert V. Trelease at 240 Mill Street and will soon open it in connection with their present store at 238 Mill Street.

A crowd of moving picture actors and actresses attracted a large audience at the corner of Mill and Radeliffe Streets on Tuesday afternoon. The scene being enacted was that of an elopement in an auto.

"MINSTER'S GROCERY, the store for particular people. Strictly fresh eggs. Highest grade creamery butter, fresh twice weekly. Fresh fruits and vegetables. Salt and smoked meats. Prices no higher than elsewhere. WM. G. MINSTER, successor to Edward H. Foster Estate, 213 Dorrance Street."

"Re-opening of School. Next door to Old Presbyterian Church, Radcliffe Street. Wednesday, September 9. Morning class, 9 to 12. Advanced classes and private lessons, afternoons. Evening classes after September 21. MISS ESTHER LAWRENCE, 233 Cedar Street."

9/25 – MISS MINSTER A BRIDE. Miss Marie E. Minster, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Minster, and William H. H. Fine were united in marriage Monday morning at 11 o'clock in the Third Presbyterian Church, Warren Street, Trenton, by the Rev. Charles E. Burns of the Bristol Presbyterian Church. The ceremony was witnessed only by the members of the immediate families and, after the ceremony, the bride and groom departed for a wedding tour. Upon their return, they will reside at the home of the bride's parents on Jefferson Avenue. The bride has a wide circle of friends in Bristol, and the groom holds a responsible position in the Farmer's National Bank, is secretary of No. 1 Fire Company, and an active member of the Masons and Elks.

BRISTOL A.A. LOST IN NINTH. The strong Bristol A.A. baseball team journeyed to Beverly on Saturday and were defeated by the Loyal 13 of that town by the score of 8 to 7. Playing for our local team were: Pierson, Sagolla, Wilson, White, McGeehan, Hibbs, Elmer, Mulholland and Allen.

MOCK BIRTHDAY PARTY. Don't forget the mock birthday party vaudeville entertainment and dance for the benefit of St. Ann's parish, Friday evening, September 25, in St. Mark's hall. The charge of admission will be as many cents as you are years old.

LOCAL INTELLIGENCE: The old Edgely railroad station presents a neat appearance since it has been fixed up for inspection. Now open it for trains to stop and everyone will be happy.

The Wilson Band of Bristol will give a benefit vaudeville and moving picture entertainment in the Riverside Theatre on October 1.

The police officers were kept on the move on Tuesday night between looking for midnight prowlers and the arrest of five persons for intoxication.

Dr. Edward Laing, the veterinarian, has purchased an automobile.\
A glee club has been organized among the members of the Bristol Elks, under the direction of Thomas Snelson.

"How Much Bread Do You Eat? It has been figured that, in a year's time, you consume 60 feet. It is necessary, therefore, that it should be good bread! GRATZ'S BREAD is the best. Prompt delivery. Also ice cream, confectionery, cakes, etc. Cor. Dorrance and Wood Streets."



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### **BCHF Calendar Of Events For 2024**

**SEPTEMBER** Sun., 9/22, 2PM. Presentation by local history researcher and author Patricia Mervine entitled "Lafayette, the Abolitionist." See another section of this Gazette for more information. Light refreshment. BCHF headquarters. Donation of \$5/ adult attendee requested: students, free. Payable at the door.

SEPTEMBER. Sun., 9/29, 2 PM Bristol Borough's Grand Procession commemorating the Marquis de Lafayette's return visit to Bristol in 1824. Starting on Radcliffe St. at Adams Hollow Creek and terminating at Radcliffe & Mill St. where further activities will be held. OCTOBER. Tues., 10/8. Bus trip to the Tenement Museum on NY's Lower east Side, followed by a 3-course lunch and some free time in Little Italy. \$165 for BCHF members: \$175 for non-members Reservation deadline extended to September 11. Call 215-788-9043 for detailed flyer/reservation form.

**OCTOBER**. Sat., 10/19 10AM to 4PM. Annual Historic Bristol Day. Theme: Celebrating the 200th Anniversary of Lafayette's Farewell Tour. More info in this Gazette next month.

**NOVEMBER.** Wed., 11/20, 7:30 PM. BCHF's annual meeting at BCHF headquarters. Election of Board members followed by a presentation (topic to be determined). Light refreshment. The public is cordially invited. No fee.

NOVEMBER. Tues. 11/26, 7 PM return of Titanic Historian David Kaplan whose topic will be "Unsuspecting Participants." Light refreshment. BCHF headquarters. Donation to the FUMC Food Pantry of Bristol of sanitary products, toilet paper, paper towels, dish or laundry detergent, etc., greatly appreciated. DECEMBER. Tues., 12/3. Bus Trip to "Holidays at Nemours Estate". DE. 3-course luncheon at Buckley's tavern and self-guided tour of the Nemours Mansion, elaborately decorated for the holidays. \$135 for BCHF members; \$145 for non-members. Reservation deadline: October 25. Call 215-788-9408 for detailed flyer/reservation form.

BCHF Headquarters are at 321 Cedar Street, Bristol.

For current information about activities and events, check our website at www..bristolhistory.org

Email us at bchf2157819895@gmail.com Follow us on Instagram - - IG@brisol historic foundation